

Fourth Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LVII No. 76A - 10 a.m., Thursday, May 25, 2006

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 25, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Orders of the Day, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from the IMF School, 15 Grades 6 to 8 students under the direction of Mr. Rollin Heide. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

And we will move on to Bill 208, but before we do I have one more announcement.

We have some students here from Parc la Salle School, 23 Grade 4 students under the direction of Mrs. Nancy Estabrook. This group is located in—*[interjection]* They are not here yet. Okay. I will introduce them a little later then.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 208—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: So we will move on to second reading, public bills, Bill 208, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I would like to move, seconded by the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 208, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Rowat: It is a pleasure to rise today to bring forward a bill that I feel is very important for public safety and especially for safety of individuals who may consider it not an unsafe practice of riding in the back of a pickup truck. This bill prohibits people from riding on the outside of a vehicle or any other part of it that is not designed to be occupied, and a number of exemptions are provided that will address the issues of the farming community, firefighting and

other work-related occupations that do require that need.

The Department of Transportation launched a review of The Highway Traffic Act following a deadly accident in late August of 2004, when 16 people were involved in a rollover near The Pas that left many injured and two dead, Mr. Speaker. This was a tragic event, and I believe that the minister at that time indicated that they would be looking at this situation and reviewing the accident. I believe in 2001 and in 1999, the minister in recent correspondence indicated that they also were looking at that and had created a working group. So there has been some research done into this, but my concern is that there is not a strong enough sense from this government to do something about this.

Last summer a resident of my community lost his life while riding in the back of a pickup truck. It was a very serious accident. He lost his life, but there were two or three others that were very seriously injured in the accident and were very fortunate to come out of the accident and be back on track with their lives at this point, Mr. Speaker.

But what it has done is that it has created a strong concern, not only in my community, but in individuals who I have since spoken to about this issue and have indicated that the current legislation does not specifically address riding on the exterior of a vehicle. People throughout the province have indicated that they thought it was against the law to ride in the back of a pickup truck and were very shocked to learn after, most recently the accident off of No. 1 highway near Oak Lake, that this was not legislation. One individual commented that it is illegal for a dog to ride in the back of a truck loosely, it has to be restrained, but for his grandchildren to ride in the back of a pickup truck there are no laws to prohibit that activity.

I guess my comment then is, Mr. Speaker, that kids are not cargo, they are precious human beings. We should respect and appreciate the dangers that arise from riding in the back of trucks and we need this government to take heed.

Section 183(1) relies on the peace officer to make a determination that a person is riding in the box of a truck in an unsafe manner. In the event of a

high-speed collision, passengers in a pickup truck box are unrestrained and can easily be ejected from the vehicle and suffer serious injuries, and most likely head injuries, Mr. Speaker. This eventually would make it inherently unsafe to ride in the box of a pickup truck, regardless of a police officer's judgment.

I am going to make reference to a study that was done in the United States that indicated that the majority of people who are involved in accidents, or even just riding in the back of pickup trucks with the vehicle stopping when going 30 kilometres an hour, the chances of a head injury are very severe. They are often left with head injuries. At a young age of 18 years old or 17 years old facing a future with a debilitating brain injury is very disheartening, Mr. Speaker.

So clarification of the law would make it easier, obviously, for police officers to legally prohibit the practice they acknowledge is unsafe. In speaking to law enforcement officers in my constituency and across the province, they have indicated they would seriously welcome the ability to have a consistent law in place that they can rely on to help eliminate a common sense practice. It would eliminate the ambiguity for motorists who may be unsure of the legality of allowing people to ride on the exterior of their vehicles, and a more clearly defined law would act as a deterrent in that the punishment for violating the act would be much clearer.

More than half of the provinces have indicated that they have some form of legislation that makes riding on the exteriors of vehicles illegal, so updating our legislation would illustrate Manitoba's willingness to conform on progress that is happening on a national level in safety standards, Mr. Speaker.

*(10:10)

Feedback and consultation: the Canadian Public Health Association passed a resolution in 2000 calling on all jurisdictions to take action to make it illegal for passengers to ride in the back of pickup trucks. The CPHA noted that passengers who ride in the back of pickup trucks are often injured in non-crash events. Recent studies that I have been pulling off of the Internet and in discussion with other studies' co-ordinators, they have indicated the same. It is said that ejections leading to death or serious injury could easily occur at speeds of 40 kilometres or less, Mr. Speaker. CPHA also indicate that people ejected from trucks most often receive head injuries,

one of the most costly and debilitating injuries to treat.

The Injury Prevention Centre of Children's Hospital, IMPACT for an acronym, believes that individuals riding on the exterior of vehicles would face greater risk of injury or death due to the lack of appropriate restraints and protection afforded by the vehicle cab. IMPACT acknowledges that some professions like firefighting and agriculture-based industry require employees to travel on the exterior of vehicles and approves a specific exemption for that purpose. So they supported what I am trying to put forward, Mr. Speaker.

But it does also indicate that it discourages exemption for riding in the back of pickup trucks for any purpose. So they would like it to be strengthened, and I look forward to the debate from the other side to provide some options.

Keystone Agricultural Producers supports Bill 208, and I think that is important to understand and appreciate, Mr. Speaker, because the agriculture sector continually feels restrained and restricted by this government, but they support the safety. The key issue of this is safety, and they support that for farm families.

So this bill is an important step in ongoing efforts to prevent injuries in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. KAP also recommends a degree of flexibility in addressing the unique nature of some businesses and agrees with allowing exceptions for particular professions: firefighters, construction workers, et cetera.

Other provincial legislations—Alberta's traffic safety act has specific regulations dealing with riding on the exterior of vehicles. Punishments for doing so include fines and loss of merit points on drivers' licences. The Alberta legislation also contains certain exemptions for occupations. Saskatchewan's higher traffic act also outlaws riding on the exterior of vehicles and, like Manitoba, this regulation is also considered unclear in terms of enforcement and interpretation. So I think Saskatchewan has also had re-occurring incidents of injuries and death, and the Saskatchewan government insurance has proposed that the legislation be amended to provide greater clarification.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am bringing forward this bill because I believe the Doer government has done little on this issue other than discuss it internally, and I believe that they should take a leadership role in

looking out for the safety of all Manitobans. I urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to support this bill and provide safety for all Manitobans. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for Selkirk, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Parc la Salle School 23 Grade 4 students under the direction of Mrs. Nancy Estabrook. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here this morning.

* * *

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It is a pleasure to rise today to put a few words on the record in terms of Bill 208, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act. As the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) has stated, this bill will prohibit people from riding on the outside of a vehicle or on the back of a truck, Mr. Speaker. As well, it has a number of exemptions to the rule which I think is important.

We will give the member credit; this legislation does have some merit. We are not against the concept of prohibiting people from riding in the back of trucks in particular. I recall when I was a student and going to elementary school in the 1960s living outside of Selkirk, Mr. Speaker, we did not have a school bus. So, in order for us to get from one school to another, we all rode in the back of a grain truck. The whole school got in the back of a grain truck. I recall because it was my father's grain truck; he put in benches, and off we went from the Selkirk area up to the Petersfield area to participate in the various events there. Looking back at that, I would have to admit that was a pretty dangerous practice, but it was a very common practice back in the sixties when, as I said, the school division was a poor one, and we did not have the benefit of having school buses to transport the kids in a safe manner. But, fortunately, nobody was injured in that practice, but I think it speaks to that particular time. I think it speaks now to us as we look at legislation like this or similar legislation which will prohibit some of that practice.

We know that is a difficult practice to completely prohibit because it is necessary we feel in some communities and some types of occupations require the riding in the back of a truck, whether you

are a forest firefighter, for example, or farmers, commercial fishermen, fisherwomen, and in other areas of the province, whether you are in the rural area or the North where it is more common or impractical not to be in the back of a truck during the course of your employment, Mr. Speaker.

We know currently there are provisions in The Highway Traffic Act that deal with unsafe riding or riding in an unsafe manner. So, currently, it is up to the police to determine whether someone is, in fact, riding in an unsafe manner. Then they have the authority, under section 183 of The Highway Traffic Act, to charge that person with dangerous riding, Mr. Speaker. Presently there is a fine for dangerous riding of \$146, and that was April of this year. I do not know if that has been increased or not. *[interjection]* The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) suggests that perhaps it was increased. Maybe that is one way to prohibit people from riding in the back of trucks, or riding in an unsafe manner, is to increase the fine, use that as a disincentive.

