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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Good morning, Mr. Speaker, I believe if you canvass the House, you'll find leave to proceed to debate Bill No. 210, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention).

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to go directly to Bill—Bill No. 22–210? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 210—The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, I'm going to call second reading of Bill No. 210, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention).

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member from River Heights, that Bill 210, The Liquor Control Amendment Act, the fetal alcohol syndrome disorder prevention bill, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Inkster, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill No. 210, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this isn't—this is not the first time in which I've introduced this particular

bill to the Manitoba Legislature. It's a bill in which we within the Manitoba Liberal Party have been advocating for a number of years now and, ultimately, believe that the government could be doing a great service to Manitobans by getting behind and supporting this bill.

The essence of the bill and what it does is it would ensure that there's labelling of alcoholic containers of the hazards of drinking while one is pregnant. And the consequence, as we all know, is quite significant. Where you have pregnant moms drinking alcohol, it does, in fact, put at risk the child and to the degree in which, Mr. Speaker, that every year there are dozens and dozens of mothers that are having babies born that are inflicted with fetal alcohol syndrome disorder. And that is something in which we believe the government can help address, in terms of as an issue, that the government can educate at a virtually a marginal cost.

The other aspect of the bill ensures that there is signage in establishments that are serving alcohol, again, warning pregnant mothers and, ultimately, educating the public as a, as a whole of the dangers of drinking while a mother is—an expected mother is pregnant, obviously.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this particular bill should receive the support of the government, and we would look forward to the government getting behind this particular initiative. Somewhat disappointed at this point that the government has not, and one could question as to—as to why.

Mr. Speaker, the bill would have a very significant difference and impact here in the province of Manitoba. People need to realize to what degree fetal alcohol syndrome disorder affects all of us. There is the social cost of this particular disorder, but there's also an economic cost to it. In terms of a social cost, one could draw, I suspect, very strong correlation in terms of crimes in our streets, to the impact that it has in the social family unit as a direct result. The economics of this disorder would include things such as the cost of health care, to the cost of having individuals that, had they been properly diagnosed or dealt with in earlier years, the cost of imprisonment, and so forth.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is, in essence, the issue. Now the question becomes what—to what degree the government is prepared to act. I'll suggest to you that we only need to look at the impact of smoking and the branding that went in, in terms of when governments made the decision to force tobacco companies to put labels on the packaging that would, ultimately, point out the facts. The facts was that cancer kills and causes a great deal of harm to society. It became a very successful educational promotional tool that, ultimately, I believe, contributed towards not only a much broader public awareness of the issue of the dangers of smoking but, ultimately, led to a decrease in smoking in the province, in fact, in the country.

This particular bill would do something of a similar nature, I believe. It is only through public education and encouragement that we're able to combat a number of the types of behaviours that occur. And this bill would go a long way, I believe, in better educating the public, and that's why, you know, we look to the—to the government for leadership on this issue.

* (10:10)

I know Judy Wasylycia-Leis, a New Democratic Member of Parliament, has talked about how it is that we need to have legislation of this nature. She's even suggesting that Ottawa take it on, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, I've heard other ministers speak and the government say, well, this is something that Ottawa should be doing. Could you imagine that if politicians around this Chamber really believed that to be the case, especially if you take a look at—quite often we get initiatives that quite often start at the provincial level, and then, ultimately, become a national policy. The best example of that, one could ultimately argue, would be health care. You know, many would have argued and could have argued, well, let Ottawa do it. Why should just Saskatchewan be the benefactor of universal health care? And—but the province of Saskatchewan, the government at the day, saw the merit, in terms of protecting the interests of its—the people that they represented.

Well, I'll suggest to you that to argue that it is not appropriate to be dealt with at the provincial level is, in fact, a bogus argument and an argument that doesn't, I believe, deserve the attention that the government seems to want to focus on, on that particular issue. It is not the federal government's responsibility. It is a responsibility of legislators. The

Province of Manitoba can play a leading role by enabling this to take place, Mr. Speaker.

There have been other jurisdictions that have acted, and one aspect of the law of this particular bill has, in fact, been acted on in the province of Ontario, where they—I believe they call it the Sandy Law, named after an individual that quite heavily lobbied for having signed representation in our bars or in restaurants that serve alcohol.

So, you know, I think that, ultimately, the government, if it decided to act on it, could take a big step forward, in terms of addressing what is a disorder that disrupts many lives in the province of Manitoba, and, in fact, ultimately, I would argue, has an impact on every Manitoban, when you consider the social cost and the amount of money that the government has to spend on dealing with fetal alcohol syndrome disorder. We're talking into the hundreds of millions of dollars every year that the government's having to spend in order to try to deal with this particular disorder, and that is why I believe that a gesture which is significant, as significant as this particular bill would go a long way in making the whole issue of public awareness that much greater, and, by doing that, I believe, that there would be fewer babies being born with fetal alcohol syndrome.

And, as it's been pointed out to me by many parents, this is, in fact, a disorder that could in fact be cured, only if we could convince and educate the public on the whole issue of drinking while you're—while you're pregnant, and the consequence of doing that.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, we look to the government in anticipation that they will see the value of public education and allow this bill, which would make a significant difference in the life of Manitobans and contribute immensely in terms of the whole issue of public awareness. And we ask the government to get behind this bill and allow it, at the very least, to go to committee where I'm sure many members of the public would welcome the opportunity to add their words of support to this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise in this House today to speak to Bill 210, as it is a privilege to rise in this House on any day to enter into debate and dialogue with my colleagues across the floor.

And, certainly, when you talk about this issue it is—it is a very important issue. And I do recall, Mr. Speaker, a conversation I had with my mom when I found out that I was going to be a father for the very first time. My wife and I expecting our first child, and the conversation that I had with my mother about her pregnancies, and she had mentioned when she was experiencing a lot of morning sickness with her first pregnancy that the doctor had prescribed a drug for her to take, and she decided, no, that she wasn't going to do that and—when she was pregnant with my elder brother. And, as it turns out, that drug was thalidomide. And she had decided at the time that she would let her judgment prevail and not take the advice of the doctor, and, certainly, we know the impacts that thalidomide has had on many children when it was prescribed with good intentions. But, certainly, the outcomes were not expected and quite devastating for many families.

And I know that, when you are expecting a child, you hope for the very best, and you do everything that you can in anticipation of the birth to ensure that your child has a healthy start, and certainly we know that there are issues around nutrition that are very important to expectant mothers, and in situations where individuals might have limited incomes, we've introduced the neonatal or prenatal benefit, which has helped mothers get the appropriate nutrition that they need when they are expecting their children.

It is without a doubt a very important issue, Mr. Speaker, but listening to the member opposite, I can assure him when he talks about realizing the effects of FASD and the impacts that FASD has in our community, as somebody who taught in the public school system for 13 years, I had students who had exhibited many of the characteristics of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, some not quite as pronounced as others. Some were quite profoundly impacted, and I do recognize, indeed, the impact that this has on that young child and the potential for that child. It is quite a profound impact.

But also listening to the member opposite, he says, will the government see the value of public education on this particular issue? Well, I'd like to assure the member that we do indeed see the value of public education on this particular issue, and the member opposite says, to what degree is the government prepared to act? Well, perhaps I think it would be an appropriate opportunity for me to tell the member opposite where we have acted and what

we have been doing because this is indeed an issue that has been very important to the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet to the Minister responsible for Healthy Living and to all of us who sit at the table and know the impacts that this particular disorder can have socially, economically, and certainly in terms of the limiting factors that present themselves to children who are afflicted by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

So, for the member to suggest that the government could be doing a great service might imply that we're not doing a great service. We are doing a lot of things in the province of Manitoba to address this very important issue, as I said, and I'm certainly prepared to talk about some of those.

First of all, Manitoba's the first province in Canada to implement a universal screen at birth for exposure to alcohol during pregnancy, and this screen for alcohol was launched in January of '03, facilitated by public health nurses, and every baby that is delivered in hospital receives a home visit from a public health nurse.

