

**Second Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature**  
**of the**  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
**and**  
**PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 10, 2008

**The House met at 10 a.m.**

*PRAYER*

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you canvass the House, there'd be leave to go directly to Bill 224, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Booster Seats).

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement for the House to go directly to Bill 224? [*Agreed*]

**SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 224—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act  
(Booster Seats)**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) that Bill 224, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Booster Seats); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sièges d'appoint), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, this bill would provide for the mandatory use of booster seats for toddlers. As things are in this province at the moment, we require infant seats for infants. We require seat belts for adults but we don't require, as do most other provinces require, booster seats for toddlers.

It's become very clear that adult seat belts don't always protect toddlers because of their size, age and shape. Indeed, it's now well recognized that there is a condition which people have called seat-belt syndrome in which toddlers are put in adult seat belts, but because they're not appropriate for toddlers, the toddlers can be injured and, in a number of cases, severely so.

There is a study by Dr. Santschi, Dr. Miriam Santschi, a population surveillance study on the spectrum of seat-belt syndrome in Canada. This was published in the *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, and what it shows is that toddlers who are too old for infant seats and not old enough for

regular seat belts, when they are put in regular seat belts are subject to this seat-belt syndrome. The problem is that the seat belts of adults, when used for toddlers, can cause severe injury if there is an accident. These severe injuries can lead to paralysis and lifelong, lifelong disability, and this is all because adult seat belts were used instead of booster seats.

I've talked to a number of people in Manitoba and they reply, as well, I thought booster seats were mandatory. The reality is, it is mandatory in a number of provinces. It's mandatory in Ontario; it's mandatory in Nova Scotia; it's mandatory in British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. This covers the majority of Canadian children and one has to ask, as I did yesterday with bicycle helmets, you know, why does this government, why does the government of the NDP in Manitoba consider children in this province less worthy of protection than do politicians in other provinces consider their children to be very strongly worthy of protection.

The two-year study, which I quoted, showed that the death rate—now, let's go back. Between 1997 and 2001, the death rate due to motor vehicle collisions dropped by 52 percent among children younger than five years of age, and by 25 percent among children 10 to 14 years of age but didn't drop at all for children five to nine years of age, those in the booster seat age group. This is the age group that we want to pay attention to, today, with this legislation.

The two-year pediatric surveillance program study, which I referred to earlier, which talked about the seat-belt or lap-belt syndrome, identified that 12 of the 28 confirmed cases occurred in children younger than eight years of age and only one of those children was restrained in a booster seat but that was wearing only a lap belt inappropriately put on. The spinal fractures, permanent spinal cord lesions, occurred in these children; devastating injuries which are preventable with the use of booster seats.

We should not be hesitating to protect the children of Manitoba who are toddlers and in the age which is appropriate for booster seats. We have

looked at the age and weight and height appropriateness of booster seats, and we've modelled this bill on legislation in other provinces so that it would cover toddlers who are appropriate to be in booster seats. By being consistent with other provinces, that makes it easier to administer and to use booster seats which are readily available and being used in other provinces.

\*(10:10)

There is evidence, Mr. Speaker, of a positive, effective legislation in improving both the knowledge of and the use of booster seats. This has been shown in 16 states in the United States where booster seat use increased among children six and seven years of age by almost fourfold. These studies in the United States are similar to studies which have emphasized the importance of legislation in increasing the use of bicycle helmets, because the legislation brings not only increased awareness but much greater compliance.

The numbers and the proportions here have been dramatic. It shows why it is so important to have this legislation. We should not be waiting any longer because, the longer that we wait, the more we risk children in our province, for whom we are responsible, being injured and having spinal cord paralysis.

Bill 224, which deals with booster seats, is one of several bills that we have brought forward in this Legislature, covering mandatory bicycle helmets, ending smoking in cars with children, having labels on alcoholic beverages warning of the problem with FASD. What we're seeing is a consistent pattern that, where there are opportunities to make a difference, this government has been missing the mark.

So, Mr. Speaker, time and time again in this session, we have brought forward legislation—this is one example of that legislation—legislation which is badly needed in this province, legislation which is needed to protect the children who are toddlers, who are not being appropriately restrained by regular adult seat belts and who need booster seats in order to prevent spinal cord injuries, to prevent stomach and intestinal injuries and solid-organ injuries.

These patients or children who have suffered these injuries, the number of these who have been paraplegic, which is clearly preventable, speaks loudly to the importance of passing this booster seat legislation.

I hope that all MLAs will join in being able to move this forward to committee today, so that it can be dealt with along with other bills in this Legislature, so that we can implement it as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living):** It gives me great pleasure to stand up and to speak about our record as far as injury prevention in the province of Manitoba.

We've worked with many partners as we come together to deal with a number of issues around injury prevention, including drownings, bicycle injuries, farm injuries and workplace injuries.

We've seen progress; with all of those initiatives, what we've done is we have encouraged people to use best practices, to use bicycle helmets, to prepare for farm safety by providing them with grants to support the development of play structures within their community, or within their farmyard with fences as well.

Mr. Speaker, these are initiatives which increase public awareness, provide education and provide support for individuals to take action. We've seen progress. We really believe that, as far as providing education and awareness, it makes a difference. The government in Manitoba supports safe driving habits and fully agrees that vehicle safety is important. We've proven that time and time again. We support safe practices for driving with your child.

There are a number of partners who have worked with us to ensure that that message gets out to Manitobans. We have seen partnerships between MPI as well as firefighters and first responders, where they come together and provide that awareness about the benefits of booster seats for children in preventing injury. As well, they will assist individuals in the installation of these booster seats because that's a key, too, that they're installed properly.

We know that as the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures task force made its way through the province of Manitoba, a number of Manitobans came and spoke about the importance of youth as our future and came up with 47 recommendations. Some of those recommendations speak specifically to injury prevention. I'm very proud to say that we continue, through Healthy Living, to implement those recommendations to support Manitobans and to ensure that the risk of injury is reduced through our initiatives. All of those initiatives include robust

public awareness and education campaigns around childhood injuries, the prevention of childhood injuries.

We know that through the Healthy Schools initiative, that we've been able to develop awareness for youth and children themselves as well as for their parents. The initiatives that we've used to respond to our recommendations include the development of the provincial injury prevention strategy.

As well, Mr. Speaker, with that framework, we've been able to address a number of issues across Manitoba, specifically around child safety. We know that through our physical education and health curriculum that we're providing that information as well to youth at an early age. That's what's key is that we continue to provide that education and awareness. We often say about using the carrot approach and not the stick, ensuring that people know the information, that they have access.

We know that the prices of those booster seats can be prohibitive. We need to ensure that people have access to them. We know that the current legislation that we have is that the Manitoba law requires that children up to five years or 50 pounds must ride in a car seat. We know that that's been effective.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we continue to encourage Manitobans by giving them information so they can make decisions. They want to ensure that their children are safe. They want to provide them with that security. We will continue to work with all Manitobans and provide them with the information and the public awareness that they need to make the right decisions to protect their children. Thank you.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to put a few words on the record in regard to The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Booster Seats) legislation, Bill 224, as brought in by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and seconded by myself. I wanted to just put a few words on the record on this bill as I have moved it.

I believe this type of legislation is protective of our children and the future of Manitoba. We have to remember that our kids are the future of Manitoba. I know that many members of the opposition are dealing with disability issues across the province and champion some of those areas and this bill very much supports all children under the age of eight being in a booster seat while riding in a vehicle. This bill would make it mandatory for such to take place.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I support this kind of legislation is because I have three grandchildren who are presently just about too old for this type of legislation, but who my own children would not let me take in my car without taking the booster seat that they have with me. So, everywhere the children go, the booster seats go. I think it's only something to consider when we look after the safety of the next generation.

Now, I know that perhaps when I grew up this wasn't something that anybody considered. There was no such thing as a booster seat, I don't think, when I was being carried around in a vehicle as either a baby or up to the age of eight years old, but particularly, you know, when I was 10 or 11, we started driving machinery around the yard on the farm and so it was pretty hard to be in a booster seat. Probably that's why we needed a booster seat was to see over the steering wheel in some of those vehicles. But, Mr. Speaker, it was—mind you, my father was very strict and he never let me out of the yard until I was at least 13.

\* (10:20)

So, I don't think I'm telling any tales out of home. Most young farm people were helping on the farming operations at that time, Mr. Speaker. That was my role, hauling grain and backing it up to a grain auger and a number of those types of things. I learned a lot of things that have come in handy in my life. The point is, I never had an accident, and I think we need to make sure that all children are as fortunate.

This type of legislation is mandatory for children under 145 centimetres as brought in on this bill or under 36 kilograms. In my line of thinking, Mr. Speaker, that's if you're under four foot nine and you're under 80 pounds, you don't have to—if you're obviously over four foot nine, you don't have to be in a booster seat regardless of your age or if you're over 80 pounds you don't have to be in a booster seat. So one or the other; it's not exclusive. You could be four foot six and 81 pounds, you wouldn't have to be in a booster seat.