The department, of course, and the minister, they are reviewing the act on an ongoing basis. As I said, it is necessary that there are provisions for responsible riding, as opposed to riding dangerously in the back of a truck, Mr. Speaker, because there are some practical considerations faced by firefighters, farmers, commercial fishers and people who live in the North or in rural areas.

Of course, currently there are no legislative criteria that enforcement officers follow in determining whether a person is riding in a safe manner. Every situation is assessed by the officer and a decision is made based on the facts at hand. The officer will look at factors such as whether the person is standing or moving about, or whether there was a passenger sitting, or any other circumstance specific to the situation that may present a hazard for the passenger or others.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, currently it is up to a police officer to decide whether or not an individual is violating section 183 of The Highway Traffic Act. They will decide whether someone, in fact, is riding in an unsafe manner. We do not know whether the member—she did mention that she has talked to some of the farmers and farm communities and farm groups, but we will have to make sure that if this legislation is passed, or whether we will consider this legislation, that there be proper consultation with northerners and with other forest firefighters, other

rural members, other rural Manitobans and workers to decide actually what kind of impact that this bill would have on their activities.

So, although we do concur that there is some merit to this, we are not against the concept, Mr. Speaker. We are a little uncertain at this time as to whether it is necessary that we pass this legislation or we, in fact, would just go forward with the current regulations that are provided for in The Highway Traffic Act. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak on this very important bill that was brought forward by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat). I know that she has brought forward this particular legislation previously.

* (10:20)

Bill 208, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, is a very important piece of legislation. It is really designed to protect all Manitobans. In particular, this bill prohibits people from riding on the outside of a vehicle or any other part of it that is not designed to be occupied. Of course, a number of exceptions are provided to this regulation as well.

As the Member for Minnedosa pointed out, it really hit home with her with a particular accident that did occur in Souris and did amount to loss of life. Prior to that, of course the Department of Transportation launched its own review of The Highway Traffic Act back in 2004, when there was another fatal accident in August of 2004, when at that time there were 16 people involved in a rollover near The Pas. Many were injured and two were dead at that time, Mr. Speaker.

So, clearly, the law as it states right now does not specifically say that riding in the back of vehicles is illegal, and the intent of this particular legislation is to really clarify that that particular activity will be illegal going forward. That way it will take any doubt out of people's minds whether they should be riding in the back of vehicles or not.

So really the intent of this bill, very straightforward, and just is going to add some clarity to the existing Highway Traffic Act. I guess just to maybe comment on the existing Highway Traffic Act, what it does now is it relies on the peace officer to make the determination, to say when a person is riding in the back of a vehicle that he is actually or she is riding in there in an unsafe manner. So the onus then is on the peace officer to make that

determination. Clearly, in the event of a high speed collision, passengers in the back of a truck box who certainly are not restrained will be easily ejected and could suffer serious injury.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation really hit home with me in an incident that happened near my community just about a month ago. At that time there was, I believe it was eight individuals travelling in a pickup truck, and I believe there were at least two, maybe three of them were riding in the back of the half-ton or three-quarter ton. It was an extended cab or a four door version.

These particular individuals were, in my view, probably old enough to know better that they should not be doing this, but because the law said that they still could, there was no deterrent in place to stop them. So they were out driving around one evening and driving down a municipal road and they came across a situation where, as a result of a lot of the rain we had this spring a washout on the road. They were unaware of this particular washout and they drove into the washout.

Mr. Speaker, they were travelling at a fairly high rate of speed. As the result, the two or three individuals that were in the back of the truck were ejected out of the truck. In fact, they were flown several metres. I think some of them were, we are talking in excess of 20 or 30 metres. These particular individuals were very lucky that they were not killed in this situation. Two of them were hospitalized for some period of time. We do know that at least one of them will have extended injuries that will affect them for quite some time to come, but fortunately no one was killed in that particular situation.

I think what it does, this particular legislation will point out to individuals like that that it is clearly against the law to ride in the back of a vehicle in situations like that. So my view is that this law, this legislation will act as a deterrent for this to happen. My view is it will save lives. My view is also that it will save injuries to individuals that undertake this particular endeavour.

We realize that Manitoba Public Insurance will be paying out or has paid out a tremendous amount of money in terms of loss of life. Also people have suffered disabilities as a result of being thrown out of the back of vehicles. So I think that certainly we as legislators have an onus to protect Manitobans. I know it is a bit of a case where we have to sometimes protect ourselves from ourselves, but I think it is an important piece of legislation going

forward. It really is a matter of common sense, but sometimes we do have to spell that out in writing to protect people's lives, and really the other thing, the issue here, is family lives. I know we like to have our kids riding around in the back of vehicles just for the fun of it because they always like to do that, but common sense would say accidents could happen. Even at low speeds young children can fall out of vehicles and be injured.

Now there are some important exemptions here, and I think it is very important that we have a look at those particular exemptions. It is not an all-encompassing type of legislation. I know the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) has taken time to really reflect on what areas of society should be excluded from this particular legislation, and I just want to talk about those exemptions for a minute. The intent here is exemptions would be under section 146(2).

We talk about mopeds and motorcycles. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, those vehicles are designed to carry people on the outside. So, obviously, those particular vehicles should be exempt.

Another exemption is the farm tractor or implement of husbandry. So again those particular units and vehicles are designed to have people ride on the exterior, not necessarily be enclosed. So that exemption exists for those particular pieces of apparatus as well. I understand the Member for Minnedosa said that the Keystone Agricultural Producers support this piece of legislation. So they must be happy that those exemptions will still allow Manitoba farmers to go out and continue their activities and still not be impeded by this particular legislation.

There is also an exemption here for special mobile machines. Certainly in different industries there will be equipment required to carry out different tasks, and obviously those pieces of equipment are again designed to have people ride on the exterior, probably to help them carry out the activities of their jobs. So again those particular pieces of equipment are excluded.

Another exclusion here, which of course is another common-sense exclusion, would be the off-road vehicle or power-assisted bicycle. Again, Mr. Speaker, those particular vehicles are designed to have people ride on the outside, and again another common-sense exemption.

Another important exemption is the exemption on a vehicle used for firefighting, and quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, we recognize there are certain situations where firefighters endeavour to do their job, are required to ride in the back of vehicles or the outside of vehicles. Just to comment on that, I know we have had over the years some serious problems with firefighters falling out of vehicles, but I know government agencies have gone a long way in terms of providing safety mechanisms for firefighters in terms of going to emergency situations. This exclusion probably more pertains to an actual on-site situation where firefighters are doing their work maybe on a farm situation or a grassland situation. So that is the exemption there.

Another important exemption is a vehicle engaged in highway construction or maintenance. Of course, Mr. Speaker, we see Manitoba employees out on the highways, and just a common-sense exemption.

Another one that we find is the exemption for sanitation vehicles. Of course, again, vehicles are designed, and it is just now a matter of doing business for the garbage men to go up and down the back lanes. It just makes common sense.

Another important exemption, of course, would be the vehicle in a caravan, a motorcade or a parade or a rally or other special event and again, Mr. Speaker, that is a common-sense exemption. If there is going to be that particular situation, it will be carried out at a very low speed.

Those I think are the important exemptions that have to be brought forward. I thank you for the opportunity to speak briefly on this bill, and I hope the members opposite will give it some serious consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I am pleased to rise to add my comments to Bill 208, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, brought forward, I believe, by the Member for Minnedosa.

*(10:30)

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of parts to this bill that are of some interest. I know in my time in working with my colleagues at the Legislature during the some of the task forces we have been engaged in since we have come into government, we have had the opportunity to travel around the province of Manitoba and to talk with folks about a number of highway traffic act rules and the regulations that are in place and how they would affect Manitobans, not

only in the occupancy of their vehicles, but in the operation of those vehicles.

One of the issues that has come to my attention, and I know from my colleagues who joined with me on the task force in past years, was the fact that people were quite concerned about folks who were riding in the back of open vehicles and who were not in any way restrained.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that there are laws in this province that require Manitobans and folks travelling through our province to be restrained by seat belts in our province, but one of the anomalies, if I could use that term, has been the fact that there is no regulation or rule or law that says that members of the public are prohibited from riding in the back, for example, of open half-ton trucks.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans living in rural Manitoba have often said to us when we were travelling across the province that you have to have some consideration with respect to farm practices and folks that are travelling from the home quarter, for example, of where the machinery would be located or where the workers who would be located out to the particular worksites in the agricultural sector. So the rural Manitobans wanted to have some consideration for that.