We launched our FASD strategy in April of 2007. This came with recommendations from experts and community stakeholders, and the strategy focusses on multidepartmental, multimillion dollar prevention activities and services, supports for individuals with FASD throughout their lives and, again, that's one thing I'm very proud of in the province of Manitoba, the multidepartmental approach that we have taken, the fact that we have a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet where eight Cabinet ministers meet to discuss issues of mutual concern as they relate to the health and well-being of our children, from the prenatal benefit all the way to age 29, and to discuss every issue around health education and services that are needed and necessary and provided by government in support of our young people.

And the strategy that I speak of with respect to FASD is a partnership between Family Services and Housing, Health and Healthy Living, Justice, my department of Education, Citizenship and Youth, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and Healthy Child Manitoba. So there is a tremendous amount of co-operation from a number of different departments. These departments all have an interest in the health and well-being of our children, as all departments do, and, certainly, to be a part of this strategy is very important from my perspective as Education Minister because, as I've acknowledged, and the

member opposite has, there are some pretty profound impacts on the socio-economic variables. There's pretty profound impacts on the ability of these children to achieve in school. There's pretty profound impacts on these children and their lives as citizens in the province of Manitoba above and beyond the school system.

*(10:20)

So that is why I'm very—that I think it's obvious that Education, Citizenship and Youth would be a part of this discussion, and government-wide spending in 2009-2010 will be \$11.6 million for the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder strategy. It includes the development of the Visions and Voices project which helps adults with FASD diagnoses speak publicly about their experiences living with this disability, and this project will receive \$16,000 in 2009.

Healthy Child Manitoba and the Stop FASD program: In 2000 our government established Healthy Child Manitoba and the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, as I mentioned, as a prevention in early intervention strategy to achieve the best possible outcomes for Manitoba's children with respect to their physical and emotional health, safety and security, learning success and social engagement and responsibility. And I wanted to assure the member. I know he's raised this issue many times, and I commend him for it because it is a very important issue.

I want to assure the member that we have had this discussion and have had plans in place for a number of years and that it is something that we do take very seriously and, as I said, our commitment to funding of the various programs in support of FASD education and response to FASD is very substantial. The programs and services from Healthy Child Manitoba has increased from only \$10,000 in 1999 to nearly 1.9 million in 2009-2010, and, as I said, the cross-government interdepartmental spending is substantially more than that.

So there are a number of services that Healthy Child Manitoba provides: The Stop FASD program where mentors provide intensive support to women who are pregnant or have recently had a baby and used alcohol or drugs during that pregnancy, so we continue to identify at risk and work with individuals at risk to assist them in this very important health issue. It is a voluntary program for women who aren't well-connected to community support services, but programs include sites in Thompson and The

Pas, and there are three new Stop FASD programs that'll be opening this fall in Portage la Prairie, Flin Flon and Dauphin, bringing the total number of sites to seven. Stop FASD has also expanded to include a staff position at Healthy Child Manitoba to manage the program, and the program has a total investment this fiscal year of \$1.4 million.

Healthy Child supports other programs as well: two specialized classrooms for students with FASD at David Livingston School. I had the opportunity to tour that school, Mr. Speaker. I had the opportunity to speak to the teachers who are involved in that program, and I know that that particular program has international renown. I know that there have been teachers and individuals from across the country and outside of Canada who have actually visited this program to see how successful the teachers are in working with these very special children who need more support to be successful, and this is an incredible model at David Livingston School, and I want to commend the teachers and staff that have worked very hard to create this model at David Livingston School.

And Healthy Child also supports funding to the Fetal Alcohol Family Association of Manitoba, providing support and services to families as well as public education. It's not just about supporting the child, but it's also about supporting the families, whether they're the birth mother or whether it is parents who have taken the child in for foster care or adopted the child and the supports that are necessary to assist these parents who are dealing with the challenges that a FASD student or child might present.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I want to thank and commend the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) for bringing forward this particular bill, and I know he's done so in the past as well. I've said it in the House on other occasions, and I do so without reservation, that the member for Inkster is one of those MLAs I think who touches base and touches his constituency at a level that we could all take some lessons from, who ensures that he's out and advocating for the issues that his constituents bring forward and brings them to the Legislature with passion. Nobody would dispute he brings them with exuberance sometimes, he does a tremendous job in representing his constituents, and I think he

has brought forward a bill that should find support from all political parties.

There are times, and not often enough, I think, Mr. Speaker, where private members will bring forward ideas that have merit, and just because the government didn't come up with the idea or didn't think of the idea, doesn't mean that it doesn't deserve support from all political parties.

I believe that our constituents send us here with the idea that regardless if we get elected into government or into opposition or as an independent member, as is the case with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that we are tasked by our constituents to bring forward ideas that are for the betterment of all Manitoban and that it doesn't matter which party brings them forward. It doesn't matter which part of the province the individual represents but that there are times when we need to put down those partisan flags that we carry at election times and other times and rally around a good idea, regardless of which political party they initiated from.

And this, I would say to members opposite, is one of those times where the member for Inkster has brought forward, I think, a common-sense initiative to ensure that the incidents of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is reduced in the province of Manitoba. And, you know, there's been recognition from the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and certainly from the member for Inkster, that this is a disorder that has so many different ramifications in the province of Manitoba.

We talk about it sometimes in the justice field—and it's certainly not limited to that—but when we talk about issues of auto theft and different sorts of criminal activity, we recognize that some of that crime is a result of individuals who, through no fault of their own, are dealing with issues of FASD. And so it would benefit all of us, regardless of which riding we represent or which ministry we may hold, to try to do all that we can to reduce FASD in our province.

And this is one of those ideas, an idea that's already been implemented in the province of Ontario that wouldn't cost, I don't believe, an awful lot of money for government. And whatever cost there would be, it would be made up in time with the reduction of cost that we pay through those individuals who have FASD, whether that's through treatment or because they have a more difficult time in contributing within society. And so, here again,

we are presented with an idea that makes sense, that's common sense, that isn't a huge burden on the government, and I can see no logical reason why the government wouldn't embrace this idea and support the member for Inkster, as we support the member for Inkster in this particular, in this particular issue.

It's already been stated, some of the—by the minister and the member—some of the statistics around FASD, and we have to sometimes look past the raw analysis and the raw data and recognize that there are individuals, people, real people who are living with FASD who have difficulties because of the disorder that they have that was of no fault of their own.

And when you think about the sort of the human element of it, I think all of us would have a heart to try to reduce the disorder, and putting labels on bottles or into retail establishments, again, I think—you know we've seen it in other instances. We've seen it when it comes to smoking. We've seen other sort of warning labels that appear on products and I know even those in the business who might be involved in bottling or packaging, I think, over time, recognize that there is a greater social goal involved when you have the sort of warnings that appear on packaging or on bottling.

These sort of labels, as good corporate citizens, I believe that most of those who are involved in this industry would see, over time, that there is that benefit to society as a whole. And, you know, a lot of the industries have taken it upon themselves to do education, whether it's the alcohol industry which sponsors ads that are related to drinking and driving and sponsors other sorts of public awareness campaigns.

* (10:30)

We see that there is that corporate desire to ensure that products aren't harmful to those who are using them or to those who might be harmed in a tertiary manner, Mr. Speaker. So I believe that the corporate community would, in the long term, be onside. I believe that the public, if, you know—and that maybe is where our focus should be—if you—sometimes we get caught up, sort of, in the dome mentality of the Legislature, but if we were to walk down the street, if we walked down any street, any main street in our communities or in the city of Winnipeg and asked 20 people, do you think that there should be or would there be value in having a label on a product that would warn against FASD? I believe that the vast majority of Manitobans would

say, yes, that just sort of seems to make common sense. And, if you then said to them, well, you know, the government, the NDP government is opposed to that in the Legislature, they would be surprised and they would be shocked by that. And so sometimes we have to sort of step out of the Legislature, step out of the Chamber, and recognize that Manitobans, in their own common-sense way, would support things that are getting hung up here in the Legislature.