I know that the Manitoba Car Seat Coalition has done a lot of research. The Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has just pointed a good deal of that out in his presentation so I won't repeat it, but I know that they're a very dedicated group, having met with them myself earlier in the spring. I do know that I was very impressed with the research that they had done and the dedication of the people involved with

this volunteer organization across the province of Manitoba.

I would agree that some seat belts are not the right size. Certainly the seat belts that are in cars today for our adults can actually be a detriment to younger children. Much of the time, what happens because of the way the seat belts come across the chest and near the neck of the younger individuals, they take the darn thing and put it behind their back, so they end up with just a lap belt. That's not a very safe way to be riding in a car, and sometimes the parents driving in the situation—if there's only one parent in the vehicle, as quite often happens—they don't know that the children have replaced the seat belt behind them and are riding in an actually unsafe situation and basically an illegal situation as well, Mr. Speaker, as all persons have to have a seat belt in vehicles today. The driver is responsible for making sure that that is the case.

Mr. Speaker, I know that other provinces—that Manitoba would be catching up with this type of legislation. Ontario, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick all have this legislation mandatory at the present time.

The Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) yesterday talked in the House about having 42,000 bicycle helmets that they've made available in the province of Manitoba. I would submit that booster seats are probably as important or more important than the bicycle helmets in regards to our children's future in Manitoba.

I know that, particularly the Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), I know has been concerned about the issue that the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) just spoke about and that's spinal cord injuries and lesions and that sort of thing, Mr. Speaker. This would help reduce the number of injuries, as was pointed out earlier, that would take place in accidents involving smaller children ages five to nine because, of course, this does not replace the fact that infants are still in an infant seat and only graduate to a booster seat until they're either four foot nine or over 80 pounds.

Mr. Speaker, I was shocked and amazed to know that my 10-year-old grandson, when I took him skiing this winter—I had to measure him up for a pair of ski boots and poles and he didn't know how tall he was for sure. I knew he was getting closer to my shoulders all the time. I put him up against the measuring stick that they had in the chalet and found,

to my amazement, that at 10 years old, he was five feet high.

I hadn't got that tall until I was 13, even though I was six feet by the time I was 16. I think he's had his growth spurt earlier than I did in life. It was amazing to me to find out at Christmastime that he was actually five feet tall. Of course, he's probably 100 pounds as well. So he's well outside the limits of this type of legislation but for many years, as I said, they wouldn't let me in there without carrying him in the car. The booster seat went everywhere that the children did, for my wife and I, and even my brother, to be able to take them in their vehicles.

So then I looked at the second young guy and found out that he was four foot six so he would qualify under the height restriction on this legislation at nine years old. In fact, I guess he won't be—he is nine now, he won't be 10 until this fall, but he also would not have to be in a booster seat anymore because he's about 85 pounds himself.

So I think that the only one left in my family so far that would qualify is my granddaughter who is seven, coming eight, I believe, tomorrow and, Mr. Speaker, she is one of the petite ones in the family. She's definitely under 80 pounds and under four foot nine so she's still going to have to ride in this for another year at least. Well, actually no, she would probably—eight years of age, yes, she'd still have to wear it as long as she's eight, which she'll be tomorrow.

The one that I'm most concerned about, of course, would be my daughter's future child that isn't born yet but will be soon, and I believe that we need to look at this type of safety for our children. We should only, I think, find it common sense that we need to wear seat belts in our vehicles. We see the results of accidents across the province. We always hear of the person that was injured the worst or killed in an accident. I had a good friend last fall who was killed at an intersection, hit by a vehicle, thrown out of it and killed instantly. If he'd have had a seat belt on—certainly as his wife did, she survived—and it's not known whether he did or not or whether the seat belt was faulty. That will never be proven, but it's certainly a case where it's been well documented that wearing seat belts saves lives and more serious injury.

I think that this is a situation where, if you're going to be using the straps that are already in the manufactured vehicles—and some of them don't move up and down on the posts beside the driver and the

passengers the same as some vehicles; they're not all manufactured the same—a booster seat would help get the strap in the proper location, prevent children from putting the strap behind their backs and make it a much more safe opportunity for the future of our children in Manitoba.

So with that. Mr. Speaker, I'm privileged to put those few words on the record. Thank you.

**Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to consider myself something of an expert in the area of car seats. In the last seven and a half years I have bought—let me see I'll do the math here—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine car seats in the last few years, and although I'm not a professional car seat designer, I have looked for many different styles and tested out a few and, as I said, have owned nine of them.

The reason why is because, of course, I needed a certain car seat to bring three triplets home from the hospital. They had the baby car seat which faces the back, and at about nine or 10 months they had started to outgrow it. We were in Québec at the time and at that point in Québec, and I'm not sure what their laws are now, you were allowed to put the child facing front by the time they were about nine months old. Now here in Manitoba they are facing back until about a year old, but standards are different across the country, so my daughters moved into a forward-facing car seat when they were about nine or 10 months old which worked out good for us.

When we moved back home to Manitoba my sister-in-law was our caregiver in our home, and sometimes had to drive the girls to various places, including when they started preschool. So we had to buy three more car seats for her car, which was actually quite handy for when grandparents babysat or when friends had to take the girls somewhere there were always enough car seats to lend around. We just had to make sure we had friends and family with vehicles that had three shoulder belts in the back seat and enough room to put three car seats because that is not an easy thing to do I can assure you. You have to shop carefully for a new vehicle when you've got three car seats in the back.

I think that it's important to make sure that children are in car seats. I certainly support that. My children were in car seats just until about six months ago, but I think we have to be very careful in wording any legislation that addresses car seats. The bill that we're talking about, Bill 224, ensures that children who are under eight must be in a car seat. I

had pictured my children being in their car seat until eight years old. That's most of the education you see. My pediatrician had recommended they stay in their car seat until they were eight. Much of the literature that you see will recommend it. MPI recommends and educates parents that keeping your children in a car set until they're eight years old is a benefit to most children, but unfortunately, by just summing it up as an age, well, we all know, as the member opposite said, children grow at different rates.

My daughters have a friend who is the same age as them, just turning eight. She's about a foot taller than them, so she outgrew a car seat by the time she was five years old. I'm not sure that her weight was there, but her height was pretty tall. As for my daughters, they're just turning eight this July, and I did think that they would be in car seats until then, but around Christmas we started to notice that they didn't fit the car seat anymore. They are nowhere close to 80 pounds, which is what concerns me about some of the height and weight restrictions in here. My daughters are going on eight years old and are only about 50 pounds. At the rate they're going, they'll be 13 before they make 80 pounds, and it will be very difficult to get those 13-year-olds into car seats, I can tell you that.

\* (10:30)

At around Christmastime we noticed that they outgrew their car seats in a way that is actually really dangerous, and I think that's an important thing that people need to realize, that a car seat is absolutely the safest thing for a small child, but at a certain age and a certain height the car seat becomes a liability. My daughters had the kind of car seat that has a bottom with the back to it and the strap that goes over, and you can change the place where the strap goes over the chest in terms of the shoulder height. As they grow, the shoulder height changes; you can make that strap hit at a different point.

But the part that was concerning is by around Christmas this year their heads were growing above the back of that car seat's back, which meant that, in the case of an accident, their heads would've actually snapped back and not had any protection there. They wouldn't have had anything on their heads, and the next place to protect them was the car seat itself, as in the seat that comes in the car, which was a couple of inches back by the way it was. So we made the decision that the car seats that we had were probably more unsafe than going with their seat belts. So it was an exciting day for all of us in the family when

they got to move out of car seats. I can tell you they were awfully proud of themselves that they were big enough to not need a car seat and a lot of relief on my husband's and my part, because after seven years of loading everyone in the car and doing up the car seats and undoing the car seats, it just sped up the whole process in the morning so that we're quite thankful for that.

So, although I think that car seats are an incredibly important part of child safety, I think we have to look at more specifics of how to keep it safe. There are different types of car seats as well, as you may be familiar. There is the booster seat, which is basically the same kind of seat that you see in a restaurant. It just makes them a little bit higher, but the child's back is still sitting against the actual car-installed seat. Then there is the booster seat, the type of car seat that I had for my children which has a back on it. There are some that have a very, very high back and some that have an average back, which is I guess the one that we bought. Looking back now, I probably would've bought the higher-backed seat had I known they were going to outgrow it so quickly. But this is the sort of thing that we've got to think about before we put something into legislation.

In buying my third set of car seats, of course price started to become something I was considering. Car seats range from \$30 to \$200, and it's really hard when you're in the store to figure out which is the best one for me. The fact that they're all in the store makes a parent assume that they're all equally as safe, but from some of the reports that I've heard about, and this goes back to being a consumer reporter and I did some stories on different safety things, and in researching booster seats for a particular story, some of the sources that I went to didn't recommend the booster seat type, the type that are like the dining room chair because the child is sitting up high enough for the lap belt to reach them well and it actually gets them high enough that the shoulder belt is in a good placement. But since they're not back far enough against the actual car's seat, they're not in tight enough and, unfortunately, in the case of an accident, particularly a highway accident at high speeds, in some cases children have been known to be launched from those.