We have had some concerns here in the past with respect to folks who would be unrestrained in the back of half-ton vehicles, and we have had, and if I recollect correctly back to the Graduated Driver Licensing Task Force, we had recommended at that time that consideration be given to making sure that the occupants of vehicles would have to be secured to the vehicle by way of seat-belt restraint devices, Mr. Speaker. I have had some discussions with folks over at Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for a number of years now about this particular issue.

We have had the discussions that MPI has related to me through discussion, I should say, is the fact it matters not whether or not the seat device which would be anchored, obviously, to the main frame of the vehicle, would be in the cab of a truck, for example, a half-ton truck, whether it be a crew cab or just a two-person half-ton truck or other truck or passenger vehicle, but as long as there is a seat with a seat-belt restraint device that was anchored to that vehicle so that the passengers could travel safely in that vehicle, I think is the primary concern.

Mr. Speaker, in looking back at some of the accidents that have happened in the province of

Manitoba here, not that long ago, as a matter of fact, I am going from memory here now, where there were a number of folks who were travelling, in particular, in rural and northern Manitoba, folks travelling in the back of an open half-ton truck and the truck rolled and a number of people were very seriously injured. That, of course, should cause all of us concern about that. I think that, perhaps, is part of the premise or the basis for the private member's bill that has been brought forward. *[interjection]* The member opposite says that is one of the main premises. I do not disagree with that.

Not only from the point of view of the potential for loss of life and the significant consequences that will result to the families if a loved one should be killed in an automobile accident because they were not restrained in the vehicle, that there is also the huge financial cost that would be associated with individuals that may be thrown from a vehicle or crushed as a vehicle rolls over or tips because they were not restrained by a seat belt or restraint devices within the vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, there are concerns that Manitoba Public Insurance has with respect to this because I have had discussions with them in the past about this. They would like to see some support for changes to make sure that passengers riding in a vehicle would be restrained in some safe manner according to the regulations that we currently have in place and the rules that we have in place in the province of Manitoba.

I do note that in the bill itself it calls for the prohibition of people riding on the outside of a vehicle, but I do know that there are a number of occupations, in particular, just looking in my own community and watching the waste removal companies travelling up and down the streets of my community and the folks who travel on the outside of a vehicle. So there has to be some exceptions where you would have low speed situations that folks who are doing that particular occupation would be exempt from those rules under the proposed bill that the member has brought forward here. There are a number of other occupations, I believe, firefighters are another occupation that—*[interjection]* That is exactly what I am saying, that are exempt. I know the member is listening very closely and is very interested in the comments that we are making here today. *[interjection]* It is. It is very heartening that the member is listening so intently to the comments that we have wished to put on the record here today.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of other occupations on this that have been excluded as a result of this. I just have to think forward here, perhaps a week from now in my own community, the Transcona Hi Neighbour parade will be occurring and there will be a number of residents in my community that will be riding on the backs of trailers that will be towed through the community, will be riding in open vehicles as they parade through the community. I know there are many other parades that occur in and around the province of Manitoba, particularly through the spring and summer months.

I know, Mr. Speaker, of course, we want folks to ride safely during those parades. I know I will be participating in that parade again. I encourage all members to come to Transcona on June 2 and 3 to take part in the Hi Neighbour parade and festivities that we will have ongoing. But riding on the backs of trailers and in open vehicles during parades, they occur. *[interjection]* The Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) and the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) know the effect that rules such as this would have on that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that this bill does not have some merit, because I think based on what I have heard from Manitobans in past years, Manitobans, too, are concerned and want to look very seriously at this. I think perhaps this legislation with some greater look at this bill would have some merit, that this would be a way to protect Manitobans and to encourage them to ride safely in vehicles and that we would use the appropriate passenger restraint devices in vehicles.

So I say to the member opposite who has tabled this bill, brought this bill forward, that I think in my estimation, from what I have heard from some Manitobans, they think that this has some merit. I know folks in my own community have talked to me about this, at least in part, over some years, that there is some merit for bills of this nature and that we would want to give some consideration to this. But I think, also, that we want to have an opportunity here to listen to other members of the Chamber who may have other comments that perhaps I have not considered at this point in time. I am willing to listen to those arguments that may be made here. I can see that my time is running short, and I will give other members the opportunity to add their comments.

Mr. Speaker, I think that perhaps we have some opportunity here to provide some movement with

respect to this legislation. I am willing to listen to what other members' comments are here to make sure that if there are other arguments coming forward, perhaps items I have not considered, that this will give us further opportunity to do so.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think what I have heard over my years in this job and with some of the folks of my community who have talked to me about this, there is some merit with respect to public safety. I have no problem in saying that this is something that I have pushed for over a number of years and that I would like to see something like this with respect to public safety, of course taking into consideration the fact that are some exceptions with respect to employment, as I have mentioned here and as other members of this Assembly have mentioned. So there may be an opportunity here to make sure that perhaps we can work together to make sure that something positive like this could go forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this.

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: There has been asked for a question. Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: No? All those in favour of the question, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: I see one speaker up, so the honourable Member for Rossmere.

* (10:40)

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is about public safety. It is about people riding on the outside of a vehicle or any part that is not designed to be occupied.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone a long way in public safety. I can remember the time when I started teaching in a rural school in the 1960s, the school would go to play baseball at another school, and the whole school would get in the back of a truck and we would go and play, and maybe next week, they

would come back in the back of a truck and play at our school. So we have come a long way.

I just wanted to point out if we brought in seat belts, Harry Enns, who had been in this Legislature a long time, he was against seat belts. He said that is against freedom. They were a party of freedom. I am glad to see that the Conservative Party has moved on and appreciates public safety.

We have also helmets for bikers, which is a very good move. It is a move in the right direction. It was not too many years ago a Grade 10 student that lived on our street was killed because he was in the back of a truck. So I appreciate some of the things this bill has, and it has merit in many areas.

Actually, we are working on this continuously. The minister is reviewing the act and it is on an ongoing basis so there are provisions made for responsive riding in the back of trucks to accommodate practical considerations. So quite a few things are being done, but I do think it needs a bit more work, a bit more consultation with many people. We hear the Conservative Party talk about consultation. It just needs a bit more work. We are moving a bit, maybe, too quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate many of the things, ideas, that are mentioned in this bill, and with that, I will end my comments. Thank you.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), that debate be adjourned.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Brandon East, seconded by the honourable Member for Wolseley that debate be adjourned.

Order. Is there agreement?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of adjourning debate, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to adjourning debate, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Point of Order

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): I think perhaps in deference to the Member for Brandon East, he may not have seen that there were more speakers ready to speak on this issue in the House. I certainly know the member would not be the sort of member who would want to shut off debate on an issue that might be important to Manitobans so I wonder if you could canvass the House to see if there would be leave to continue debate on the issue.

Mr. Speaker: Is there willingness of the House to continue debate on the issue? [*Agreed*]

* * *

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): This is, indeed, a very important piece of legislation and I am pleased to see that the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) are in full agreement. Out of 35, we have already got two on side. Now, we just need 33 and we are doing okay.

This is one of those pieces of legislation that probably was a long time in coming. I give, as an example to this House, I remember that, as a young boy flying in airplanes, there used to be such a thing as smoking and non-smoking sections. It was probably one of the most gratuitous things that you were ever part of because if got the last row of the non-smoking section right in front of the smoking section, it did not automatically stop the smoke. You were, de facto, in a smoking section, it was just that your seat was designated non-smoking. Now I do not think it would ever be conceivable that we would go back and have smoking, for instance, on airplanes.

A good friend of mine indicated to me, he said he can remember going into Safeway and looking for steak for a barbeque and people were smoking, leaning over the meat counter and ashes falling on the food. Again, something that we would find completely and totally unacceptable. In fact, even this Chamber, we had this discussion the other day that in this Chamber, they used to allow smoking. They used to allow cigar smoke. I think pipe and cigarette smoke—

An Honourable Member: And cigar.