And I wouldn't want to suggest that the reason this isn't moving forward is because it's coming from a member other than a government member. I would hope that we could all rise above those sort of partisanship—those partisan divides that do sometimes separate us here in the Chamber. I think that we could get past that and, in a bipartisan way, in the spirit of bipartisanship, that we could, in fact, support the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

And I don't think that the member for Inkster brought this forward in trying to get credit. I know him as an individual who, I think, does things for the benefit of his constituents and also because he has a heart for it and because he believes that it's the right thing to do. And so I think that the member for Inkster, as he often has, would reach across the aisle and try to work with the government if there were things that could be done to the bill to have it improved or different things that could be done to see it move forward. I believe, knowing the member for Inkster and the integrity that he has, that he would, in fact, welcome that opportunity.

So I would ask the government—I know that they're busy these days with leadership debates and other things, but this is one of these times, I think, where you need to look at the priorities that Manitobans may have and what's good for the long-term future of our province and put aside some of the leadership disputes that they have and join with the member for Inkster and the members of the opposition to ensure that this bill is passed and brought forward for the benefit of those who would benefit from it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, Bill 210, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention), is a private member's bill which prohibits anyone from selling or serving a beverage containing more than 0.5 percent alcohol without a warning about birth defects caused by consuming alcohol during pregnancy.

FASD is of interest and concern to me especially since our son Nathan is a teacher in an FASD class at Shaughnessy Park School, and I'm very proud of him for teaching in a challenging environment and for working on his special ed certificate. He will soon have more education than his father.

I would like to point out a number of shortcomings and problems with this bill, beginning with the fact that labelling is a responsibility of the federal government under the Food and Drug Act if federally mandated manufacturers could add the warning label as part of their existing bottling and labelling systems. To implement a labelling program in Manitoba—program in Manitoba without it being federally mandated would mean that each of the 22 million bottles sold through the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission would have to be removed from its case, labelled, replaced and the case resealed.

Warning labels are only one way of educating the public about the effects alcohol use has during pregnancy. In Manitoba, we have a broad comprehensive approach based on practices that have proven effective in reducing alcohol consumption during pregnancy. And I would like to outline just some of those. Unfortunately, time doesn't permit to outline all of them, but here are some, beginning with our FASD strategy.

Manitoba was the first province in Canada to implement a universal screen at birth for exposure to alcohol during pregnancy. The universal screen for alcohol, launched in January 2003, is facilitated by public health nurses. Every baby that is delivered in hospital receives a home visit from a public health nurse.

Manitoba's FASD strategy was launched in April 2007 with recommendations from experts and community stakeholders. The strategy focusses on multidepartmental, multimillion-dollar prevention activities and service supports for individuals with FASD throughout their lives. The strategy is a partnership between the departments of Family Services and Housing; Health and Healthy Living; Justice; Education; Citizenship and Youth; and Aboriginal and Northern Affairs; and Healthy Child Manitoba.

Government-wide spending in 2009-2010 will be \$11.6 million for the FASD strategy.

In 2000, our government established Healthy Child Manitoba and the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet as a prevention and early intervention

strategy to achieve the best possible outcomes for Manitoba's children with respect to their physical and emotional health, safety and security, learning success and social engagement and responsibility.

Funding for FASD programs and services from Healthy Child Manitoba has been increased from only \$10,000 in 1999, to nearly \$1.9 million in 2009-2010.

Healthy Child Manitoba services include the Stop FASD program, an outreach program where mentors provide intensive support to women who are pregnant or have recently had a baby and used alcohol or drugs during that pregnancy. It is a voluntary program for women who aren't well connected to community support services.

And a number of years ago, on behalf of the former Minister of Family Services and Housing, I had the opportunity to announce an expansion of that program at Nor'West Community Health Co-op, which is where some of the Stop FASD staff are located. This program includes sites as well in Thompson and The Pas.

Healthy Child also supports the following programs: two specialized classrooms for students with FASD at David Livingston School and funding for the Fetal Alcohol Family Association Manitoba, which provides support and services to families as well as public education.

And recently, that is on September the 9th, 2009, our Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) announced increases in diagnostic services and supports for Manitobans with FASD. And these investments are quite significant, and I would like to detail the announcement that was made on that date. Nearly half of the new funding will be directed to the Manitoba FASD Centre, formerly the Clinic for Alcohol and Drug Exposed Children, or CADEC, allowing it to expand services to youth and to increase the number of children who can access it by as much as 30 percent.

In addition to the increase in assessment capacity in Winnipeg, the new funding will enhance diagnostic capacity in rural and northern regional health authorities. Health authorities will develop satellite diagnostic sites and partner with the Manitoba FASD Centre in Winnipeg to form the Manitoba FASD Network. This expansion into rural and northern communities will improve diagnostic access for Manitoba families and build local capacity to support individuals with FASD. The Manitoba

FASD Centre will oversee the administration of the network and provide its expertise to satellite sites as they develop.

And I have a quote here by Dr. Sally Longstaffe, who, in the news release, said, "Manitoba FASD Centre staff members are profoundly grateful and enthusiastic about the opportunities of responding to the critical need for more available FASD diagnosis and for the first time providing FASD diagnostic services to adolescents. We are equally eager to work collaboratively in development of the Manitoba FASD diagnostic network, allowing enhanced access to diagnosis and support everywhere in Manitoba." End of quote.

To increase support services to families, \$342,000 has been provided for new respite day camps for children aged three to 12 called Stepping Out on Saturdays in Manitoba. This new initiative will be launched this fall in Winnipeg, Brandon, Little Grand Rapids and Thompson. These camps will provide respite for caregivers while also helping up to 72 children a year develop healthy, social and problem-solving skills.

A total of \$80,000 has been allocated for the fall launch of the Winnipeg pilot of Project CHOICES, a new prevention initiative aimed at reducing alcohol-exposed pregnancies. Project CHOICES provides information and a brief intervention to women and adolescent girls who are at high risk for an alcohol-exposed pregnancy.

* (10:40)

Other new and expanded initiatives that build on Manitoba's FASD strategy include: the development of the Visions and Voices project, which will help adults with FASD diagnosis speak publicly about their experiences living with their disability; three new Stop FASD prevention programs in Portage la Prairie, Flin Flon and Dauphin, increasing the total number of sites to seven; support for 12 FASD community-based coalitions across the province, including the Coalition on Alcohol and Pregnancy based in Winnipeg; an Aboriginal elders' gathering that will provide information and resources for FASD prevention; support for Reclaiming our Voices, a healing gathering for women affected by addictions who may have children with FASD; and FASD resource packages for child-welfare agency staff and alternative caregivers; and the creation of FASD resource libraries within each of the four Child and Family Service authorities.

And this announcement also included Elsie Flette, the Chief Executive Officer of the Southern First Nations Network of Care, who said: We welcome these new initiatives and believe they will go a long way to help tackle FASD within our communities. We all know FASD is a very complex issue that needs strategic approaches and much-needed resources for our families and communities.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of what our government is doing in this area and, by contrast, I'm informed by a friend in British Columbia that their government is cutting programs to children, but continuing to invest money in highways. Well, I think we have a balanced approach in Manitoba where, yes, we are continuing to develop—to invest in highways, but we are also investing substantial amounts of money in children through our Healthy Child programs, including expansion of services for FASD.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, this bill has been before the Legislature a number of times. Time and time again, the NDP have rejected the concept that alcoholic beverages should be labelled.

The member from Burrows has said, well, this is a federal responsibility. We've heard, in this Chamber, this is a federal responsibility is an excuse for inaction in all sorts of things, and, enough, enough excuses.

There are, interestingly enough, some Manitoba companies, I'll give you the—Rigby Orchards, which now labels on its wine, raspberry wine and other wines that are sold in Manitoba, look out or a beware warning notice to—if you are pregnant, that this alcoholic—this is an alcoholic beverages and you shouldn't be drinking. This example, you know, gives the retort—show—exposes the emptiness of the words of the member from Burrows in trying to argue that it can't be done in this province.

It is being done by one producer of wine. It could be done very easily in this province because the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, they hold—controls the marketing of liquor throughout the province, and it would be very easy for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission to move and to mandate.

And I would guess that since many, many other countries already label, in the sense of providing this warning, including the United States—and the United

States has labelled alcoholic beverages for quite a number of years, that, in fact, it would be very easy to make sure that such labelling was available here in Manitoba.