So, once again, which is safer? Well, in an accident of that speed, sure it's not safe to have a short child with a strap going across their neck. We know that's not safe. But is that booster seat, which are definitely the cheapest ones, those are the

\$30 price range ones, what is that going to be like in a child who may be like mine, kind of skinny and long right now and definitely don't have the thickness to push that—that strap won't push them back against the car's seat itself, and in that case that seat becomes a liability.

As I told you, the seat that I had was a seat with a back, and a good quality one, we spent probably more than \$100 on each of those seats and were confident that it was a good seat. But who was to know that our children were going to grow a little taller than the seat's expected life span, and this is again another thing we have to look at before we talk about legislating: exactly how old, how tall or how heavy. Also, the problem is that when children reach eight years old, they may be nowhere close to 80 pounds or 145 centimetres in height, and certainly you've noticed my daughters in their class—

**An Honourable Member:** I was.

**Ms. Selby:** No doubt that the Minister of Education was of height and weight for booster seats by the time he was two or three, but I've noticed that in my daughter's school classes and in their dance classes, there's such a variety of size and weight that some of the children that are eight years old or turning eight years old going into the next school year are much shorter than my daughters and certainly even lighter than them, and do we say that they outgrow a car seat? That's a difficult thing.

We also have to talk about, if a bill goes through, what do you do with children who have been out of a car seat? As I said, I certainly had intended to keep them in until they were eight years, but a lot of people only tend to keep them in until they're five. Some of those kids have been out of a car seat for a year or so. I know that it's important to make sure our children are safe, but it's a tough fight to get a wiggly five-year-old into a car seat as well.

I think the most important thing we can do is to educate parents and to encourage all parents to do safe practices, whether it is in their car seats or whether it is on their bicycle. We want the best for our children. We want all our children to be safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** I just wanted to—sorry, I was distracted. I was actually e-mailing someone regarding this issue. It was a debate around converting weights, as we've seen them noted here for the same thing. I'm sorry, I'm not a metric speaker myself.

Again, I am thinking of—the concerns are exactly as the Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) has mentioned. The issue around sizes and kids in different growth rates—that, again, it really comes down to parents being educated and kids having an understanding of what's in their own best interests, whether they get it or not.

I know with my own child, the eldest, it was the same kind of issue, Mr. Speaker. He's a tall, thin child and he would clearly be in a booster seat until he was about 12, based on weight, and maybe about four and a half, based on height. So the idea of putting in these kinds of restrictions, they're a nice general framework. I think that, once we start entrenching things with exact numbers and things like that, we end up, again, possibly putting some children at risk, based on the designs of the seats.

So, it comes down to being educated so that parents can make those observations, much like the Member for Southdale mentioned, where suddenly a seat is being outgrown, where a seat becomes more of a detriment, more of a liability than an asset.

Those are the kinds of things that we need to keep in mind. I think this is where we've done a great job in terms of educating people. The idea of educating people about how to use the seats is the most important thing. I know that every time we've had car seats and, again, much like the Member for Southdale, we've gone through several of them and several based on the fact of having children with such a wide age range. The seats that were available 15 years ago when my first child was an infant are very different from the ones that were available when my second child was born a decade later.

So, we've seen the progress that's been made, but also the progress in education. Every seat that I've ever purchased, it's gone straight from the store over to the local fire hall where the firefighters inspect to make sure that you've installed your seat correctly and that you're putting the child in it correctly.

We've even gone back to double-check when there's been debate over, does a strap go this way or what is this hook for? So, really, it comes down to education because, if you can safely use that chair and know how it's used, know what the optimum way of using it is, then, as a parent, you also know what's in your child's best interest.

Again, the better educated you are, the better able you are going to be to keep your children safe where an arbitrary number, an arbitrary height or

weight range could actually end up putting them at risk.

As someone who's short, I also know that seat belts, while they're a great idea, I have to get an adapter for my seat belt because the seat belts, where I sit in a car, could actually, if left in their original form, decapitate me. So, great.

The seat belt is there; it's wonderful, but it has to be used the right way. That's the whole thing; any kind of mechanical device, tool or implement is merely that. It's a tool and it can have, theoretically, great advantages but only if it's used right. Anything that can be a tool and have a positive implication can also, in a sense, be a weapon or be something dangerous, if used incorrectly.

So I think, rather than mandating people into usage, we really have to educate people about usage because the more they know, the more empowered they are and the better able they are to use car seats. It would be a tragedy to have people have access and be compelled to use car seats, if we weren't educating them properly, and have someone put their child at risk because they were using a car seat, but weren't using it appropriately.

So, really, again, it's about that idea of leading people to that decision, rather than compelling them to make it. When you think of the things that have been done through Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures, you see how this is about even educating children at a young age.

\*(10:40)

My kids understand the reason for car seats. My kids understand why they sit in them, and to be honest, if there's anybody that's diligent in my household about car seat seat belts and the like, it's my kids. The eldest one was obsessed by seat belts at an early age and car seats, so he was always the first one to comment, made sure everyone was buckled up. The keys do not go into the ignition of the car in our house unless everybody's buckled in.

The second one is all about locking the doors, and if the automatic locks don't kick in on the doors by the time we're out of the driveway, we've got a four-and-a-half-year-old sending off the doors-need-to-be-locked alarm. So that's the most important thing is getting kids on board with the idea and parents being educated. This'll be something that the long-term effects will be seen later on down the road. I'm pretty sure that when I have grandkids, they're not going to have any issues around car seats because

my two boys are so indoctrinated into safety. They won't even ride their bikes down the driveway without their helmets on, but that's another act that we'll go into, that, again, is all about educating youth.

I think really what we need to do is educate people about this issue, give them all the tools, things like knowing where the kid zone is in a car, knowing that it is that centre back seat that's the safest place, knowing where that is, knowing how to put your seat in. Thank God—*[interjection]*well, I was going to say thank God we only had one at a time. The kid zone there, I mean, I don't know if the Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) had to pick favourites or rotate it or something, but, you know, it's a tough call. But you have to make these decisions and you have to be educated about this kind of thing.

You have to make sure that parents know because having a car seat that's in there improperly can be as dangerous or more dangerous than no car seat. So, again, a good idea in theory, but we need to also look at other alternatives as well. We need to consider, you know, some cars are being designed with built-in car seats. Is that a way to go in the future? To work on larger, federal legislation that makes it mandatory to have built-in car seats in all cars. That way, we don't have the cost issue that's involved.

This is all blue skying, that kind of idea, but the point is that we need to really make sure that parents know what they're doing with car seats. They know what's in their kids' best interests. They know how to use them, because parents will ultimately make the best decisions for their kids the majority of the time. They will always know, and, again, the more educated they are, the more likely they are to make good decisions.

We need to consider how kids learn from this. Think about the idea of how one learns responsibility, Mr. Speaker. One learns responsibility by guidelines being set out, by consequences being laid out, by being educated about the larger thing. Just telling somebody to do something and compelling them to do it won't necessarily teach them anything about it. It becomes merely something that's enforced, and you're likely to get rebellion from it.

Again, having a teenager and a pre-schooler, I can tell you all about the laying down a ground rule, and if it doesn't come with any understanding of the larger situation, you're going to get rebellion just on principle. So the idea of getting kids involved in the

process, my kids have been a part of picking car seats, picking bicycle helmets, learning about it, understanding why they need to be safe. That's the other thing. Make this a family thing. Educate kids at an early age.

This is where this Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures project really comes into mind, and where we're doing these other things, you're empowering young people, because what you see now are kids that know that it's better to be strapped in. I mean, I think of back when I was a child, my God, the number of trips that we made across country where, effectively, we were projectiles. You know, Mr. Speaker, it was the stereotypical, you're in the back seat of the station wagon, or the back seat of the huge tanks that we drove back in the seventies. There was no car seat. There was no seat belt. Like I said, effectively, we were projectiles. I'm really surprised that myself and my cousins have actually made it to adulthood to have children because, when I think of a two-week drive to California and back, going at God-knows-what speed, trying to pass semi trucks and we had no seat belts on. We should be statistics.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't want my kids in that place. I thank God for having made it to this age, but we need to know that parents are educated about this rather than being compelled because education will take them farther than being compelled to do something, especially if compelling them to do something could actually lead to more dire consequences with improperly used equipment. Thank you.

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** I don't want to spend too much time on this.

**An Honourable Member:** Ten minutes.

**Mr. Altemeyer:** The 30-second—I know I'm getting encouragement from my colleagues to use the full 10-minute allotment, but the proposal is so short on substance, it's going to be really stretching the subject matter. I commend those who do manage to find 10 minutes worth of thoughts to say on this.

The gist of this bill is that it would bring in something that the vast majority of people in some of the neighbourhoods I represent could never ever implement, and I would love to know what the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), who's decided to bring this forward, would do for the families who are low income. I know this is a new concept for him. There are pockets of poverty in all parts of our province, in all of our constituencies.

Evidently, the ones in River Heights are areas that he's not familiar with, but this isn't a new set of behaviour from the Member for River Heights either. I mean if the single parent actually had a decent place to live because our affordable housing stock is so short after, as a federal MP, he savaged the social safety net, maybe someone in a low-income neighbourhood would be able to afford to go out and buy the proper security equipment and booster seats for their kids.