An Honourable Member: And spittoons.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, they had the full gamut from what I understand, and some of my colleagues seem to remember those days. I do not anymore. I was not

there. Again, I do not think we would consider going back to those times.

The other example that I would use is seat belts. I just cannot believe that we had a time when individuals would drive around and not have a seat belt on. In fact, I can remember there were six of us in our family, and certainly not enough seat belts, and that is the way it was. Nobody was belted in. If there was a car accident, everybody flew around in the vehicle, and that is why in those days you had such heavy casualties. I do not think anybody is arguing to go back, whether it be child seats, Mr. Speaker, which are helping to bring down infant mortality rates certainly when it comes to car accidents.

There are a lot of examples, whether it be helmets for bicycles. The other day my youngest wanted to tear off for the driveway and did not have a helmet on. I said to her, no helmet, no riding the bicycle, and if I ever catch you doing that again, the bicycle gets hung up for a week in the garage, no riding the bicycle. That is the way it goes because we know that a bicycle accident can give serious head, serious spinal injury, and we want to protect our young people.

So we have before us Bill 208, which is, again, a discussion of another issue, and that has to do with riding in the back of a pickup truck. Now, having grown up on a farm, I will say that I did have the opportunity to ride often in the back of a pickup truck, certainly driving around the farm. My colleague from Transcona probably would have been well served to actually have read the legislation before he spoke to it because there are quite a few exemptions in the legislation and would have allowed, and still does allow, a pickup truck to drive around on the farmyard, and there are exemptions there.

What does, however, concern this side of the House is the fact that there was an accident, I believe outside of The Pas, where 16 people were involved. I do not know if all 16 were in the back of the pickup truck on a highway where basically you can do 100 kilometres, 103, 104 kilometres an hour. If the vehicle even swerves to avoid a moose on the road or a deer on the road chances are individuals will be falling off the back of the pickup truck.

I believe what this bill speaks to is reason. What is reasonable in this situation? Certainly that incident I think brought how unreasonable things have gotten. I think we are at a point in time now where we

recognize that driving from one farmyard to another farmyard is not the issue or the example the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) raised, the garbage truck with the guys hanging on the back. I do not think it deals with those issues.

It really does deal with the situation where you have 16 people involved in a pickup truck. It does allow law enforcement to pull over a vehicle like that and say, this is just not going to happen, it is just not good, it is a catastrophe waiting to happen. I saw the other day, I was driving, I believe it was on the Perimeter Highway, the north Perimeter, and there were three or four boys in the back of a pickup truck. I was doing exactly the speed limit, 100 kilometres an hour. This truck passed by me, and these kids on the back of the truck, if something would have happened to the vehicle, there is no way those children would have survived an accident like that.

* (10:50)

So, again, it is one of those issues where its time has come, and I think we have seen legislation come in certainly in the last 15, 16 years where we have dealt with these kinds of things. We have heard the argument that this is an attack on personal liberties, or it is Big Brother, or whatever. Actually, I disagree with that. I think it is protecting us. It is a safety issue. We have heard discussions even from the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the NDP party talking about raising speed limits on twinned highways, something I have been advocating for years. If that is in fact the case, then I think we have to look at everybody in the vehicle having to have a seat belt, and those in the back of pickup trucks certainly would not be afforded that opportunity. Also, the difference between a pickup truck loaded full of people and even, say, a jeep, the jeep still does have a roll bar. So that means that if the vehicle were to get off the road the individuals are still protected from a roll bar which you do not have in the back of a pickup truck.

So I think the legislation would serve the province well. I am a little concerned that the NDP caucus, the NDP party is more interested in talking this issue out and not allowing it to come to a vote, which we wanted. In fact, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) wanted to shut down debate. I think that is unfortunate because this is something that should proceed to a vote. I will allow others to speak to it, but let us move on with it. I believe its time has come to endorse Bill 208, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I too wanted to talk a little bit about Bill 208. I think that it is a bill that deserves the attention of this House to the degree in which it would be nice to see it ultimately passed to committee.

In listening to some of the other speakers, what I had noted was that there were a lot of good ideas and questions posed in regard to the bill. If by chance it was allowed to go to the committee stage, Mr. Speaker, some of those issues, for example that the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) made reference to, could be talked about, could be addressed. I suspect that if there were some shortcomings in the bill they would be able to be dealt with in a co-operative fashion, and then ultimately, I would argue, pass through the committee stage. I suspect that it would pass through committee stage, even possibly somewhat amended, because in principle it is a good piece of legislation.

That is why I thought maybe it would be appropriate to say a few words. Initially, I was not inclined to speak on the bill because at one point it looked as if it might actually pass second reading. If I felt that I was going to hold it up by speaking, Mr. Speaker, I would not have. But given that it has already been adjourned, we know that it is not going to be passing today. So that does afford me the opportunity to talk about this bill because as other speakers prior to me talked about other issues regarding safety, they gave examples. You know, the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) talked about the grain truck. Others talked about half-ton trucks and how youth would just kind of like pile into these trucks. Well, I suspect that if you went around the Chamber you would find that all MLAs would be able to relay some sort of a story as to what their experience has been. Like everyone else, I too have had a number of stories in regard to half-tons.

It is something that has changed. You know, society has moved towards the safety of our citizenry by leaps and bounds in the last 20, 25 years compared to the previous number of years, Mr. Speaker. I think that is a good thing. We have benefited by that tremendously in many different ways, one could ultimately argue, in terms of the lifestyle of many that have been saved because of proactive legislation.

One could use examples of that by looking at the seat-belt legislation. Had it not been for seat-belt legislation, today we would have more people in our health care institutions and their lifestyle would have

been dramatically decreased. They would not have the same sort of lifestyle that they have today had this Legislature not passed legislation years ago making it mandatory to wear seat belts. So this is something that has really made a difference. Plus the cost factor, Mr. Speaker, you know, people that get into vehicle accidents where an individual is thrown or they are not wearing a seat belt, quite often it ends up costing the taxpayer that much more because of all the care and attention that is required.

So whether it is the individual, whether it is the taxpayer or it is the caring parent or sibling, Mr. Speaker, someone has died as a result. That is the way in which I look at this particular bill, is that this particular bill can save lives, and more often than not, the type of lives that we are talking about are the lives of our children.

I know the Leader of the Liberal Party also wanted to speak on this bill, Mr. Speaker, so I am going to stop at that, so he would also be afforded the opportunity to say a few words. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to just comment about a particular section of this bill and then make some other broader comments. First, I want to talk about the section of the bill which deals with parades, which clearly is important. It may be much more important in Transcona if this OlyWest situation keeps getting hotter and hotter. There might be parades every week, who knows? So it would be important to have the legislation in place and operating, providing safety.

But what I think is important is that there would be a central site that people could go to who want to participate in parades and that they could make sure that this is an appropriately licensed parade. The member knows as well as I do that in a lot of rural communities people show up at the last minute to participate in parades, and it would be important that there be a central site which says that this is a licensed parade and that if you want to participate, these are the rules that govern that. Otherwise, you are going to have people showing up, presuming that it is covered under this exemption but without things being clearly specified or clear.

If you have that, then you would at least have somewhere where people could go on a provincial site to know whether this has been appropriately licensed and whether they have to take any particular measures in preparing for the parade, whether there are any particular guidelines in place or whether

people can do whatever they want, which essentially is the circumstance at the moment at the parade site.

So I think that there is an opportunity here to put in place good legislation, which we in the Liberal Party certainly support, but to do it in a way that you have a place where people can go very quickly and find out that that parade or activity is exempted or is not exempted and exactly what the rules are. Otherwise, you have the potential for some confusion, misunderstanding, people thinking that they are covered by the exemption who may not be, et cetera.

I can tell you that I was recently involved in a parade where partway through the parade a police car showed up and said this is not a legal parade. Well, in fact, it was a licensed parade. So even from the perspective of the police, it is important, if they are going to enforce this, to have somewhere where they can go and check, you know, was this appropriately licensed and what is the situation governing this.

I mean, it was a little bit of a surprise that the police were not appropriately informed, and I am not sure exactly why that happened, but it was clarified very quickly. This was a parade in Winnipeg which actually dealt—it was the first annual parade for people who had been in Child and Family Services and subject to rape and abuse. It was an important parade and the people who were involved had a very important message. This sort of thing needs to be taken very seriously.