So, enough of the member from Burrows' excuses for inaction; enough of the member of Burrows' excuses for trying to protect children from being born with FASD. We should have a government which cares about children, not this government which doesn't care about making sure that everyone is aware that this is a major issue.

The government, to its credit, brought in a form of universal screening for FASD. We hadn't had reports of the results of that, how universal it is, how effective it is, how many children are being diagnosed or whether, in fact, there's—numbers are increasing or decreasing. But we should have this kind of reporting, and we've been asking for such reporting for quite some time, but the government has turned that measure down too.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, it is—it is a problem in Manitoba that there is not a government which is providing awareness. This has been done for years and years and years when it comes to awareness of the health problems related to smoking, and, indeed, this is one of the factors that has been effective in getting a reduction in smoking rates. And one of the other factors, of course, is the reporting so that, year by year, we know where we stand in terms of the proportion of people in Manitoba who are smokers and the proportion of people in Canada. But, when it comes to fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, you know, we don't have the educational awareness on the product, and we don't have the reporting, as we should have it, to know what the numbers are and whether, in fact, there are any changes.

So, this is, Mr. Speaker, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders are a very important condition that we need to be doing much more in terms of identifying the children early at preventing, as we're talking here, the problem from occurring in the first place. This is a very preventable disease and, as well as making sure that these children are diagnosed appropriately and early, so that the problems which can arise in children with FASD can be addressed early on, and we can move and to have less social problems resulting from FASD than we have at the moment.

So I would—I would urge the government to wake up, to start being concerned about and caring about the children of this province, and to start supporting this bill. Thank you.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I am very pleased to stand up and reflect on some of the commentary that I've heard so far this morning.

I'm not a hundred percent sure where to start. This is just so marvellously consistent with what my honourable colleagues from River Heights and Inkster have conjured up before that I daresay I'm going to be repeating myself a little bit. But let me just be a little bit direct at the beginning and say that an idea which isn't workable is probably not going to be implemented, no matter how many times you introduce it to this Chamber, no matter how loudly you scream about it, and no matter how many people speak in favour of it.

There are lots and lots and lots of ways, which we have already heard. The honourable member for River Heights, if he was paying attention, just heard some very articulate and detailed descriptions from my colleagues, from the government side, on all of the services that we now have in place to help combat FASD, and he continues to maintain that none of these services are in place, and that the notion of taking 22 bottles out of their containers and sticking a label on them and then putting them back in the box, that the expense involved in doing that is worthwhile.

What about the notion of pamphlets when people purchase their alcohol? What about putting notices on receipts? What about putting posters up in all of the stores where alcohol is acquired? What about developing a Web site? What about putting the information on the very bags that the alcohol goes into? You know what? All of those, Mr. Speaker, are very good and sound educational activities to help counteract FASD. All of them are being implemented. I just cannot believe that the Liberals have yet to realize that we are not standing in the House of Commons. Maybe they believe that that's why they have to scream, when they bring in their various so-called new ideas, which have, more often than not, as in this case, been introduced numerous times beforehand.

Labelling of food products is a federal responsibility. I'm not making that rule up; it's in the Constitution. If you want to change that law, talk to the feds. Listen, there are many things that I am frustrated about with our federal government. This would be one of them. Climate change might be another. We could make a fairly long list.

* (10:50)

If you want to make a change at the federal level of Canada's government—I know this is a new idea for the Liberals, but there is a division of powers within Canada. Some of the responsibility for government is at the federal level, and some of it is at the provincial level, and some of it is at the local level. This is a new concept, apparently, because the Liberals don't get it. They keep introducing ideas which don't pertain to our ability to act on them. That makes it a dumb idea to bring forward a notion that you can actually implement this year and that it would be the best course of action to take.

Taking 22 million bottles out of their containers, sticking a label on them, and putting them back in and having that happen in Manitoba rather than having the federal government very simply, as the wonderful colleague from our party, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, the Member of Parliament in Winnipeg North has introduced on numerous occasions. Successive federal Liberal governments have said no to that. Successive Conservative federal governments have said no to that. The federal government could, with a single act of Parliament, require all producers of alcoholic beverages to put a warning label on the bottle. Full stop.

And to do that in Manitoba after the bottles are already in the boxes, you've gotta be kidding me that this is the best use of resources. I would much rather put our money to work on the front end making sure that the public is aware, through all of the other strategies that I just mentioned. I would much rather put resources into treatment programs, into support programs for parents and families that are wrestling with FASD. I would much rather do all of the things that our government is now doing under the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet.

This entity did not even exist under our predecessors, the Conservatives. The budget for FASD was paltry. I believe it was \$10,000 in 1999. We have now increased it to over \$11 million. Looking at the prevention pieces, the treatment pieces, and the support pieces. Our own family, we've took part in a program Roots of Empathy whereby we were able to take our son who was quite young at the time, he was an infant, and every month we would take him to a classroom of kids who have FASD, and those children would be able to see our little Oliver interact with them on a monthly basis, and all of those kids in that classroom had FASD. The Roots of Empathy program has done a fantastic job, a measurably fantastic job, at helping children

with FASD conquer some of the obstacles that have been unfairly placed on them.

Nobody disagrees, Mr. Speaker, that FASD is one of the easiest illnesses to prevent. The idea that, you know, rather than have the feds take care of this labelling issue on the individual bottles, at the federal level as they should be, and you know, that's just not on in terms of what Manitoba is doing. We're doing a host of other things which we do have control over which are making a difference, which are reasonable. This particular—*[interjection]* The member for Inkster has just asked me, such as? He's not even listening. I already listed all of the things that we're doing. My colleagues have listed the things that we're doing, and—

An Honourable Member: No, you've read the paper. You read the script.

Mr. Altemeyer: Here, you can read my script. You need it more than I do. That's your homework assignment. I want a four-page summary. I want it on my desk, and I will grade it for you.

The plain truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that all of the initiatives that we're doing from the brochures, from the bags, from the posters, from the receipts, all of those are education activities exactly like what the Liberals are proposing. All of these are things we have control over. We don't have control over putting labels on individual alcoholic bottles. That's a federal responsibility. I know it doesn't make sense to the Liberals. To an outside observer, the division of powers in Canada are a little bit interesting at times.

The plain truth of the matter is we don't have control over this, and my honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) reminds me, and all of us, of a very sage point. He's very wise in his understanding of the history of Parliament. There was a time when the member who just finished speaking, the Liberal leader, the honourable member from River Heights, actually sat in Ottawa and not just that, he was actually a Cabinet minister in a Liberal government and did they bring in this law? No, they did not. They did a whole bunch of other things like savaging the social safety net, but did they think to protect kids who were going to be struggling with FASD? No. That wasn't one of their priorities.

I actually see a lot of correlations, Mr. Speaker, between bringing this piece of legislation forward, again, when they've been told over and over again

that it's not going to work, that this is not the appropriate forum, that there are better things that we can do with the resources we have available. I think this is an exact correlation with the so-called poverty legislation they bring forward. The notion that you could actually measure poverty reduction, according to the Liberals, is a complete myth. They have a provision in their law. Every single time they've brought it forward, they're going to use some sort of internationally recognized measurement tool. That's pretty much a direct quote of their proposed legislation. Well, you know what? No such measurement tool exists. Canada doesn't even have a national measurement tool for poverty. We're now developing one, but the federal government has not implemented it.

In Manitoba, we are on the leading edge of developing measurement tools for poverty, and no matter which tool you use, you can see a remarkable decrease in the amount of child poverty in our province and in the amount of overall poverty in our province because of the work that our government has done, just as on FASD you can look at a dramatic increase in the funding going into preventing FASD, a dramatic increase in providing diagnostic services so we can more properly identify the number of children who are struggling with FASD and the number of adults who are struggling with FASD. Sure, Manitoba, as a result of that initiative, we might end up with a higher incidence of FASD than other provinces because we're actually measuring it, because we're actually providing supports for people who need it and because we're actually putting resources on the front end to make sure that this happens at a greatly reduced rate from when it could.

And, of course, the ultimate goal is to see that FASD does not happen anymore in Manitoba or anywhere else. It is a completely preventable illness. If we were just able to get past ideas like what the Liberals keep bringing forward and clouding the issue here with the notion that ripping apart beer boxes on the weekends and sticking labels on the bottles is actually going to make a difference here in Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand in the House and put a few words on the record about Bill 210, which is the private member's bill for The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention).