Maybe, if the previous government to ours hadn't savaged the social safety net again and reduced social assistance rates, refused to improve the minimum wage, and did absolutely nothing to help people transition from a life of poverty to a life of employment, you know, maybe those low-income folks would be in a position to own a vehicle and then get a booster seat.

But for the Member for River Heights to suggest that by passing a law, suddenly everything is going to be made just fine and dandy, mirrors several other similar proposals that we've seen from his caucus of two, which assumes that everyone has the money available to comply with these laws. What on earth type of punishment would he have in mind for people who wouldn't comply with his law? I mean, what, you're going to fine them? They don't have enough money in the first place.

There's also, I think, a lot of ignorance embedded in this bill. It assumes that people don't know and can't access the information on how to properly use a booster seat. We've gone down to the fire station and made sure that the seats that we've had in the back of our car for both of our kids are installed properly. Each time they've told us, yes, and each time, they've also shown us some useful tips. If the Member for River Heights feels so strongly about this issue, he could do a mail-out to his constituents telling them that there is free advice available at these locations. You just head on down, and you can get it from our hardworking firefighters, from paramedics, and from other social service agencies which our government is happy to provide funding to.

Why on earth he feels that he needs to bring in a law which some people can't comply with and which isn't necessary in the first place leads me to the obvious conclusion that he didn't have anything else to talk about today, and he just needs to do some grandstanding. I'm not going to be much of a party to that.

I think quite clearly this is an issue which our government is providing the information and providing the support to other organizations to do the same in a very good way. I absolutely encourage all parents to comply with the existing rules around safety in automobiles to make sure that those booster seats are properly attached and that they are being used in an effective manner, and the proposal that we have before us today really doesn't bring a whole lot more to the table than what's already necessary.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I'll let one of my other fine colleagues carry us through. Thank you.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to speak on Bill 224, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, and I noticed that we caught one of our members kind of off-guard, but that's because normally in the House we go back and forth from one side to the other. But right now, this side is carrying the debate because no members of the official opposition are further interested in this or want to debate this bill, which is too bad because this bill ensures that a child who is under eight years of age is to be properly secured in a booster seat while riding in a vehicle. An exception is made for children who are at least 145 centimetres in height or 36 kilograms in weight.

So this is an interesting topic and it's one of many that the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has introduced this session, and we're happy to participate in this debate even though we have some perhaps philosophical differences.

\* (10:50)

One beginning would be that the cost could be prohibitive for many families, and I represent a lot of low-income people in my constituency, people who are on social assistance, people who are working at minimum wage, people who are struggling to get by. These people are just trying to put food on the table.

In fact, it's interesting when you go door to door in a constituency like Burrows, because when you ask people if there are any issues that they'd like to discuss, they almost never have issues that they want to discuss, and sometimes there are some pretty big issues being debated in society. I think that the reason that they don't have an interest in this is that they're just trying to put food on their table. They're trying to subsist from day to day. They're trying to survive on a daily basis, and so they're not concerned about broader societal policy issues like we are.

Mind you, we get paid to specialize in that. I think that's different than constituencies where there are a lot of middle-class people, or even affluent people, who probably are more involved in policy issues than my constituents. When you have a lack of income, your main goal in life is to survive and to provide food and put clothes on your children and make sure that you take care of them the best you can with the limited resources that they have.

So there are concerns about the cost. There are three common types of booster seats sold in Canada with an average cost of \$75. So if it's two children, we're talking about \$150. If it's three, we're talking \$225. So cost is certainly a factor.

The government of Manitoba supports safe driving habits and fully agrees that vehicle safety is important. The government of Manitoba supports safe practices in all areas, especially when it comes to children. I guess I'm one of those parents who's very safety conscious. In fact, we purchased a new car last summer. We probably could have got by with something a little bit smaller than we bought, but the smaller version of this make only had two airbags. So I went one model higher in order to get six airbags because I thought that that would be a much safer vehicle to drive in. I'm not terribly concerned about that when driving around Winnipeg, although that's certainly a factor. But we do go to Watson, Saskatchewan, once or twice a year, and so, for being on the highway, we wanted a vehicle that had more safety features.

Our government has initiated several programs designed to protect children from injury and to educate the public and individuals from crashes, from bicycle injury, from drowning, from farm injury, from workplace injury. It was good to read these briefing notes because I'm going to find out how I can help people in my constituency to get free or cheap bicycle helmets. We've already provided 1,500 free helmets to families and community groups that work with low-income children, and certainly there are lots of those in Burrows, so I'm going to pursue that and find out how I can help people to get them. I'm sure there are many non-profit organizations and schools in my constituency that would be interested in acquiring them.

From time to time we find out that there are recreation facilities, but kids can't use them, and that strikes one as kind of odd. For example, if there's a skating rink on a school ground, why can't kids go out and skate? The reason is they have to have

helmets. The kids can't afford to buy helmets, and their parents can't afford to buy helmets. So before you can let them go skating, for example, at the outdoor rink at Strathcona School—this was the case a few years ago, actually, in the constituency of Point Douglas, so the principal had a drive on to get hockey helmets so that children could go pleasure skating, not just for hockey, but for pleasure skating. So it's good to know that schools are concerned about safety and that they take precautions with the children, probably for liability reasons because it's on school property and they don't want anybody being sued, including the school division or the principal or Strathcona School. But the parents don't have the money to afford that kind of equipment and so they had to have a drive to acquire it, and it's good that they were able to do that.

In 2004, the Premier (Mr. Doer) announced the creation of an all-party task force called Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures. I was very impressed to read that they made 47 recommendations in their 2007 report. Our government has pledged to implement all 47 of those recommendations. A number of them had to do with injury prevention, including making childhood injury prevention a priority in its work to develop a province-wide injury prevention strategy and related initiatives, to promote injury prevention through communities and schools through physical health and education courses and the Healthy Schools initiative. We will require schools to make sure that the appropriate safety equipment is available and on hand for all school field trips.

Mr. Speaker, we are developing a provincial injury prevention strategy and safety guidelines for physical activity in Manitoba schools and Youth Safe Manitoba which is also distributed to schools. The new physical education health curriculum contains a section dealing with safety and school board field trip policies.

The provincial Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Strategy and Lifesaving Society northern swim program and I believe that we're putting a lot of money into teaching swimming in northern communities as a result of this.

We have a Safe Play Area grant program and farm safety walkabout checklist and program. We know that there are far too many injuries on farms, on farm equipment and around equipment. One of the members opposite mentioned grain augers and certainly, there have been far too many injuries in grain augers. Part of that is that children are normally

considered part of the work force on farms, but it also means that people have to be extra careful. I worked on farms when I was in high school and I was fortunate, I didn't have any injuries, but some of my friends did. One of my friends was involved in a tractor rollover and was almost killed.

I also took part in a tractor-driving competition. The farmer that I worked for, Mr. Wellman [*phonetic*], gave my friend Keith Berg [*phonetic*] and I a lesson in how to drive a tractor pulling a wagon in an obstacle course. Then we went in the Richmond Hill Fair. Mr. Speaker, there were about 15 competitors and all of us, except two, were farm boys. We did quite well. We finished second and third. So we beat a whole bunch of kids that grew up on farms and we were quite proud of ourselves and the reason was the good instructions that Mr. Wellman gave us.

But certainly, there needs to be a lot more emphasis on safety and prevention on farms because there are far too many farm accidents. There is, fortunately, youth tractor operator training. There is a bicycle safety and helmet education and awareness, a free helmet program and a public awareness campaign. There is the helmet initiative. This initiative includes a multi-faceted approach involving media campaigns and a low-cost and free bike helmet program.

Since 2006, over 31,000 low-cost helmets were made available through the participation of 652 schools and early learning child-care centres. The total spent on bike helmets is almost \$51,000 and, as I said before, over 1,500 free helmets have been provided to families and community groups that work with low-income children.

CTV has a Ride Safe program. Canadian Tire and the Winnipeg Police and Healthy Living have partnered to air the Ride Safe campaign from May 23 to September 2, 2007. Ads were run promoting bike safety and promoting a contest featuring the Winnipeg Police and Canadian Tire. The police bicycle patrol officers identified and stopped and rewarded with Canadian Tire cash, 120 cyclists exhibiting safe riding habits.

When our children were young, we were very concerned about their bicycle riding and we insisted that they wear helmets. I suspect that some kids, when they leave the sight of their parents, they take their helmets off because, at that time, they didn't want to be seen wearing helmets because they were in the minority. I think that's changed. I think

probably most kids are wearing helmets and that's a good thing. But we need to promote it. We need to provide low-cost helmets where needed. We need to provide free helmets where parents can't afford it. We need to continue to emphasize safety.

There's one more speaker, so I'm going to sit down now and let the Minister of Education speak.

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak about many of the things that we've been doing on this side of the House with respect to education and tantamount to safe practices for all children here in the province of Manitoba.