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) will have six minutes remaining, and it will also stand in the name of the honourable Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

RESOLUTION

Res. 11—Alzheimer's Strategy

Mr. Speaker: We will now move on to resolutions, Resolution 11.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat),

WHEREAS an estimated 18,000 Manitobans have Alzheimer disease or a related dementia; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Health in January of 2000 directed Manitoba Health to develop an Alzheimer Strategy for Manitoba; and

WHEREAS from June 2000 to November 2002, consultations with over 3,000 experts, individuals, families, and caregivers resulted in the development of a consensus of issues, goals, and actions for an Alzheimer Strategy; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Health was presented with the Alzheimer Strategy in November of 2002, which included nine strategic areas with corresponding goals and actions; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Health in April of 2003 reported that the government of Manitoba had accepted the Alzheimer Strategy in principle and a commitment was made to develop a proposed plan of action to deal with the strategy recommendations; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Health in December of 2003 referred the Alzheimer Strategy to the Minister of Healthy Living; and

WHEREAS on December 15, 2003, the Minister of Healthy Living committed to developing a Stakeholders Advisory Committee and providing the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba with a written report detailing steps taken toward implementing the Alzheimer Strategy by January of 2004; and

WHEREAS the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba forwarded letters to the Minister of Healthy Living on March 17, 2004, expressing concern with the lack of progress of the Alzheimer strategy; and

WHEREAS three years have passed since the Alzheimer Strategy was presented to the minister and there has been no reporting on any progress toward the implementation of the Strategy recommendations; and

WHEREAS the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, along with the Ontario government, were able to launch their Strategy in September of 1999 and immediately begin to improve the lives of the thousands of Ontarians affected by Alzheimer disease.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Healthy Living to consider acting in the best interests of Manitobans living with Alzheimer disease; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Healthy Living to consider providing this Assembly and the public with a report on what has been accomplished and what commitment and resources the provincial government has put forward to this vital initiative.

Mr. Speaker: When reading a resolution, it should be read word by word. There has been some substitution of words as the honourable member was going. Would the honourable member be willing for the House to accept it as printed?

Mr. Reimer: Yes. I was not aware that I had misinterpreted one word or whatever.

Mr. Speaker: There are a few words, but that is okay. As printed.

WHEREAS an estimated 18,000 Manitobans have Alzheimer disease or a related dementia; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Health in January 2000 directed Manitoba Health to develop an Alzheimer Strategy for Manitoba; and

WHEREAS from June 2000 to November 2002, consultations with over 3,000 experts, individuals, families, and caregivers resulted in the development of a consensus of issues, goals, and actions for an Alzheimer Strategy; and

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on March 17, 2004, expressing concern with the lack of progress of the Alzheimer Strategy; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Healthy Living to consider providing this Assembly and the public with a report on what has been accomplished and what commitment and resources the provincial government has put forward to this vital initiative.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Southdale, seconded by the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat),

WHEREAS—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Reimer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I did maybe have a little liberty with a word or two in the speaking there previously. But I did want to put some words on the record because of the fact that this is something that has been ongoing now with this provincial government, as was mentioned in the resolution, since 2000, from the year 2000. This has just become Ping-Pong with this government, and it has gone now through four ministers. Four ministers have been approached, and each time it is referred or delayed or no action is taken.

I think the Alzheimer association of Manitoba is getting very discouraged with the fact that this government is not moving on the initiatives that they have committed to, and the optimism that they come out of the meeting saying that the government is going to act on this strategy, and nothing happens.

And, like I say, it just keeps going from minister to minister.

Manitobans deserve a comprehensive Alzheimer Strategy for the province. As was mentioned, we have over 18,000 Manitobans who are either suffering from Alzheimer's or related dementia, and the fact that there should be some sort of recognition by this government to develop a strategy for the quality of life these people deserve. The government has been stalling on it.

As was mentioned back in the early part of the discussion that the government, they even admitted there has to be a strategy. Six years ago in January of 2000, the Minister of Health directed his department to develop the strategy. So then six months later, there were over 3,000 individuals and groups consulted, including medical experts, people with knowledge in the field, people that were directly involved, families, caregivers, just to name a few. So there was a fair amount of input given back to the government in developing a strategy, and a comprehensive direction was outlined and there were nine key areas that were recognized and recommendations that came forward to the government. Since then, the government has not moved on any of these strategies, any of these recommendations or the goals that were set up through this study.

Mr. Speaker, it is becoming very, very frustrating, as mentioned earlier, that the Alzheimer association is becoming very discouraged with the fact that the government goes through the lip service, goes through the meetings, but nothing is coming out of it. And, as mentioned, it has now bounced through four different ministries and there is still no indication that there is any type of direction for a resolve on this.

In December of '03, the Minister of Health at that time was involved with the study. It was then transferred to the Minister of Healthy Living who then transferred it to the new Minister of Healthy Living. With each transfer, the importance seems to be diminishing to the fact that there is no direction given to get the report and the implementation of a strategy to go forward.

We are now into May of 2006. There is no report. There does not seem to be an indication of the report that is coming, and the people again are asking what is happening. In March of 2004, the Alzheimer association of Manitoba forwarded letters to the Minister of Healthy Living, and they said, and I

quote from the letter, "We are frustrated by your department's obvious misinformation regarding the origins of the report and we are concerned about the unnecessary duplication of the two-year research process spearheaded by the Department of Health."

It would appear that they—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, on a point of order.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): I know the member is quoting from a letter, and I wonder if he would be willing to table it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the honourable member quoting from a private, signed letter?

Mr. Reimer: The quote is a letter that was sent to the minister. He does have that letter. The minister does have the letter. So I am only quoting a letter that he received already, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a signed, personal letter?

* (11:10)

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, this was a letter that was sent by the Alzheimer association to the Minister of Health. At that time, I believe, in 2004, he may have been the Minister of Health. I cannot recall the exact dates, but he does have that letter. I am only quoting from a letter that he has received already.

Mr. Speaker: When members are quoting from a signed personal letter, they must table it, a signed personal letter.

Mr. Reimer: I will gladly pass that to the minister when I am finished.

Mr. Speaker: To table to the House.

Mr. Reimer: Oh, yes, pardon me. Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. When the honourable member has concluded his speech then he will table the signed letter.

Mr. Reimer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to continue, I know that it is a very delicate subject to the minister in trying to derail the thought about trying to get a strategy that was implemented by, so-called, to be implemented by the government that has been going on now since 2000. Now you see it is a little touchy, so I understand his apprehension of not

wanting to answer the questions or to be involved with trying to get it resolved to the Alzheimer association.

They have asked for other things like that. It is that type of little nit-picky things and arrogance that they are aware of, and this is one reason why they came to the opposition to try to spur this government to make some sort of recognition. It is only through the opposition that we can bring these forth so that the government may move on it and try to embarrass them to the fact that it has been six years, four ministers that have sat on this study who have done nothing, four ministers that go Ping-Ponging it around so that they do not have to take responsibility. In the meantime people are suffering, 18,000 people or more are suffering from dementia. But you see, Mr. Speaker, they will look for any type of little peccadillo to point to so that they do not take responsibility.

But that is not unusual for this government. They will not take responsibility for things. They will look for small loopholes to wiggle out of. Four ministers now are doing the wiggling on that side right now, Mr. Speaker, because they are not taking responsibility. If the members want me to talk about the four ministers of Health, we had the minister from Inkster, not the minister from Inkster, Kildonan, pardon me, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale), the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), and now the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson)—*[interjection]* or Seine River.

So there are the four ministers. Now each one of them has not responded to the strategy for the Alzheimer association. So they can sit there and cajole and make fun of the situation, but Mr. Speaker, it is very, very serious to the Alzheimer association of Manitoba. They want to know when will this government be acting.

So this is one reason why this resolution has been brought forth. We would hopefully think that the resolution, and they will speak to it also, and we can find out why they have not passed on the strategy to the Alzheimer association so that these people can get on with trying to make it a better, comfortable place for the people that are suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's.

So with those words, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to this resolution passing. Thank you very much.

Mr. Sale: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am still waiting for the letter. I wonder if it is available to be tabled. Perhaps before I start my remarks we could find out—

Mr. Speaker: I would suggest the honourable minister start on the debate because it has to be photocopied to make sure that we have enough copies.