Mr. Speaker, this bill prohibits anyone from selling or serving a beverage containing more than 0.5 percent alcohol without a warning about birth defects caused by consuming alcohol during pregnancy. It recommends two forms of warnings: warning labels on bottles, cans and other sealed containers or alcohol beverages unless they are sold by the case or the carton. It also recommends warning signs posted in places where alcoholic beverages are sold or served.

Mr. Speaker, I think we heard the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer)—I don't think. I know. I know we heard the member for Wolseley quite eloquently explain whose responsibility labelling is, and we know that labelling is the responsibility of the federal government under the Food and Drug Act. It is federally mandated. Manufacturers can add a warning label as part of their existing bottling and labelling system, but right now, it is not mandated under the federal government's act.

I know I listened to the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) talk, and he talked about his interest in this particular act. And I have to ask him, if he's interested in this particular act, he should be talking to his colleagues in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, I have a friend. His name is Doug Lavallee. He's the marketing individual for one of the main breweries, and I have to say that he's the marketing individual for western Canada, not just for Manitoba, western Canada, and that is how a lot of these bottling companies, a lot of the brewing companies work. This is a Canada situation. This is not a Manitoba situation. To implement a labelling program in Manitoba without it being federally mandated would mean that each of 22 million bottles sold through the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission would have to be removed from their case, labelled, replaced and resealed.

Mr. Speaker, I think that I have several problems when I take a look at what is being proposed. What is being proposed is that Manitoba undertake something that is not being undertaken federally. Warning labels are—

* (11:00)

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

The hour being 11 a.m., we will now move on to resolutions, and we will deal with Resolution No. 22, Manitoba Friendship Centres.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 22—Manitoba Friendship Centres

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead),

WHEREAS the Manitoba friendship centres provide a wide variety of valuable services to rural and northern Aboriginal people; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba friendship centres began with the establishment of the Winnipeg Indian and Métis Friendship Centre over 50 years ago and currently lists—excuse me, and currently includes 11 centres across the province in Brandon, Dauphin, Flin Flon, Lynn Lake, Portage la Prairie, Riverton, Selkirk, Swan River, The Pas, Thompson, along with the original centre in Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba friendship centres operated a large number of programs and services that respond to the cultural and social needs of their respective communities and the original purposes of the friendship centre movement; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres and the individual friendship centres are committed to building strong community connection for urban Aboriginal people, sponsoring activities such as cultural events, classes, sports and recreation, job training and educational services and child-care facilities; and

WHEREAS provincial core funding for the Manitoba friendship centres was eliminated by the previous government in the 1990s; and

WHEREAS the current provincial government reinstated core funding upon taking office and in 19—excuse me, in 2007 committed an additional \$1-million capital fund for friendship centres across Manitoba which is assisting in the further development of the friendship centre—of Manitoba centres.

THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED THAT the Legislative Assembly recognize the vital role and importance that friendship centres play in our province as supports to our Aboriginal people; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Legislative Assembly commend the Manitoba friendship centres for their strong record of achievement and commitment, and that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Selkirk, seconded by the honourable member for The Pas,

WHEREAS Manitoba friendship centres—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce this resolution to the House, and I'm expecting unanimous approval by my colleagues. As members will know, the friendship centre movement in Manitoba is a resilient—has a—was going to say a—is a resilient organization.

As members will know, during the—during the '90s they were under some—they were the victims of both federal and provincial government funding cuts, but Aboriginal people continued to support the centres. They continued to be an important part of many communities and they continued to grow, Mr. Speaker.

The concept of the friendship centre originated in, in the mid-1950s. A number of Aboriginal people were moving to the large urban centres in Canada, primarily to seek an improved quality of life, and in an effort to address the needs, concerned individuals began to push for the establishment of specialized agencies.

Mr. Speaker, during the 1950s and the '60s, the friendship centres were largely autonomous. They relied primarily on volunteers and were funded by fundraising activities of churches, service groups and small grants. As the demand for services by urban and migrating First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, so did the number of friendship centres, and it became evident that they would require greater funding.

Mr. Speaker, the very first friendship centre in Canada was established here in Winnipeg in 1959. The one in Selkirk was established in 1968, I believe, 40 years ago. I was, as well, a former employee of the Selkirk Friendship Centre, and the movement to establish a provincial organization was initiated by The Pas Friendship Centre in the early 1970s.

Mr. Speaker, 1972, the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, MAC, was incorporated to unite the seven centres at that time and to create an association of—to represent their concerns and their programs and services at that provincial level, and I'm pleased to report that Jack Park, from Selkirk, he

is—he sat on the friendship centre board in Selkirk, and now he's currently the president of the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, and, as I said, currently there are 11 friendship centres in MAC, or, the Manitoba Association of Centres.

In 1972, the National Association of Friendship Centres was formed, and, of course, it acts as a unifying body for friendship centres across the nation. The movement seeks to provide services to urban Aboriginal people across Canada and they provide services offered such as cultural, family, youth and sports recreation, language, justice, housing, health, education, employment, economic development and, of course, other activities, social activities as well, community building and special events,

I can refer to the most recent newsletter from the Selkirk Friendship Centre, which I'm still a very proud member of. They have a program called Partners for Careers where they offer employment counselling, employment referrals, job placement, interview preparation, assistance in how to do an effective job search, training opportunities, sources of funding for student aid and the list goes on. They also have a Young Minds Program operating out of the Selkirk. They have a support services for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, Mr. Speaker. It's not only is this a organization that helps support Aboriginal people but also non-Aboriginal people also are welcome, and the services they provide are free services, be they anger management or relationship, addictions, positive parenting, and they have—in Selkirk they have a sweat lodge, they have a you-can-heal-your-own-life group, they have individual anger management, they have grief loss support groups, and the list goes on and on.

And I'm reminded that in the '90s, regrettably, there was a times of fiscal restraint and the friendship centre movement was one of the victims of that. The core funding for the friendship centre movement in Manitoba was eliminated by the previous government, Mr. Speaker, and I was very proud that one of the first acts of our government was to reinstate that funding, that core funding to friendship centres and, not only that, I know later on today we'll be discussing—we'll be doing a condolences motion on our friend Oscar Lathlin, and one of—Oscar was of course a very proud supporter of the friendship centre, and he was responsible for initiating a program which will see a \$1-million capital grant that friendship centres will be eligible for to improve their capital facilities. So I am very proud of that.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I think \$250,000 of that money was already forwarded to friendship centres, and it's being used to upgrade their facilities. I know in Selkirk they've used it, I believe, repair the—put in some new windows, repair the roof. So this will help not only, of course, the Selkirk centre but all the other 11 centres across the province. So I commend the friendship centres for what they do for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people here in the province, and I hope that all members will recognize what they do and hope all members will support this resolution. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It's a pleasure to rise this morning to speak a few words on the resolution put forward by the member for Selkirk, and I first want to say he made mention of the fact that a former member of this Legislature, the member for The Pas, Mr. Lathlin, had a key role in support of the friendship centres and we'll be speaking this afternoon on a condolence motion and I may not have the opportunity at that time to say a few words but I do now, given the opportunity, want to recognize in fact Mr. Lathlin's support of the friendship centres and a variety of other projects that he supported, to the benefit of Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in his constituency—and, again, I know that there'll be many accolades and words of condolence, support and friendship put forward for Mr. Lathlin this afternoon.

* (11:10)

On the resolution brought forward by the member for Selkirk, certainly when we look at the 11 friendship centres in Manitoba, we see that they, along with many other organizations in Manitoba, add something to our communities, whether it's the different programs that are established and run through the centres that welcome Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, or whether it's the ability to come together as a community in these centres.

I know, throughout Manitoba, we rely on community centres of a variety of natures to establish that sense of community and to deliver programs. And so many of them rely on volunteers to ensure that they can provide the services and provide the programming in their various facilities.