I can echo some of the comments of my colleagues who talked about what it used to be like. When I was from a family of six, four children and mom and dad, we'd load up the car every Saturday and drive out to Arbog to visit amma and afi. For *Hansard* that's a-m-m-a and a-f-i, grandparents in Icelandic. We visited them every Saturday night. When you load up into that car without car seats, as we did back in the 1960s, you think about the safety measures that we have in place today compared to the safety measures that were in place in the 1960s and certainly, we've come a long way.

But frankly, it's education that is key to ensuring that our children are safe. I know my children are very good at educating me. They make sure Daddy has his seat belt on. They make sure that I buckled in all my—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable minister will have nine minutes remaining.

The hour being 11 a.m., we will now move on to resolutions.

\* (11:00)

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 16—Daycares—Early Childhood Family Support

**Mr. Speaker:** We will deal with the resolution Day Cares—Early Childhood Family Support.

**Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, before moving the motion, I would like to seek leave of the House to amend the resolution as follows:

THAT the third WHEREAS clause be replaced with the following:

WHEREAS since 1999 the government has doubled funding for child care and allocated funding for over 7,000 more spaces; and

WHEREAS the government has introduced a capital program for the expansion and construction of child-care facilities; and

WHEREAS in April 2008 our government announced Family Choices, which will increase funding by a further 84 percent to fund 6,500 more child-care spaces and enrol 1,300 more children in nursery programs in just five years.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave to change the clause, replacing with the following:

WHEREAS since 1999 the government has doubled funding for child care and allocated funding for over 7,000 more spaces; and

WHEREAS the government has introduced a capital program for the expansion and construction of child-care facilities; and

WHEREAS in April 2008 our government announced Family Choices, which will increase funding by a further 84 percent to fund 6,500 more child-care spaces and enrol 1,300 more children in nursery programs in just five years.

Is there leave to adopt the amendment?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, it's been agreed to. The honourable—*[interjection]*

Order. Has it been agreed to?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Speaker:** So the honourable member to move her motion as amended—*[interjection]*

Order. The honourable Member for River East.

#### Point of Order

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Thanks, Mr. Chair, on a point of order.

Do you think we could have copies of that amendment so that we have the opportunity to speak to the amendment?

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll make sure copies are made and then, as soon as they're made, we'll give them out to the members.

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**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Southdale to move her resolution as amended.

**Ms. Selby:** I move, seconded by the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that

WHEREAS Manitoba's child-care program is held as one of the best in Canada;

WHEREAS access to quality child care has a direct impact on the economic stability of many families; and

WHEREAS Since 1999 the government has doubled funding for child care and allocated funding for over 7,000 more spaces; and

WHEREAS the government has introduced a capital program for the expansion and construction of child-care facilities; and

WHEREAS in April 2008 our government announced Family Choices, which will increase funding by a further 84 percent to fund 6,500 more child-care spaces and enrol 1,300 more children in nursery programs in just five years; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has reduced child-care fees for low-income families, leaving Manitoba with the second-lowest child-care fees in the country; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has trained and supported up to 700 child-care workers, including 252 who will graduate this year, and increased child-care workers' wages by 23 percent since 1999; and

WHEREAS the provincial government committed an additional \$11 million in order to create 2,500 newly funded child-care spaces, set up a million dollar training and recruitment fund for early childhood educators and increased operating grants to allow for a 6 percent salary increase over 2008 and 2009; and

WHEREAS the provincial government will not retract the Universal Child Care Benefit from families who are receiving employment and income assistance, which will provide an estimated \$10.9 million to families in need each year; and

WHEREAS the federal government has recently admitted difficulty in fulfilling its commitment to

create 25,000 child-care spaces across Canada each year,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly support the provincial government in urging the federal government, at a minimum, to create the promised child-care spaces or to provide provinces with the necessary funding to create sufficient child-care spaces themselves.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable Member for Southdale, seconded by the honourable Member for Burrows,

WHEREAS Manitoba's child-care—dispense?

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense. The resolution will be as printed and as amended.

**Ms. Selby:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to be speaking today about a topic that is not only important to me but incredibly important to my constituents. This is a topic that I campaigned on. I promised that I would help improve access to child care and ensure that we continue with quality day care and child care and make sure that it's affordable for all families in Manitoba.

I am really proud that I was asked to work alongside the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) on Manitoba's five-year agenda, Family Choices. You've heard the word choices thrown around a lot by other levels of government, but choice is what we're really offering Manitoba families. Our program provides support for families who choose either to work or who have no choice but have to have either both parents working or single families where the head of the family must work, low-income families or those who choose to balance both having a career and having a family.

Manitoba's Family Choices child-care agenda means an increase of funding by 84 percent. It also means 6,500 more funded child-care spaces. That's a 28 percent increase. It means nursery school for 1,300 more children at a 33 percent increase. It also means the construction of up to 35 more day-care sites around the province. It's an exciting initiative, this new Family Choices day-care agenda, that along with the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), means that schools and communities that are slated to close could now be considered to have day-care spaces in them and will bring life not only to the school but also to the community, because as we know, when schools close, communities die.

What a better way to get communities involved in the school than having children getting used to going to that school from the time they begin day care. Because of course, we know that day care is not just a place to park children, it's about early education. It's about kids getting the best start. So it only makes sense that both of these departments would work together to see that our children get a good start in early education and are prepared to begin their education as well once they hit the kindergarten age.

We have got Canada's first Child Care Safety Charter legislated to protect and keep those who we consider most vulnerable safe. We know that our day cares are doing everything they can to keep children safe but we have to address new issues that perhaps hadn't been thought about in the last couple of decades as more and more children were going into day care. Of course, we look at issues of fire safety but, unfortunately, now we have to look at personal safety and issues that most of us don't want to think about when we drop our children off at day care or school in the morning. But it's good to know that in Manitoba we will be prepared for any situation and should something happen, we will be able to be rest assured that our children are in the hands of trained professionals who know how to handle any situation that comes their way.

I'm also really proud in Manitoba that our fees are regulated and predictable so that families can look at their budget and know how much they are going to be spending in day care over the year and know that it won't suddenly be subjected to huge changes in costs. That they know that they can count on how much they pay, and they also know that they will pay according to need. We have the lowest fees outside of Québec and low-income families pay as they can afford to, much less than families who can afford to spend a little bit more, but there is legislated fees for everyone in Manitoba.

It's also important that, with our early education, that our children learn to be compassionate and that our children learn about including those children with special needs. We all benefit from having special needs children integrated into the day-care program but, of course, that requires support and our government is initiating new ways to support more inclusion for children, not just with special needs but diverse cultural needs as well, which enriches all of us to have that sort of difference in the classroom from the time that you are so young that those differences won't be so obvious to children who

grow up with children with special needs or diverse cultural needs and looking at the different richness that cultures can bring to our early childhood education, whether it's Aboriginal families or francophone or new immigrants.

I see all kinds of interesting celebrations going on in the day cares in Southdale as we celebrate whatever particular holidays and customs are important to the various children within the day cares. I also think that Family Choices and the new day-care agenda addresses families who may not work the same nine-to-five hours that many day cares only cater to and we are looking at having more flexible hours, off hours. Perhaps parents' shift work or rural families need particular support during certain seasons, and maybe a little bit less support when it's off-season for rural families.

All of this, of course, can't happen with a stronger work force. That's why we're committed to making sure that not only do we recruit more people into child care and make sure there are enough spaces for all of those who are interested in this important job to be able to be trained, but to keep people as well.

\* (11:10)

That's why we're establishing a minimum-wage base, so it will be assured that everyone will be paid fairly and, most important I think to retraining people, is the creation of a pension plan that we'll see going in, in the next few years, and child-care workers who do what I think is the most important work there is will know that they will be rewarded and fairly compensated for the work that they're doing. With a pension plan, we will certainly see that they will be able to maintain that career and not have to think about other options, and again, I said that also means training spaces and recruitment.

This year alone, right here, this year we'll see funding for more than 1,500 more spaces, a 3 percent increase in wages and a low-wage adjustment so those who are making the least amount will see their wages go up. The total investment this year alone is \$7.75 million. Our Family Choices plan has been well received by parents and child-care professionals as well as media. I've heard the phone calls coming into my office and parents on the street, including day-care workers stopping me and thanking us for the work that we've done in listening to them and the needs that the child-care community has.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* says, parents are finally getting real choice in child care. Of course, the federal government claimed that their choice in child-care allowances would give parents options as well. Their choice meant \$1,200 per year, per child under the age of six. Well, we all know that \$100 a month doesn't cover the cost of day care, and it certainly—\$100 a month—is not enough for a parent to stop working if he or she needs that second income. It also doesn't provide very much for single parents who don't have the option of quitting work for \$100 a month, and it assumes that children only need child care up until the age of six.

I was a recipient of the child-care allowance for one month. I got it, my daughters were five years old, I got that one cheque for each of them, and then my daughters turned six a month after those cheques were first issued and I got a letter from the federal government saying, you're cut off, your children are six, you no longer benefit from this program. Well, guess what? My kids are still in child care, and they will be in child care until they're 12 years old. They didn't stop going to child care when they turned six, so I'm not sure why the federal government's program stopped covering them at that point. Also, we need to remember that families are taxed on that child-care allowance benefit. So, depending on how much you earn, that \$100 a month becomes a lot less and, particularly for middle-class families earning \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year, they see that cut by a large percentage. In recognizing that this \$100 a month didn't solve the problem, the federal government announced in 2006 that it would create 125,000 spaces, although they have now admitted that they're having difficulty in funding those spaces.