Mr. Sale: Thank you very much. I first want to tell the member that this is indeed an important issue, that all aging brings with it, unfortunately, or just in the real world, the consequences of disabilities, and in regard to people with Alzheimer's, it is a particularly cruel disease. I have had members of our congregation and friends whose parents and loved ones have suffered from this disease, and it is very difficult, both for the person with the disease, but often even more so for the caregivers. In fact, most recently, my sister-in-law's family went through the loss of a parent and in that case the parent, well into his nineties, severe dementia, and extremely difficult for the caregiver who herself is in her eighties. So I think that we recognize very clearly the challenge of all aging-related dementias.

I think one of the things the member should realize is that there are many different diseases, but the strategies for responding to them may well be very similar across the family of diseases. For example, I ask members to think of cancer. Cancer is not one disease. It is at least 260 recognized cancers, but we do not have a strategy for each cancer. We have a strategy for cancer as a family of diseases. We do not have a strategy for a particular form of kidney disease. We have a strategy for managing the overall questions of kidney disease.

So Alzheimer's is one form of dementia. It is a particularly cruel form, but we have a strategy for managing long-term care needs of Manitobans. I would like to quote from and table, just so that members opposite understand that it is important to be able to follow the rules of the House and table documents when quoted, the Long Term Care Strategy a Good Start, from The Newsletter of the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba, Spring 2006. "The Long Term Care Strategy links directly to the Alzheimer Strategy in Manitoba," says Sylvia Rothney, executive director of the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba.

"The Alzheimer Strategy, developed in October 2002"—exactly what the members opposite were

talking about—"consists of nine key recommendations, one of which looks at a variety of flexible alternatives in the community for individual and family support. The necessary changes in the Long Term Care Strategy are a positive first step towards reaching some of our goals."

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to table three copies of this document.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Alzheimer Society is a member of the long-term care planning group, which Manitoba Health has had for some time. It is a partnership between Manitoba government regions and key players, including those groups who were involved in the creation of the original strategy document.

The Alzheimer association has established an education working group with representation from the various regional health authorities. This working group is developing public education strategies, caregiver education strategies, that will help support both those with Alzheimer's and those who provide care for them.

I would also like to quote from another letter which I am prepared to table on behalf of the Alzheimer Society. This is from Rebecca Kroeker, who is the Communications Manager of the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba. I have copies of this letter to table. Miss Kroeker writes among other things after an introductory paragraph that thanks us for sharing our thoughts on the Long Term Care Strategy. She says: "We appreciate your help with this article that appeared on the front page of our spring newsletter. It was printed in the Winnipeg Free Press on April 23, 2006. I have enclosed a few copies of the newsletter for you to keep or share with your staff members."

Then, she goes on to write, Mr. Speaker: "It is because of people like you, who contribute their time and effort, that we are able to educate the public and help people who are affected by Alzheimer's disease and related disorders."

The Alzheimer Society itself, Mr. Speaker, recognizes that dementia and the diseases or simply symptoms of aging do not include only Alzheimer's but a wide range of dementias. She goes on to say: "I hope this experience has been a positive one for you and that you know how much your help is appreciated." She, of course, was not referring personally to me. She was referring to our whole department and all of those who work to provide

better care for people with dementias, with the mental health issues related to aging.

I would also remind the member opposite that it is only a few weeks ago, and he did not mention this in his speech, that we announced a \$23-million development of the long-term care for persons with serious disabilities and dementias in the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, something that under the previous government was never addressed in spite of the long, long years of evidence that that centre is frankly ages behind the times, Mr. Speaker, and needed to be updated.

* (11:20)

We are doing that. We are going to provide state-of-the-art care for people with particularly pernicious forms of dementia where their behaviours are such that they cannot be managed or supported either in their own homes or in a traditional personal care home, no matter how good the quality of care is in that personal care home.

Mr. Speaker, we are the first government to put in place units to provide support for people with acquired brain injury, which can produce exactly the same behaviours, exactly the same behaviours as a person with Alzheimer's. In other words, the kinds of care and treatment that need to be provided for people with serious dementias are not very different regardless of the cause of the dementia. So there are drug issues. There are care and security and safety issues. There are supports to the caregivers' issues, which are very similar across all those dementias. Of course, there are specific drugs that are different for different dementias, but the issue of dementia and appropriate treatment is a relatively generic issue that our gerontologists and our senior caregivers are best able to both prescribe for and manage in their provision of health care for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the Alzheimer Society is a critical part of the advocacy network of Manitoba's health advocates. We have wonderful advocates in the area of lung disease, diabetes, kidney, heart, stroke, Alzheimer's, Huntington's chorea. There is a wide range of advocacy organizations that do excellent work on behalf of Manitobans, and they push governments to take appropriate action to care for Manitobans with the needs represented by that particular advocacy group.

But I will also say that we have excellent relationships with the advocacy groups. They are members, for example, of the long-term care

strategy. They are members of the chronic disease prevention strategy which we have in Manitoba that is quite unique in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

So while I can concur with many of the WHEREASes in the resolution in terms of the importance of Alzheimer's and importance of the care of persons with Alzheimer's and their caregivers, I cannot concur with the notion that we have not done what we had committed to do in 2002, Mr. Speaker. We have a long-term plan. It has been endorsed by a number of associations, including MSOS, the society of seniors, and the Alzheimer Society. We continue to work with them on the care of people with dementia. We have made available drugs like Aricept and others which may be beneficial for those with long-term dementia. So we have been active. We are supported by the association. We will continue to try and do more on behalf of those with Alzheimer's. But we provide an excellent care and we will continue to do that within our capacity as a province.

I congratulate the Alzheimer Society on their excellent advocacy, their excellent community education work. I want to say through you, Mr. Speaker, to them that we will continue to work with them to improve the supports we provide, particularly to caregivers whose energies and health are often negatively affected by the tremendous burden of caring for people, spouses, parents who have dementias, which change personality and make the person that you loved and knew barely recognizable. Nevertheless, caregivers continue to provide wonderful care. They deserve our thanks and our support.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I am honoured and pleased to see the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) bring forward a resolution on Alzheimer Strategy or lack thereof, and I am pleased to be able to speak in support of the resolution. The WHEREASes that he put forward are very strong and very important and need to be addressed by this House.

There appears to be a number of issues with the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) and also the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Oswald) on this lack of strategy for the Alzheimer Society in looking for support from this government. In 2002, there were recommendations put forward that identified nine key areas with recommendations and goals that this government could have easily moved towards, Mr. Speaker. Again, I guess it just shows that this

government has again made promises and has not been able to fulfill these promises.

Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 18,000 Manitobans who suffer from Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. It is a debilitating disease, and all of us have recognized and been affiliated with either a family member or a friend who has been impacted in a personal way by this disease. What is unfortunate and often scary for families is that the prevalence is on the rise for this disease in Manitoba, and contrary to popular belief, it is just not an old person's disease. The symptoms and outcomes do affect people in their forties and fifties.

Research has been done in the causes of Alzheimer's disease and there have been potential treatments. However there remains a lot to be done, and in the meantime, thousands of Manitobans continue to be diagnosed with this disease. Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve a comprehensive Alzheimer Strategy in their province. The Alzheimer Society has worked hard to educate, inform and assist Alzheimer's patients and their families, but they also need this government's support in fulfilling their mandate.

In 2004, the Alzheimer Society in the Westman region approached me and indicated that they were very concerned with the presentation that was done by the current Minister of Healthy Living, the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), who seemed to be out of touch and misinformed on the issues related to the ongoing strategy process and just did not seem to have a handle on where the process was at. I was very concerned and distressed that it seemed to be losing its focus from within the government. The Minister of Health spoke about his support and his understanding. Well, I have seen otherwise and I have heard otherwise from people who directly work with the society or are affected by this disease, either through having a family member of a friend afflicted.

Mr. Speaker, the government admitted a need for a strategy way back in January of 2000. That is six years ago. Six months later they did start a consultation process. They received over 3,000 individual and group supports or consultations. That included medical experts, families of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease and caregivers, just to name a few. The ideas that were generated were very good. They provided goals and strategies to help with a comprehensive Alzheimer Strategy. So the

framework was being set. There was a good base and the Alzheimer Society was very pleased at that point.