I think of, in my own community, though I don't have a friendship centre, I think of an organization like Anna's House, which provides, largely through volunteer work, the different programming for new

immigrants and for positive parenting programs. And they've really added something specific to the community and to those individuals who have to rely on their service. And they do it largely because of the volunteers who make those centres that Anna's House run and operate effectively.

And we have, through the Manitoba friendship centres and others in our community, we have those volunteers, those Manitobans who are willing to step up and say, you know, this is my community and this is my province and I want to be a part of it. And, yes, you can support it financially sometimes, but we're going to support in other ways by giving of our time. And often, we think of, sort of, the collective—the collective ability of Manitobans, through their experiences, to add to these centres and these community meeting spots.

It's one of the things that if we could harness—and we often see it in very high-profile situations like the flood of 1997, where Manitobans came together and rallied around a cause to try to protect, not only, of course, the city of Winnipeg, but all of southern Manitoba. And they came together and they said, this is something we're going to take up, this is something that we're going to help our fellow Manitobans.

On a more of a community level, we see that almost every day. I'm sure that I could speak, and I do, I often speak to my friends on the opposite side about their communities that they represent and one of the things that they always tell me is that there are volunteers and individuals in their community who say, hey, we're going to take ownership of an issue or take ownership of a problem or take ownership of a project, and make it happen simply because we know that to support it would advance the community and advance Manitoba as a whole.

And sometimes, you know, we look at the province as one large entity but, in fact, it's a series of communities. It's made up of a variety of different communities with different backgrounds and cultures and collectively, it's made stronger by the strength of each individual community and the individuals who are in those individual communities who say we're going to be a part of our province, of our community, by establishing something special.

And so, when we look at the 11 friendship centres, and I know they were listed off by my friend from Selkirk, the Brandon Friendship Centre, the Dauphin Friendship Centre, Flin Flon Indian-Métis Friendship Centre, the Lynn Lake Friendship Centre,

Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre, Portage Friendship Centre, and I believe my colleague from Portage may want to speak more specifically about the programming offered in that facility. Also the Riverton Friendship Centre, Selkirk Friendship Centre, Swan River Friendship Centre, The Pas Friendship Centre, and the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre of Winnipeg.

No doubt that in each of these 11 friendship centres, there are individuals who have said that they're going to dedicate their time and perhaps some of their resources, and certainly, time is a resource that all of us have. We're going to dedicate that time to strengthen the centre but also to help individuals who rely upon its services.

And I think that each of us could stand in the House and name individuals who are important parts of our communities, who ensure that these sort of centres and these sort of cultural programs and other supportive programs, are maintained because they're playing a part and are willing to give that time.

There are lots of good programs that happen in centres, like the friendship centres and other programs throughout Manitoba. Some of them are related to social, family and health programs. And I know that there is no easy solution sometimes to the various challenges that different communities might face. But, I think, ultimately, we need to rely on individuals who understand the community and who understand some of the history and the dynamics of the community, to bring forward ideas in terms of how to overcome challenges that every community faces.

I don't think that there is a community in Manitoba that wouldn't be able to identify something that they would like to change, something that they would like to better within their community, and they really have the understanding and the expertise of how to do that.

I understand also that a good deal of the funding, maybe the primary funder of the centres, is the government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage, and I do want to recognize the fact that the federal government has looked at a variety of different programs around Canada and has really made a concerted effort, I think, to reach into a variety of different communities and to try to empower those communities to find, in their own way, what works in individual areas because I don't think that there is a one-size-fits-all solution when it

comes to different things that we're trying to better, whether it's in our province or through the country.

And the federal government, I think, is understanding of that, that you need to ensure that these individuals in communities have the ability to come forward, bring their ideas and have the support to do that. And support, you know, is a lot of different things. I think sometimes we're often too focussed specifically on the monetary issue of support. I mean, there's a lot of different ways that community organizations and community initiatives can be supported, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm sure that all the members of this House would have good examples of residents in different areas who have brought forward ways to support organizations or ways to support a particular initiative that didn't necessarily have to be with granting of funds. Sometimes it's simply the volunteer support and those man hours and an ID or putting somebody in contact with somebody else or having private—there are so many ways that organizations are supported in our community and in our province, and I don't think we should focus in specifically on one way because that, I think, would do a disservice to the broader strength of these organizations which reach out and find different ways to have support.

So I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you're signalling to me that my time is short, but I do want to conclude by thanking all of those individuals who are working either through an employment situation or on a volunteer basis in friendship centres and across Manitoba in a variety of different programs, trying to better their province, trying to better their community. In fact, they are the strength of our province. It's not us as legislators. We play a role, but I think that the strength of our province are those individuals in their individual communities saying that we are going to try to better our community and thereby better our province and better the future for Manitobans. So thank you for the opportunity to speak to the resolution this morning.

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the member from Selkirk for moving his resolution and the member from Steinbach for speaking to the resolution.

I want to say that I was involved in the friendship centre movement at an early age, first as a service user that they were providing for the youth in The Pas, getting us involved in community activities, community events. And to this day I still see the

young people benefiting from this program and services the friendship centre has to offer.

As a volunteer, I got involved in the various committees to help make the programs and services run in The Pas area, was very fortunate to have been part of that group and, as a board member for the friendship centre in The Pas, I was involved in a more, I guess a bigger—the bigger movement to bring all the friendship centres together in Manitoba.

* (11:20)

I'm glad to have been part of that because now I see the relevance of that work that we have done, how the friendship centres have become a major part of society and how they have helped enrich quality of life for all people. I have seen the movement grow from a handful of people who saw the importance of having a friendship centre and how they would be active in the development of people and in the community as well. They are responsible for enriching quality of life for all peoples. I'm very proud of them, and I'm proud of this government that they are very supportive of the friendship centres.

I want to also say that through the friendship centres we have seen various groups come together to benefit all of the region in The Pas area. I have seen people from all walks of life, from every cultural background, from every business sector support the friendship centre, and, as a result, the programs that we continue to provide at that level are far-reaching.

I remember one individual, who was totally illiterate, who came into the program there and, because of the friendship centre programs, that person now has acquired a skill that he could use to make life better for himself. And, on top of that, he got to the position where he finally got himself a driver's licence. That's something that he thought would be impossible, but through the help of the friendship centre that became possible. He now has a vehicle, of course, to go back and forth to the work he enjoys in the north.

These are the kind of impacts, positive impacts, the friendship centres have on people and in communities, because that individual, in not only providing for himself, but has become a productive member of society in The Pas area and contributes to the overall social and economic development.

I remember, also, when the—when the friendship centre brought in people from outside to make contact with the—with our—with our citizens, our

residents—and I remember the time when Chief Dan George was invited to the friendship centre, and, the impact that he made to the people, to the Aboriginal people and also to the non-Aboriginal people, was so, so far-reaching that it created an atmosphere of, you know, when people feel good about themselves, about their culture, about their history, about their background. Chief Dan George, was able to do that for us. I say for us because I was part of that—part of that audience.

And so we are thankful for friendship centres that provide these kind of opportunities for us to learn more about ourselves and to be able to contribute more to societies because of the programs and services they provide.

I speak in favour of the resolution, of course, and I want to see the friendship centres grow and develop so—because if they grow and develop, our communities grow and develop, our young people will grow and develop, and they will become part of the larger society in a productive way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I'm actually pleased also at this point to put some words on the record in regard to the resolution brought forward by the member from Steinbach—or, I'm sorry, from Selkirk, and spoken to by the member from Steinbach and the member from The Pas.

When you think about what friendship centres are and how they began, I think it's important that we have this discussion and talk about the good work that has been done. But I do also want to acknowledge the member, the former member from The Pas, Mr. Lathlin. As was mentioned earlier, one of his projects and supporting initiatives was the friendship centres and, certainly, well recognized for his role and work in that regard.

And I know that today we'll be having condolence motion speeches to the family for the member from The Pas, so I would also just like to say—just put a few words on the record in regard to Mr. Lathlin at this point as well.

And I think that when there are a number of friendship centres across the province, they've been here quite some time, created to ease the transition of people coming from northern communities or from reserves to the cities. And I think that's—I think that's significant because we have seen more and more people coming from northern communities and from

reserves into the city, and there is a difference from those two different cultures. And I think that friendship centres can provide a transition and help in terms of what to expect in a different culture and transitioning services in that regard.