According to the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, leaving child care to the market doesn't work. All it does is open the doors to multinationals who care more about profit than they do about quality. We've seen here that leaving it to the market, which was the federal government's plan, hasn't worked either.

According to Toronto's Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Mr. Speaker, the number of new regulated child-care spaces in Canada has dropped by thousands since the Conservatives took power and gutted the original \$5 billion Liberal funding plan. That's what their report says is that it's actually not working by leaving it to the marketplace.

The other thing that happens is that by providing grants to start up companies that doesn't cover

operating costs for day cares, and the federal government plan does not cover operating costs for day cares. It also doesn't involve communities, and that is why we need to have a federal government to take a look at a national child-care program. Quality, affordable, child care means more children start kindergarten ready to learn. Parents are able to work and train and support our economy. It means parents who are working are skill-trained and they lower the poverty rates as they can increase how much they can earn to support their family. There's a direct connection between poverty and crime, and having quality day care advances our knowledge-based society and advances women's equality.

I hope that everyone will support us on this important, important resolution. Child care is not just about working moms. Choice is better for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose):** I'm pleased to rise and speak to this motion put forward by the Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby). It appears to me this is just another case of the government wanting to blow their horn a little bit and tell us about all the wonderful things they're doing and then blaming the feds because they can't do more.

There's fully \$300 million in transfer payments from the federal government for this government to spend as they see fit. If they want to contribute more of that to early childhood care, the money's there, it's available to them. If they want, maybe they can go back to the federal government and tell them to take some of that \$300 million and earmark it to early childhood care.

In Manitoba at the present time, we're probably meeting the early childhood care need of about 15 to 20 percent of what is actually out there. That's a pretty poor number.

I heard the Member for Southdale refer to multinationals and things like that. That certainly, probably isn't the solution by any means.

I know and heard this from a professor from Australia, that they are meeting 45 percent of their needs in that country. We're less than half of what they're accomplishing.

I presume if you put standards and good rules in places, the day care or the child care is appropriate. One of the big problems, of course, in child care, is the attrition of early childhood educators. Shortage to

start with—shortage of trained educators and then the attrition that goes on into other better-paying jobs.

I notice that there's been an increase promised of 6 percent over two years, which is 3 percent a year, which is half of what this government's spending is arising at. There was an increase in the budget this year of 6.2 percent. Possibly it would have been more appropriate to see the salary increases at least in tune with the government's increases in spending.

As of March 2008, 195 of the 595 licensed child-care centres in this province were on conditional or exemption licences; that's a full 33 percent. I think that figure probably gets worse when you go into rural Manitoba where it's even more difficult to retain or even attract the early childhood educators.

I think that the other big issue revolving around early childhood support is the lack of spaces. There's a lot of smoke and mirrors goes on around the funding of spaces. When the minister gets up and suggests that they provided 5,000 or 6,000 new spaces, then we find out that most of those spaces existed beforehand, they aren't new spaces, they're just spaces that were already there that are now funded.

The situation is getting so bad out there and we've been approached by a number of the day-care centres. We have been reading resolutions that have come from those day-care centres. It's so bad out there that it may get to the point where when your own child is born you better start registering your grandchildren for day care. There's just not the spots. People are desperately running all over the city trying to find a spot. If they have more than one child, they've got good odds of having a child in one day care in one part of the city and another day care in another part of the city.

In the rural areas, certainly the very small ones, the ones that are four children or less, are the ones that seem to fill the gap and kind of take the pressure off the system.

\* (11:20)

We've seen legislation put forward that's past the committee stage now on Bill 16, which is putting a safety plan in place for day cares. We think that's a good piece of legislation and we will support it. That being said, I would hope that the government will follow up, produce a template, something that works well for these centres at no extra cost because they don't have extra money floating around. They have a

tough enough time even just meeting their budgets, and if this legislation that's coming forward is going to cost them more or take more staff time, it will be quite a problem to some of them and quite a load for them to carry.

We've noticed that the minister—after one five-year program had lapsed for a whole year, when there was a lot of pressure put on from this side of the House—finally came forward with his second five-year plan recently, and it's quite ambitious. We will be watching closely to see if he meets all the 12-point plan that he's put forward. If they don't meet it, I'm sure there'll be a little bit more smoke and mirrors flying around to try and cover up on it.

We're seeing quite a change in the work force as time goes on. The last few years, we've seen the number of working mothers increase from 1997 to 2006 from 62 percent to 68.5 percent, which just goes on to show the need that's out there and the fact that we need a lot more spaces provided.

One of the problems with the early childhood educators is the low pay. They quite often move on to work for a short time in that position and then move on to jobs as teachers' aides, things like that, where they can get better pay and probably not quite as tough a job.

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

One of the other places where this government has failed to catch on to what's going on very quickly is the new areas of the province, Madam Deputy Speaker, where housing is growing very quickly, and as they've also forgotten about schools in those areas, they are forgetting about day-care centres in those areas.

But the very basic part of this resolution that needs to be addressed is the government has the ability and the help from the federal government to meet these needs, and it's just that hat in hand: go to the federal government, ask for more money every time we turn around. It's time that the Province used their money more wisely, stood on their feet, and provided the day-care spaces that are needed.

With those few words, I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** I am pleased to speak on this important resolution from my colleague for Southdale, and I commend her for introducing this resolution and I was very pleased to second it. I

hope that the official opposition and the third party will support this resolution. It's certainly not, in its WHEREAS or in the THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, very radical. It is only asking the federal government to create the promised child-care spaces or provide the provinces with the funding that they promised.

So, during the 2006 federal election, the Conservative federal government announced that it would create 125,000 child-care spaces across Canada. So all we're asking the Legislature to do is to endorse this resolution encouraging the federal government to do what they said they would do in the federal election. We're not criticizing the federal election. We're not saying, spend more on child care. We're saying, do what you promised to do in the election. So I don't think that's very hard, I think that's a no-brainer, as some people would say, and so we look forward to their support on this resolution.

Now, the picture is very different if you look at our record since 1999 and what happened in the 1990s. I was the critic for Family Services starting in 1993, and at that time the Minister of Family Services was Mr. Gilleshammer. But shortly after that, there was a Cabinet shuffle, and then the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) became the Minister of Family Services. I was her critic from that time until 1999.

I certainly asked many questions in question period and many questions in Estimates about their record, which was not particularly good, and tried to prod them to do better. Whenever I was travelling in rural Manitoba, when we were travelling as a caucus or on caucus retreats, my job was to visit child-care centres, and it was very educational and very interesting. In fact, sometimes it was actually a lot of fun. I remember being at a school in Morden. I'm glad the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) is here. I think it was Minnetonka School in Morden, if I've got the name right.

**An Honourable Member:** Minnewasta School.

**Mr. Martindale:** Minnewaka School.

**An Honourable Member:** Minnewasta.

**Mr. Martindale:** Minnewasta School in Morden. I stand corrected. There was a before-and-after school child-care program there. I hope it's still there. The kids were playing floor hockey, and the adults invited me to join the kids playing floor hockey. I think it was actually with a ball, but it was a lot of fun, and I have fond memories of visiting many

child-care centres in Gimli, Morden and in various communities all over Manitoba.

Of course, I met with the executive directors, and I found out about all the problems. I found out, for example, that there many provisional licences. The Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) spoke about that as a current problem and that is true.

The difference is what did the Conservative government do about it? Nothing.

What are we doing about it? Well, we've increased wages. We're sending more students to Red River College to train. We have a program for accreditation for mature students who are already working in child-care centres to give them their credentials. We're doing many, many things to make child care more attractive to hire qualified ECE IIs and IIIs so that we don't have as many provisional licences out there.

We know that the wages were stagnant or falling in the 1990s.

**An Honourable Member:** You've got tons of provisional licences.

**Mr. Martindale:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I said you had provisional licences; we have provisional licences. The difference is that we're doing something about it.

In the 1990s, there were no pensions. Child-care workers now have a pension. That's an extremely important benefit, having a pension. If you go and work at Tim Hortons or whatever kind of a coffee the member is drinking, those employees have no pension. So why would you leave a job that has wages and now increasingly, unionization, and a pension for a job with no pension? You're better off having a pension.

We've increased salaries to retain employees and to attract employees, and we're working very hard on this.

What else happened in the 1990s? Well, a previous member mentioned smoke and mirrors. Well, that was exactly what was going on under the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) because they had a budget number, but they didn't make their budget target. I think it's called lapse spending, and how did that happen?

Well, we have some details. We know how that happened. The result was that they took \$10 million out of the child-care budget. We're putting more

money in; they took money out. So there's a tremendous difference there. They took \$10 million out.