But in November 2002, the minister received the strategy points. Nine areas were identified, but nothing was done for three more years. The Minister of Health committed to the strategy then and he offered hope to Manitobans who were suffering from Alzheimer's or were family members of Alzheimer's patients. He accepted the strategy in principle and promised to develop a plan of action, a plan of action that would be implementing the strategy recommendations, but that was more than three years ago. In December 2003, the Minister of Health transferred the file to the Minister of Healthy Living. That is where the whole strategy seemed to unravel, with the former Minister of Healthy Living.

Mr. Speaker, it is now May 2006 and no report as yet. Promises were made and again promises were broken. The Premier (Mr. Doer) and his Cabinet seem to be stalling and have not amounted to any support for the society at this point. I guess I question whether this has become an issue of concern for this government.

I guess the fact that is concerning is the direct consequences for Manitobans with Alzheimer's: the situation that occurred in November of 2003 when the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority put in place a policy where Alzheimer's patients entering personal care homes were to be weaned from certain Alzheimer's drugs or medications. Mr. Speaker, patients entering personal care homes had the option of continuing to receive the drugs at their families' expense, but those patients who could not afford the drugs were simply not permitted to have it.

* (11:30)

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess that is a clear indication that there did not seem to be a clear level of support from this government. The government's track record for seniors and Manitobans with Alzheimer's has been, I would not say disgraceful, but questionable in the fact that this has happened, and families having to face the issues of having family members with Alzheimer's or dementia were put in a very heartbreaking situation of having to make decisions of whether they can afford to continue with the medication that they knew was providing a quality of life and hope for some of the families, that they could continue to communicate and share stories and history with each other.

Mr. Speaker, the tools are already there, and what the Member for Southdale is asking is for the government to take action. The work has been done. All that remains is for this government to start keeping its promise. Six years is too long to make Alzheimer's patients wait for a strategy that addresses their unique needs. I hope that the minister is listening to the 18,000 Alzheimer's patients and their families, to families who have members of their immediate family or friends who have dementia and the hopes that can be raised but have been repeatedly dashed by this government.

So I urge the government to implement, and that is key, not put out press releases or go on record as saying they do, when they do not provide supports. I want this government to implement an Alzheimer Strategy today for the benefit of all Manitobans. I applaud the efforts of the Member for Southdale in bringing forward a resolution that I think is important to the quality of life of all Manitobans. I think it definitely affects the quality of care that individuals are seeking some leadership on from this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in my earlier speech I referred to a letter and I was asked to table it. The letter that I quoted from was a letter that was sent to the Minister of Healthy Living at that time, the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau). The quote that I was referring to is in this letter here, dated March 17, 2004.

Mr. Speaker: So you are tabling it?

Mr. Reimer: I am tabling that letter now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for that. We will continue on with the debate.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on this resolution brought forward by the MLA for Southdale.

Clearly, there is a discussion about whether a general approach is needed or whether it needs to be an Alzheimer's-specific approach, an Alzheimer's-specific strategy. While it is good to be moving forward on some general approaches to long-term care, an Alzheimer's-specific approach is also clearly needed. That Alzheimer's-specific approach needs to address the elements that have been brought forward by the Alzheimer Society and needs to put in context, I would suggest, a number of particular elements.

I think that, first of all, when it comes to the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease that there should be an accepted standard. That accepted standard, I would suggest, would be that there are certain conditions that have been ruled out, particularly conditions which could be treatable. I had somebody come to me not long ago and talk about her condition, which was Lyme disease, which can cause some severe mental problems. I believe, if I remember correctly, at one point she was considered as perhaps Alzheimer's disease because of the mental deteriorations. Clearly, we should have a standard so that diseases like Lyme disease are ruled out because it is treatable and also because you then have a diagnosis which you can do something about and it would not fall directly in an Alzheimer's disease category.

I would suggest that another disease which would need to be ruled out is a disease called Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease—which again causes a severe mental condition which could be confused with Alzheimer's disease—in the context of Manitoba at the moment because BSE, if it ever got into humans, would form a variant form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. So it would be very important that we would know that this is Creutzfeldt, or the variant form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob like they have had in the United Kingdom, and that we know exactly what this is from a public health perspective.

The first part of an Alzheimer Strategy needs to be to have some standards so that we make sure that we have done what we can to rule out wrong diagnosis and to make sure that we have, as best we can—not perfect, a diagnosis. That can be said in the context of some work which suggests that there may be molecular biology or other approaches that can give us some clues about genetic or other risks which could be associated with the development of Alzheimer's disease. Those could also be important and potentially useful in terms of a diagnosis and sub-categorization of forms of Alzheimer's disease.

The second part of a strategy, I would suggest, needs to deal with quality of life issues. We have already had some discussion about the need to make sure that we are dealing optimally with hospital, personal care home, home care and possibly some alternative community care. It may be that it is a home care arrangement, but it may be that it is some alternate form of community care which is best or optimal or desirable in terms of people with Alzheimer's. There have been suggestions of the need for intermediate care.

Clearly this is an area where, to the extent that we can, we can keep people as close as possible to their loved ones and at the same time connected where they can into things that they are familiar with in their community which will help with orientation and their activities and their mental level. We will do better than to warehouse people in personal care homes, Riverview hospital, whatever other setting, where people are disconnected from their surroundings which they are familiar with and disconnected with their family members.

There has been some progress, but clearly there are some additional steps that have to be taken before we are really at the level where we should be, and the government can duly be criticized for moving slowly on this and needing to do more.

Part of the quality of life deals with the issue of drug therapy, and there are some drugs which are coming along which look like they maybe have some activity. We need to have, on an ongoing basis, understanding, not only of what works in terms of using drugs to treat Alzheimer's disease, but when we are dealing with seniors' health issues, one of the real problems that we have today is seniors being put on drugs that they do not necessarily need to be on.

Those drugs that they are put on can have a significant, sometimes small, sometimes large, impact on their mental capacity, so we need to be able to make sure that when we have a senior on medication, there actually is an active approach to what should not be used. If you have somebody who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, they should be looked at in terms of the medications that they are on to see if there are drugs that they should be taken off, so that their mental faculties are not further dulled as a result of the medication, so that we are not actually causing problems.

The third area which I would suggest is pretty important is actually a look on an ongoing basis and ensuring that there is some activity in Manitoba in terms of research and development.

I would suggest, in terms of treatment areas, new drugs and treatments. This is important that we are looking in a Manitoba context at whether these agents work or do not work and that we have people involved in Manitoba who are part of the global research community in terms of Alzheimer's who are connected in and can make sure that, in Manitoba, we are getting the advantage of what is happening globally.

* (11:40)

I think there is also in this context a role for ongoing research related to activity, home care, community care, et cetera; the actual use of resources and what works and what does not work. Clearly, there are a lot of things that are being tried at the moment which are suboptimal, and that we can improve on an ongoing basis, and one of the ways to improve that is to make sure that we have research that works and looks, on an action basis, comparing different approaches to make sure that we are really using the best possible kind of approaches in terms of home care, community care, et cetera.

A further area, which I would suggest is an important element of the strategy, is the area of prevention. There is increasing evidence that there may be areas where you can act which can delay or prevent the development of Alzheimer's disease. There is work which suggests that physical activity, mental activity, can help to provide some protection, for example. I would suggest there is evidence that certain areas in nutrition have some promise and that ensuring good nutrition may also be quite useful, and that we are not dealing with individuals who are actually short of, whether it is vitamins or other essential ingredients, that these are areas which we can and should have an ongoing, active strategy, research programs.

There are areas of genetics which can help, as I have talked about in terms of diagnosis, and it may be that when you are looking at prevention or treatment, that with particular genetic areas or genetic markers that there may be specific preventative activities or specific preventative treatments that could be used. So this is a reason why you tie in medical understanding with the treatment and the prevention approaches, and why it is important to have some ongoing research and so on in this area.

The last area that I would suggest is pretty important.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Again, this is a tremendous pleasure for me to speak to this particular bill. It is an opportunity for me to pay tribute to the Alzheimer Society and the tremendous staff and the amazing, wonderful volunteers that have brought this society to the stage that it is.

I had, jeppers, it is almost going on 20 years ago that I took a job in a new pilot project at Deer Lodge Centre where my position, my job, was to support caregivers of people with Alzheimer's or Alzheimer's-related problems, and the focus was on keeping people in their homes for as long as possible. Now, I have had considerable experience working in hospitals. I was a clinical social worker for many years, and I had encountered Alzheimer's patients which were often in for a respite or in the terminal stages of their illness, so I did have some understanding, not an in-depth understanding, of Alzheimer's. But I had also worked in palliative care and I was certainly familiar with dealing with loss and grief and dealing with families, so the only new piece for me was having enough of an understanding of the Alzheimer's disease itself in order to help the caregivers at home.