Many communities have centres that provide social and economic supports to various groups in the community, whether or not they're called friendship centres, they may be called other things. But a number of our communities throughout this province have similar types of organizations that provide supports for cultural, transitional events, recreational events, education, job training, that kind of thing; they provide help and supports, whether or not they're actually deemed to be called friendship centres. I know many of the communities that I represent don't have what we would call friendship centres, but there are a number of other organizations that provide similar kinds of supports in the communities.

And, as the member from Selkirk has outlined, there are a number of friendship centres in Manitoba, being Brandon Friendship Centre, and I know that also Dauphin and Flin Flon, there are friendship centres, Portage, and I believe my colleague from Portage la Prairie would like to, most likely, say a few words, and the member from Selkirk, as well, has spoken on his friendship centre, also in Swan River and The Pas, and the member from The Pas has spoken on that.

I do recall the Lynn Lake Friendship Centre as, when I was critic for Family Services and Housing, I did travel up to Lynn Lake because there were some difficulties with delivery of child and family services at the time. And one of the difficulties was the friendship centre was the safe place, was the safe place where children that were taken into care were placed, and it was one of the very few places that was available in the community because the community did not have a lot of foster family placements, and it also did not have a lot of social workers, at the time, that were able to fill the role of supporting and caring for these children.

And what had actually happened was, at least for a time, the friendship centre was unavailable to be used as a safe house for children, and that was a very unfortunate situation that the community wanted to be addressed, because they felt that there was—it was an issue just in terms of communication and how the funding was flowing, and the availability of staff. But it was a very important central part of that

community, the friendship centre and, for a period of time, there was a—I felt that the people in the community really felt, as I was meeting with them and discussing the needs that they had, that this was a priority for them to have their friendship centre reopened to the use as a safe place for children in that community.

The associations, or the friendship centres, I believe, are mostly—either they would be staffed by a person that would be paid in that position or a lot by volunteers. And many of our associations, whatever they be, that are used to help and support community are staffed by volunteers, and these volunteers are very dedicated and committed to the work that they do, whether it's, as I said before, cultural events or sports and recreation events, job training, educational service and economic co-operatives. Social focus, family, health programs, all of these things are very important, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (11:30)

And I believe that the funding for these friendship centres was primarily through the Department of Canadian Heritage, so there's certainly support in that way, but also some of the funding does come from the provincial government, whether that's directly or through another avenue that gets channelled back into the friendship centres, as I think was primarily the case when I was speaking about the Lynn Lake centre, some of the funding was not flowing from the Child and Family Services agency, which was compromising the ability of the friendship centre to remain open and to provide that safe place for the children in that community.

We should reflect back on the friendship centres throughout the '50s and '60s when they were primarily funded by volunteers, fundraising events, private donations, grants from foundations and project funding from municipal, provincial and federal government. Certainly, they have grown over a long period of time, and if they've been started in the 1950s—I think the member from Selkirk said, 1959—I stand to be corrected on that, but certainly the friendship centres have been an integral part of integrating people into the cultures, into a more urban culture which they may not be familiar with.

Certainly, as I said, there's many people that—Aboriginal people coming from reserves to the cities, and they might find this transition quite difficult. And more and more in the last several years, we've seen more and more people migrating to the city. So these centres have been able to provide some of the

supports that they would, hopefully, provide them with the skills necessary then to go forward in the urban setting.

And I know that many of my colleagues in the House have some comments they would like to say in regard to this resolution, so I would like to close now and allow my other colleagues to have a few words on this resolution. Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It's my pleasure to rise to speak to this resolution, and I wanna begin by welcoming some guests I have in the gallery from Peguis. Mr. Edwin McCorrister and others are here on a very interesting proposal to increase education opportunities.

I would—I would like to begin, I think, by making the point that in regard to the friendship centre program, which is the topic of the resolution today, I think the record speaks very clearly the difference between the New Democratic approach to friendship centres and associations with our Aboriginal people and the approach of members opposite.

I look to the—to the history of the friendship centre program and most important it began in the 1950s rather as—1960s, as an ad hoc type of thing, but I note 1959, the first centre established in Winnipeg. But it was really the genesis in The Pas, in the early 1970s, that led to the establishment of the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres in 1972 by the Right Honourable Ed Schreyer.

No surprise to us that a leader of his vision and magnitude would have taken this step and really got us into the modern era, when it comes to friendship centres, and it's quite noteworthy that governments were involved in funding of this system up until the election of the Filmon government. The Filmon government cut funding to the friendship centres, eliminated it from their budget line.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So it's no surprise that they're going to talk this resolution out and not pass it today, because we know where they come from. We know what their approach is, when it comes to Aboriginal people they tend to use them. We saw what happened in the Monnin inquiry in 1995, how they tried to corrupt the system by running phony candidates to try and take advantage of First Nations people. So it's—that's their approach to Aboriginal peoples: they're there to be used, to be manipulated, not to be dealt with in an

honourable way, as Mr. Schreyer did back in the early 1970s.

The record speaks for itself. You guys were elected. You cut funding to friendship centres, case closed. So, we know where you stand, and we know where people with the NDP stand when it comes to funding of critical infrastructure such as this. So I'm glad that I had the opportunity to put that on the record.

I would just like to make brief mention that it's no coincidence that the founding drive came from The Pas, which was the constituency where the late Honourable Oscar Lathlin served for many years as the MLA. We all know how hard Oscar worked in regard to Aboriginal issues, and his passing is deeply felt by all of us in Manitoba, certainly in our caucus, and I would like to pay brief tribute to Oscar.

I know when I was first elected, you know, I was a green MLA, obviously, and unfamiliar to a lot of issues, and Oscar was a true inspiration to me. He taught me so many things, and as I represent so many Aboriginal people—I have eight First Nations communities in my constituency, of course, and soon to be nine, with the addition of the Ebb and Flow reserve, and also the Métis people in St. Laurent will be joining the Interlake constituency.

I regret I'll be losing Riverton because that is the location of the friendship centre in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, and very proactive friendship centre, I might add, always lobbying hard for their people, trying to get grants and funding and so forth, which we have delivered, unlike members opposite, whose record again speaks for itself, the only government in recent history to cancel all fundings to friendship centres. So, you know, I think that debate is pretty cut and dried, but I know others what to speak, so I do thank you for the opportunity for putting my brief thoughts on the record. Thank you very much.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to participate debate of the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), and as it pertains to the development and friendship centres here in the province of Manitoba. And I'd like to commend the honourable member for Selkirk for bringing forward a resolution recognizing 50 years of success in the area of assisting Aboriginal and Métis members of our society adjust from remote living to urban living here in the province of Manitoba, and I'm very proud of the

history of the friendship centre in Portage la Prairie, a centre that was established in 1966.

It was originally called the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre but changed its designation in 1968 to the Portage Friendship Centre, along with a change in governance by a constitution, by-laws, and a board of directors.

The friendship centre in Portage la Prairie is very similar to other friendship centres around the province, assisting Aboriginals, newcomers, to the adjustments in—of urban life. Also, the centre provides a medium for development of Aboriginal leadership in community, creates a mutual understanding between Aboriginal ancestry and others through education and recreational programs, as well, creates awareness within the community, primarily through the media, of the concerns and needs of Aboriginal peoples, ultimately promoting action to resolve those very specific concerns and needs.

*(11:40)

The friendship centre in Portage la Prairie is currently located on Saskatchewan Avenue and has a very prominent not only location, but place in the support activities in Portage la Prairie. The Seventh Fire Learning Centre is also part of the friendship centre and does indeed provide for very valued programs to individuals that are facing life's challenges as well, and I'd like to commend the staff at the Portage Friendship Centre for all of their work as it pertains to alcohol and drug abuse workshops and working with individuals through counselling, post-treatment and after-care programs. They also are engaged in their volunteer activities in institutional visits, as well as promoting throughout our community Native awareness and through school presentations. They all are also very, very active within other organizations in Portage la Prairie that are helping individuals with life's challenges, as I said before, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and those that have gambling addictions.