So what happened and when did this happen? Well, according to the minister's issue page from September, 1995, the budget request for a child day care for '95-96 was \$47,263,000, a decrease of \$1.6 million from the '94-95 Adjusted Vote. In '93-94, there was an underexpenditure—this is the lapse spending that I mentioned—in the child day-care budget of \$4,157,000. The underexpenditure is a result of a decline in utilization of subsidized cases in child-care facilities in '93-94, and the '94-95 annual report is expected to indicate an underexpenditure of approximately \$6.4 million. So there we have it: 4 million and 6 million, a total of 10 million.

How did that happen? Why was there less uptake? Well, it was because of government policy. What did they do? Well, in April '93, a number of changes to the child-care program took effect. Parents who received a subsidy were required to pay an additional \$1.40 a day per child toward the cost of care. So it increased from \$1 per day per child to \$2.40 per day per child for the full day care. So what happened? Some parents couldn't afford it and dropped out. What did we do? We reduced it from \$2.40 a day to a dollar a day. And the number of subsidized children was capped at 9,600.

\* (11:30)

Of course, these are all policies. These aren't news releases or government announcements, but it helped them achieve their goal of cutting or taking out \$10 million from the child-care budget.

The level of subsidy caseloads at the time was 10,000 children. Capping has occurred through attrition. Operating grants were reduced by 4 percent in day-care centres and family day-care homes. The guaranteed fee payment to private day-care centres was reduced by 4 percent. Operating grants were reduced by 50 percent in nursery schools.

The licensing of new day-care spaces was frozen for a period of time. Licensing was later allowed to proceed for those groups and individuals—listen to this—who signed an acknowledgement indicating that they understood that the provincial government will not provide grants or subsidy support to the facility. Imagine that. This is astonishing. The licensing was frozen for a period of time. Licensing was later allowed to proceed for those groups and individuals who signed an acknowledgement saying they

understood that the provincial government will not provide grants or subsidy support to the facility. So, sure, you can have a licence, but no government support. What kind of child care is that?

The length of time parents could receive subsidy while seeking employment was reduced from eight weeks twice a year to two weeks twice a year. Seeking-employment provisions for students were reduced from eight weeks once a year to two weeks once a year. So they didn't really want people to find a job. How many people are going to find a job in two weeks? So they cut from eight weeks of job search to two weeks. And what have we done? We've reversed that policy and we've increased it back up to eight weeks.

In '94 and '95, the only change to the child day-care program in '94 and '95 was a reduction in the number of allowable absent days from 65 absent days to 39 absent days for a full year of care. The revised provision reduced the child-care budget by approximately \$300,000. So they changed the absentee policy and saved \$300,000.

This was prepared by the assistant deputy minister, very revealing briefing notes or issue pages on what their policy was and how they reduced the budget by \$10 million. By contrast, since 1999, our government has doubled funding for child care and allocated funding for 7,000 more spaces. We've also added a capital fund. I believe it started at a million dollars. This was something that I advocated for when I was the legislative assistant to the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) when he was Minister of Family Services.

I'm sorry that I'm running out of time. I've only talked about history. I've only talked about what happened in the 1990s, but I'm sure that my colleagues are going to talk about all the good things that we've done. I did put a lot of information on the record about the good things that we are doing to improve the child day-care system. I'm sure that we're going to hear much, much more from my colleagues, because we've done so many good things that a person couldn't possibly list them all in 10 minutes.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm looking forward to hearing—*[interjection]* My honourable colleague from Pembina is suggesting that I have leave so I can put on the record all the good things that our government has done. But I'm sure you'll see the contrast between what happened in the 1990s and what we are doing as a government.

I'm sure that the Member for River East is going to speak and she's going to put all kinds of positive and good things on the record about her party's policy on child care, because now they're in opposition they can be on the side of the angels and promise all kinds of good things in hopes of winning the next election. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** It's always a pleasure to follow the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), especially when we've had the history lesson that we get so very often from this member. I just want to commend him and indicate to him that I felt that he was a very good critic for Family Services and that he asked a lot of very good questions. I know he's been one member that has said to me, at least when I asked questions, I got answers from you. He has said that. He has put that on the record, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do want to indicate, though, that I believe that if he had become the Minister of Family Services—and he certainly had the expertise and the experience in his role as critic for Family Services—if he had become the minister, I think that we would have seen some honesty in his answers and some integrity in the office of the Minister of Family Services. Quite frankly, we wouldn't be almost nine years into a mandate and four ministers of Family Services later because of the chaos that's been experienced in the Department of Family Services. I believe that he would have been able to manage the department in an admirable and in a way that provided integrity to the office of the Minister of Family Services.

I did listen carefully to a lot of the comments that he put on the record, and I want members opposite to know that I did indicate at the onset of Estimates this year, when we were asking some questions on Family Services and on child care, that there had been progress that had been made. It's not up to opposition just to sit back and be critical for the sake of being critical but to give support to programs that we believe have worked and have moved in the right direction.

I did put that on the record through the Estimates process, but I also did ask some questions, and I was quite concerned with the answers or the lack of answers that I got from the minister when it came to the area of child care because I've been experiencing some issues.

You know, I'm hoping that new members of the NDP caucus don't get caught up in some of the

information that's being provided to them by their colleagues without asking some very critical questions. I asked some questions in Estimates and I have yet to receive most of the information, although the minister did promise that he could get it to me within a very short period of time. I have yet, over a month later, to have all of the answers to the questions that I asked on child care.

One of them was the language and the use of language and how they play with language on the government side, and they talk about the 7,000 spaces. I can understand why the member that introduced the resolution had to go back and clarify, through an amendment, the third WHEREAS because I think it was—probably she was warned by the department that what the third WHEREAS said wasn't accurate, and so she's had to come back and correct that.

The third WHEREAS did say in the resolution that the Province of Manitoba has added over 6,000 funded child-care spaces since 1999, and, Madam Deputy Speaker, this government has a habit of going out and talking about the newly funded spaces, but are they actually new spaces within the system? I did get information from the department on last year which indicates that, indeed, they are not new spaces in the system, but the government is using spin to try to convince Manitobans that they've done this wonderful job of creating all of these new spaces when most of those spaces were in the system. They just weren't funded by government.

When I got the information, I was quite aghast to find out that, for 2007-2008, when the government says there were 720 total new spaces funded, and out of that 720 spaces, only 183 of them were new spaces. The rest, three-quarters of those spaces, were spaces that were already in the system but weren't funded in the past, and, all of a sudden, they became funded. They led Manitobans to believe that they created 720 new spaces and that 720 new children would have the opportunity to have child care provided to them when, in reality, it was only 183 new spaces.

So, if we look at the rationale, if we look at what happened in the last year of their five-year plan, only a quarter of the spaces that they said were newly funded spaces were actually new spaces that allowed for more children to be served in our child-care system. Then, Madam Deputy Speaker, if they talk about the 6,000 new, funded spaces, and only a quarter of them—if we look at the logic, based on the

last year of their five-year plan—out of those 6,000, only a quarter of those were actually new spaces.

\* (11:40)

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think we've got a government that is trying, through spin and smoke and mirrors, to tell Manitobans that they're doing a better job than what they are really doing, and I find that disgraceful.

So let's try to be truthful and open and honest with Manitobans when we're talking about child care and the reality of child care in this province. And I can understand why the resolution had to be changed, the third WHEREAS had to be changed, and the new WHEREAS says, since 1999, the government has doubled funding for child care and allocated funding for over 7,000 more spaces.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that's not 7,000 new spaces, that's funding for 7,000 spaces, and many of them that were old spaces that were already in the system. I know from experience right in my own community that there were 293 spaces that were in school-age programming that weren't licensed, were licence exempt. When I asked the question in Estimates whether they were going to be counted, the child-care office indicated that those spaces had to become licensed spaces. They could no longer be licence exempt in our schools in school-age programs.

When I asked the direct question of the minister, his answer back to me was, well, if they hadn't licensed, they would have been gone from the system, so we're counting them as new spaces. So you've got 300 spaces right there in River East Transcona School Division, school-age spaces, that the government is now going to count as new spaces. They were in the system before. There wasn't one new child that was going to be served by those spaces, but the government was counting them as new spaces because they were newly licensed spaces. They weren't licensed in the past. They were going to be licensed now, and they were going to be counted in the government's numbers.

Well, I think that's extremely misleading to people in Manitoba. Quite frankly, we can support increase and improvement in the child-care system. There's always going to be need for that kind of increased support, but we don't want smoke and mirrors, and we don't want a government who is standing up and saying that we've done a wonderful

job of creating all of these new spaces when we know that, in fact, they are not new spaces.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we've got a resolution in front of us today that doesn't lay out all the facts around where the government is at. If they were open and honest with Manitobans and put forward a resolution that spelled out the reality of the progress that's been made and admitted that they weren't trying to dupe Manitobans, have Manitobans believe that they're doing an absolutely wonderful job, that they've created all of these new spaces, when we know, when we know, as we hear from child-care facilities, as we hear from parents that are looking desperately for spaces in the system so that they can work—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The member's time has expired.

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Madam Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to this resolution brought forward by the Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby).