The first thing I did—and it turned out to be one of the smartest things I have ever done—is I turned to the Alzheimer Society which then, you can appreciate, 20 years ago, was still pretty much of a fledgling association, and I just like to think that we kind of grew up together. But I know that they not only helped caregivers; they helped professionals, and I can attest to that. I owe them immeasurable gratitude for them helping me help others, and they continue to do that. I recognize it is not just the caregivers. It is professionals, including and sometimes especially physicians who need the education in dealing with such an incredibly, not only a cruel disease. It is a very complex one in that its stages for people that are living at home, it seems that in the early stages, it is very frustrating for the family member because the person suffering from Alzheimer's is maybe still in denial so it is really harder—it is actually harder on the person with the Alzheimer's who cannot understand why people are treating them differently. It is a multifaceted set of problems that one needs help with.

It was a learning experience for me, too, but I think people tend to think of someone with Alzheimer's, it is generally an older person. They realize how difficult it is for the caregiver, but I do not think they understand how it always impacts the whole family and the kinds of problems, again, back 20 years ago, they were predominantly older people, and when you are dealing with women of that age, their husband has Alzheimer's. Perhaps the wife had never had anything to do with finances. Some of them did not even know how to drive, and so they

are left fairly isolated and somewhat stranded and requiring help with how to deal with the finances.

For the men, of course, then we had the problem of dressing, having to cook and shop and all the little things that wives would take care of. The husbands, they are just sometimes quite stymied. I remember, actually, frequently humorous situations that would come up. Just as an example, I remember one fellow—and if he ever reads this, he will know who I am talking about; we have had many a laugh since, but one of the greatest stresses in his life that he talked to me about was trying to sew a button back on his wife's blouse. He ended up sewing the button to his pants and he was just distraught with these kinds of little things. I always say, it is not the mountain you climb, it is the grain of sand in your shoe, so let us get rid of all those little grains of sand, like how about pullovers. Pantyhose is a nightmare for most husbands until they figure out socks are much easier.

So it is those kinds of from the little, getting-along-every-day things to the actual teaching about the activities of the brain to help the caregiver understand what the disease is doing to the brain, what is likely to happen, and try and help them not take things so personally. This is not their fault, and, of course, they are constantly dealing with the grief of losing the person they know or knew. In fact, I remember one woman describing to me how she felt like she was driving along a highway and took the wrong turnoff. She does not know where she is, does not know where she is going, has no idea where this trip is going to end.

* (11:50)

That brings me into the other uniqueness of this disease, that every time the caregiver would finally learn how to cope with the new behaviours, what would happen is that the person with Alzheimer's then goes into another stage, and, oh, my goodness, all that information now has to be re-looked, and it is just a constant changing, and sometimes for the better. Sometimes as they deteriorate they become mellow, and it is less of a hassle, and it is easier to care for them. On the other hand, sometimes the behaviour becomes more aggressive, and the caregiver has to learn how to deal with that kind of aggression. So role modelling comes into play there. Role modelling is also done in the form of support groups which is one of the best and most beneficial

and I think one of the most successful things that the Alzheimer Society has done and taught me how to do.

So, like I say, they cover the grounds of every kind of possible resource, and if they did not have it they knew where to send me to get the information. It was all about sharing and working in partnership with people, the home care people who were coming in, sharing information with them, and they often had trouble with the kinds of behaviours and the frustrations of dealing with the—They are there to take care of the person with Alzheimer's, but the caregiver is having even more trouble, and that was a stressful thing for the home care workers with whom we would collaborate on how to deal with this one particular situation.

Oh, oh. My time is almost up, and I have hardly started. *[interjection]*

Yes. Okay. I guess I just want to end with, my whole point was with the changing behaviours. When the previous Minister of Health talked about the long-term strategies, that is exactly the kind of thing, the global thing, that is needed because it never ends when you are dealing with someone with Alzheimer's, helping them deal with having to put them into an institution, and it does not end there. Once in an institution, now we have a different set of problems to deal with.

So I think our government is addressing those kinds of needs. The Alzheimer Strategy Overview Committee which meets quarterly—the last meeting was held April 7, 2006, and the next meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2006—they have also established an education working group and—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): I am pleased to put a few words on this resolution, and I am also pleased as a government that we started to move forward on this important issue.

I find it passing strange that the members opposite criticized our government for starting to work with the Alzheimer Society, seniors and different caregivers on a strategy because prior to 1999 it was easy to say that we had not moved

forward on a strategy because there was no strategy. There was no way of systematically supporting people with Alzheimer's, supporting them in the community and moving forward on this important issue. So I was pleased that our government, the NDP government, moved forward in January 2000 to develop an Alzheimer Strategy for Manitoba, and what has happened from June 2000 to November 2002 was there were consultations. Three thousand people, experts, families were involved, developed a report and presented it to government.

The members opposite may say, well, nothing has happened, and I hear the chirping from before, but the previous Conservative minister of seniors did not do anything in this regard, had no strategy. We have developed a strategy, and since that time we have also worked with our RHAs to see how they could develop programs in the community to support seniors.

So what happened was in 2002 the report was made. In 2003 what we did was we accepted the Alzheimer Strategy in principle and moved it forward, and by that meaning, moving it forward, was that there were nine key recommendations. One looked at the variety of flexible alternatives in the community for individual and family support. What we did was we talked to the regional health authorities and found out the wide range of supports that were available and we started to share best practice, et cetera.

We also looked at the long-term care strategy, developing a strategy with RHAs to see how they could meet the needs of individuals and families, and support. I think that was very, very important because what you are doing is you are taking the strategy that was given by those people involved in Alzheimer's work and support and family. They came up with ideas. They presented nine recommendations to government. Government looked at it and then they started to see what was happening in the community. They may not say it, but there is good work happening every day with individuals and caregivers who are helping people with Alzheimer's and their families.

So the different RHAs made a report and what we did was we moved that forward where we started to share best practices between RHAs and what was going on there. We started with that. We got a report and the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Oswald) met with the Alzheimer Society, and in a follow-up

letter the president of the board stated how happy they are with the establishment of the Alzheimer Strategy Overview Committee and that they look forward to the work that will be accomplished over the following year.

So what is happening is that, again, over a two-year period we developed a strategy. I remind the entire Chamber, Mr. Speaker, that there was no strategy when the member opposite was the Minister responsible for Seniors.

There is now a strategy and what we have done is we have developed a strategy. We worked with the RHAs to decide who was providing the strategy to the families, and then what we have done is we have decided how we would move forward with that, what was going on in the RHAs, sharing best practice and how to implement the changes.

So we have worked forward in partnership with the RHAs, with the families, and so now we are moving forward still again, and we are trying to implement recommendations from the strategy and move forward.

Now, it is important to know that all 11 regional health authorities in Manitoba—these are the groups that are responsible for the delivery of services and programs—looked at it, reviewed it, responded to Manitoba Health's request for information regarding the report in the context of regional demographics and the health issues and practices and resources and potential partnerships and planning. So they came up with a comprehensive report saying this is the strategy that was provided by the Alzheimer Society. Here is how we are addressing that in our regions. The different groups got together, worked to make sure that they were trying to do best practices.

The other thing that we are doing is that the deputy minister's regional support people, the Alzheimer Society, the executive director, of course, and others decided to work on where we missed. So let us say of the nine recommendations, an RHA might be addressing seven. They were talking about how they would accommodate the other two or deciding whether they actually had that issue in their regions, because there was a huge difference between, say, NOR-MAN which did not have a huge number of people suffering from Alzheimer's and the level of support that was needed for families and people suffering from Alzheimer's in Winnipeg or Brandon. So there was discussion on what supports

they had, who was going to deliver the supports and how the whole issue would roll out.

The Alzheimer Strategy Overview Committee established in January 2005 will continue to facilitate the sharing of information across regional health authorities, identify opportunities which increases collaboration, partnerships and efforts for the benefit

of people affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have four minutes remaining.

The time being twelve noon, we will recess, and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 25, 2006

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