You know, certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker, after having gone through the committee hearings on Bill 28, The Strengthening Local Schools Act, I think we heard loud and clear from members in the community the importance of the school and the importance of the school to be considered for options that would support early childhood education, whether it be an early childhood education centre, a parent-child coalition, a family room, or whatever the case might be. When we have surplus space in buildings, this is a terrific fit to have other institutional opportunities that would find a very natural home in an early years school or middle years school or, quite frankly, even in a senior school where high school students who are considering a career as an early childhood educator might have an opportunity to take a co-op credit by attending to an early childhood education centre in their own high school.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think the community has spoken very loud and clear that we're on the right path as far as making better use of surplus schools, or surplus space in schools, I should say. That's why I was absolutely delighted to be a part of the Family Choices announcement with my colleague, the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) and delighted to announce that there will be \$22.5 million over the next five years on top of our record funding to the Public Schools Finance

Board for the purpose of converting surplus school space into early childhood education centres. We will see a lot of new spaces as a result of this initiative.

The costs of renovating school spaces compared to construction of a brand-new, stand-alone building for an early childhood education centre, depending on the circumstances of the school space that might be available, could be about two-and-a-half to one. So we can see a dramatic increase in the amount of spaces that will be available for early childhood education.

Now, not only that, our commitment, of course, with the Family Choices announcement was to have more support for training for early childhood educators, and we will see more early childhood educators because the career is becoming more and more attractive to young people because of the recent increases in salaries because of the fact that now, for the first time, they'll have access to a pension fund—to a pension plan, I should say.

We've also committed to a curriculum and working with a lot of the best practices that we see in the early childhood education centres today and working as partners to develop a curriculum that will help bridge the early child learning initiative with entry into kindergarten and earlier school.

I must say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that, as a father of three children who have all gone through an early childhood education centre—and of course my five-year-old daughter is currently enrolled in one—I must applaud the work that our early childhood educators do, day in and day out, and the learning that my children have all experienced working with these professionals, and many of them very young professionals, who do see a bright future in Manitoba as far as the early childhood education system is concerned. Every day I do buckle my five-year-old daughter into her car seat and take her to child care. She loves going to her day care, and the play and the learning environment that they've created for her is absolutely wonderful.

Our commitment has been very strong since we've been elected to government. I think many of my colleagues have spoken about our record and our record being a record in funding, the increased funding that we've provided for early childhood education, for the construction of new spaces. Certainly I know the members opposite didn't like to hear their record read into the record once again because it was rather a boring record when you

consider the funding, or lack thereof, when you consider unexpended portions of a budget on what is fundamentally a very important part of a growing economy and what is fundamentally a very important part of early learning, what is fundamentally a very important part of creating opportunities for young families and young mothers and young fathers who would like the opportunity to be engaged in the labour force but find that child care can impact their ability to do so.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

So I think it's important to note that our government has had a very strong record and continues to have a very strong plan to address early childhood education needs in our communities and, again, I must applaud the Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) for bringing this resolution forward.

I was pleased to be a part of the 12-point child-care agenda announced, as I said, by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh). An increase of 84 percent will bring more accessible, quality, and low-fee child care to more families of Manitoba. My colleagues have said we do have the best system in Canada and there's no doubt in my mind that that is the case: 6,500 more funded child-care spaces, a 28 percent increase; nursery school for 1,300 more children, a 33 percent increase; the Family Choices Building Fund, 35 more program sites; capital to prioritize converting the surplus schools, as I said, \$22.5-million increase; The Child Care Safety Charter, the first legislated comprehensive code with minimum safety standards and resources to help meet the standards.

\* (11:50)

Age-appropriate curriculum, as I mentioned: This is critical in our early development indicator initiative that we have in the Department of Education to identify any gaps in learning that children might have as they enter the education system, and to have an age-appropriate curriculum that focusses not only on early learning but also on play I think is critical to assist our children in their literacy needs, numeracy needs, interpersonal skills, and emotional and physical development.

Having a centralized on-line wait list will ensure an accurate account of families seeking spaces. I know that there is some discussion about the wait lists, and, guilty as charged, as a parent looking for child care in Winnipeg when my family and I took a temporary residence here. We were even getting

phone calls as recently as last year even though my daughter's been in a child-care space for the last 3.5 years. So guilty as charged. We didn't get our names off the wait lists and we've had a few calls. So the wait list needs to be centralized. It needs to be a little more streamlined and provide more efficient service to the parents who find themselves on a wait list looking for child-care spaces.

Having the lowest fees outside of Québec by having regulated maximum fees speaks to the affordability, the comprehensive nature of this plan, because it provides for greater inclusion. Speaking of greater inclusion, we have greater inclusion through enhanced training and mentoring for workers and specialized resources. And the stronger work force that we're talking about, too, is a 20 percent increase for pension plans, wage increases and adjustments.

Now, what I've been talking about in the first half of my speech this morning is increases, increases, increases, and significant percentage increases. Now, if you contrast that to the record of the 1990s, and I know the members opposite don't like to talk about it, but when we find ourselves in such a situation where we're working hard to catch up, working hard to pass, working hard to move forward, the contrast is quite clear, the federal government cutting \$125 million out of the child-care budget. The federal government announced that it would create 125,000 child-care spaces across Canada, but the government suggested that the Conservative plan to create those spaces might not be feasible.

Now, we know that our commitment is to early childhood education. We know our commitment is to better working conditions for workers. We know that our commitment is to social justice and the ability of people who might be hindered by their economic reality to engage in the work force or hindered by their economic reality to engage in advanced education or training opportunities, we know that a big obstacle for them might be child care.

So that's why it's important to work towards a child-care system that is inclusive, a child-care system that is accessible and a child-care system that provides equal opportunity for all Manitobans who need the provision of child care for them to advance themselves either through their training or through employment opportunities.

Again, if you're to compare what we have done as a government and what we intend to do in our tenure as government compared to the record of the

previous government, I think the key difference is increase versus decrease.

This is something that we see consistently throughout our agenda, increase in the number of teachers in schools, increase in funding in schools, increase in the number of nurses in hospitals, increase in the funding to our regional health authorities, increase in training opportunities, the number of spaces for early childhood education, increase in the number of supports and—

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member's time is up.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Liberals support much better investments in early childhood education, in improved standards and better safety for children, as the many bills that we've brought forward, booster seats, bike helmets, banning smoking in cars with kids, FASD labelling, and so on, have shown.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking for moving beyond child care to an emphasis on early childhood education, recognizing the critical role of the early years in the development of children. We clearly need early childhood education broadly available to all Manitobans. At the moment, there are still very long wait lists, and, notwithstanding the comments of the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), that there are real people on many of these wait lists. There are problems when children in their early years have to wait for early childhood education. An opportunity to help children, to help them in their development, is lost. Their time is very precious because each day, each week, each month that passes is an important month in the very early years of children.

There are, of course, many in Manitoba who are very concerned about what has happened at the federal level. It was finally after many years a good situation when, led by Ken Dryden, Anita Neville, Paul Martin and the federal Liberals, a national program for early childhood education was brought in, in Canada. It was very sad when this program in late 2005 was killed by the federal New Democrats and then buried by the Conservatives. We agree that there needs to be a continuing effort to push the federal government to come back and be fully committed with major support for early childhood education.

We are pleased that the provincial NDP has started to move a little bit and pay a little more attention in this area. Last year, in February 2007, I remember being at the Legislature when there was a

major rally here in very cold weather with many parents and early childhood educators who came from St. Vital and various other areas of Winnipeg, in particular people like Don Woodstock who was involved in organizing this rally, emphasizing the need to pay much better attention to early childhood education in Manitoba.

It has improved slightly, but we are still faced with very long waiting lists, and we are still faced with a federal government under the Conservatives which has not done sufficient in this area, not nearly sufficient. So those are things which are important to us. We need a much better program and better investments provincially and federally to make sure that in the early years our children have the opportunities for early childhood education and for the optimum development that they should have.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, I realize I only have a couple of minutes to put comments on the record about the day-care situation, but I find the NDP resolution quite off the mark in terms of what I'm hearing from the community of day-care professionals, as well as from parents in the community. I think that what we're hearing more from the government right now is more—and if we listen to what some of the past speakers have said, we have more smoke and mirrors from this government and a manipulation of numbers, rather than what is accurately true. I think this government has taken some of the numbers that are out there and they've wiggled them around and are actually painting quite a false picture of what is happening in day care in Manitoba.

I would indicate, I know there were some comments about the number of provisional licences out there. I would indicate that, according to a Freedom of Information document that we have, 33 percent of Manitoba's licensed child-care centres had either a licensing exemption or a provisional licence. Mr. Speaker, what this says is that we've got some serious problems within the day-care system in Manitoba. What this government can do is they can put a lot of feel-good resolutions out on—

#### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), on a point of order.

**Ms. Selby:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I ask leave of the House to allow this resolution to pass before 12 o'clock.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. We have a member speaking, so it would require leave. Is the honourable member asking leave to put it to the House?

**Ms. Selby:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave for us to vote on this resolution.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No, absolutely not.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, it has been denied.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) has the floor, and the hour being 12 noon, the honourable member will have eight minutes remaining when this matter is again before the House.

The hour being 12 noon, we will recess and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, June 10, 2008**

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