The friendship centre in Portage la Prairie is, as I said, very, very active, and I want to commend a young person by the name of Josh Mazurat, who, also, in his very active engagement in culture and support of others in need, was the MMF youth representative for our area and worked very extensively on staff at the Portage Friendship Centre.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I truly support the Manitoba friendship centres organization and very specifically

the Portage Friendship Centre, and have made donations to various activities on numerous occasions, but I take great offence to some of the comments made by the individual representing the Interlake when he tried to take a very straightforward resolution recognizing 50 years of very active engagement of the Aboriginal community within centres throughout Manitoba and tried to state that it was a directive, a policy decision by the former Progressive Conservative Party to annihilate the friendship centres through elimination of core funding, and I take, as I say, very great offence to those statements being made, because, as one is quite aware in this Chamber, that the Manitoba government in the early 1990s was trying to deal with a annual deficit of government spending in excess of \$800 million which emanated from the New Democratic Party inability to manage the finances of the Province under the Howard Pawley administration.

And, yes, unfortunately, there was need to make drastic cutbacks in whole number of programs, and I will say that it was shared amongst all Manitobans, and examples being that all the civil service gave up one day a week of work in order to assist in balancing the budget of the Province. Not only the directly employed by the provincial government but those indirectly affected in schools and other institutions throughout the province, too, gave up work hours to assist the government in balancing its books. And, might not be common knowledge, but MLAs of the day, as well, took significant pay cuts in their stipend and expense allowances as their position as members of the Legislative Assembly as well.

So it was a time that this government had to take action because it is imperative that we, as members of the Legislative Assembly, act in a very responsible manner and do not continue to borrow monies expecting our children and grandchildren to repay those monies so we can enjoy a more lavish lifestyle. Unfortunately, the current administration under the New Democratic Party doesn't see that and is once again borrowing heavily and growing the debt of this province, expecting our children and grandchildren to repay those borrowed monies and it is sad. It really is sad that members of this Chamber are not engaging in debate and taking this most serious situation to hand.

And it might be even worth mentioning, Mr. Speaker, although we have agreed not to have a quorum count in the Chamber this morning, that

support for this resolution is perhaps reflective in the numbers of individuals present in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

I think we've all, we've all understood many times the caution of speakers about mentioning whether members are in Chamber or out of the Chamber. We've mentioned it many, many times, and I caution members to be very careful of that.

Mr. Faurshou: Well, Mr. Speaker, I apologize. It was just an observation because I feel very passionately about this resolution and so it was something that I was—I didn't mean to embarrass the government but anyway they do it for themselves.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again, the friendship centres are, indeed, an integral part of many communities throughout the province of Manitoba and I want to especially recognize the Portage Friendship Centre for all the good work that the staff and volunteers provide to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of Portage la Prairie and area. Thank you very much.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I've very happy to see this resolution come forward.

This resolution recognizes the vital role friendship centres play in our province. It recognizes the importance Manitoba friendship centres have in providing culturally sensitive programs for people. This resolution speaks to the importance of acknowledging the record of achievement and commitment to Aboriginal people and that friendship centres have demonstrated.

The resolution calls for a copy of it to be mailed or sent to the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres. Mr. Speaker, I've been sitting on this side of the House listening to members speak on the other side of the House and I've listened to them talk about the 1990s and I've been sitting here with some frustration, I must admit.

I lived through the 1990s. On the 1990s I stood on the steps of the Legislature—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Brick: I stood on the steps of the Legislature talking about day care, the importance of day care, the need to have government fund day care adequately, the need to recognize day care workers, the need to have parents pay appropriate fees for day care.

I was in the Minister of Family Services' office who is now the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). I spoke to that member at that time about day care. I served as the secretary for concerned parents for child day care Manitoba—

An Honourable Member: This is about friendship.

* (11:50)

Ms. Brick: —and I know this is about the friendship centres, but it's also about the comment that was made by the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou). It was mentioned that friendship centres, during the time of the 1990s, did unfortunately—did unfortunately have some cuts given to them. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Brick: Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a moment about the need of recognizing Aboriginal people, about the need of recognizing culturally sensitive programs. I want to talk about our government and the fact that we recognize the invaluable work done by friendship centres, that we've made a commitment to fund and support their work throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, friendship centres like the Winnipeg Indian and Métis Friendship centres, which is now 50 years old and resides at 45 Robinson Avenue, began in 1959.

I'm amazed to see, and so proud to see on this side of the House that we have members like the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), who is Métis, who brought this resolution forward; like members for The Pas, that we have now on this side of the House, member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) that we have on this side of the House, and the former member for Pas, whose condolence motion will be held this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, activities conducted by the centres are done for the people by the people, and I think that's really important to recognize. It's really, really important to recognize that these friendship centres teach things. They teach things like the seven sacred values that are really important to Aboriginal people. They do culturally sensitive programs. Activities conducted by the centres include sponsoring cultural events, providing classes, dances, sports, recreation program, job training, educational services, programs in economic co-operatives, child-care facilities—*[interjection]*—and we talked about relevance—child-care facilities and housing. Culturally sensitive

programs include activities like healing circles, include activities like intervention, which we talked about, gang intervention we talked about the other day.

The concept of friendship centres originated in the 1950s. At that time, a noticeable number of Aboriginal people were moving into large—*[interjection]* At that time, a large number of Aboriginal people were moving to the urban centres of Canada.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of programs happen with volunteers. As the vice-president of Richmond Kings Community Centre for three years, and the president of Richmond Kings Community Centre for two years previous to being elected, I can only speak volumes about the value of volunteers. We know—we know that it's through volunteers and the efforts of volunteers that these programs are successful.

I really have some frustration, as I stand here on this side of the House, knowing that it was the Conservative government federally that cut the \$5 million out of the Status of Women account, that made it so that the Court Challenges Program could not take place any more.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem standing on this House—side of the House—and being proud, being very, very proud to be an NDP member. We know that it's very, very important that young people reconnect with their roots, that they have the opportunity to have role models, to be mentored. That is really important.

When we take a look at someone like Oscar Lathlin, who we will be having condolences motion this afternoon for, it's someone like that that's a role model in the Aboriginal community. I can only speak of my amazing sense of wonderment when I talked to Oscar. He was so proud to be Aboriginal, and he was so proud to advocate for Aboriginal people.

I just had a school come through today, Mr. Speaker. École Noël-Ritchot school was here, and what I talked to them about was being me. I talked to them about any one of them can be here in this House. Any one of them can be a woman and be in this House. Any one of them can be an Aboriginal youth and be in this House. Any one of them can be Philippine, East Indian and be in this House because that is what people need to recognize.

This is Manitoba's House; this is Manitoba's Legislature.

I must say once again, Mr. Speaker, that I am really, really proud to be on this side of the House, this side of the House that put forward this resolution; this resolution that we fully hope will be passed unanimously by all members of this House, this resolution that was put forward by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), who is Métis, and the member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), who is Aboriginal; this resolution that speaks to the importance of recognizing Aboriginal people, providing programs for them and encouraging friendship centres.

As I said, I'm so very proud to be on this side of the House. Thank you very much for the opportunity to put these few words on the record, that were listened to with full attention by the entire House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would look over to the member from Selkirk and suggest that he, no doubt, has put in a great deal of effort in bringing forward this resolution. And, you know, we recognize the valuable role that the Manitoba friendship centres have played in our province in the last number of decades. And, as the member suggests, you know, that this is a resolution that ultimately would be nice to see some sort of vote on. And I know, myself, in listening to what the previous speaker was saying in terms of how proud it is that she was to be a part of the NDP and, you know, and then how the NDP brought forward this resolution.

Well, I'll suggest to you that it's the private member, the member from Selkirk, that took the initiative to bring this resolution, and I applaud him on his efforts in terms of bringing it forward and being here for the entire debate on this resolution. I am very much concerned in terms of when you get a backbencher saying how wonderful the NDP are and speaking to this resolution, and then one just looks, looks at the empty seats that are before us, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, I don't want to say what the member from Portage la Prairie had indicated, but one should be aware of the need for more caucus participation in terms of private members' resolutions, especially when you get a resolution of this, that deserves so much merit and attention. And that's why I do recognize the value of the member from Selkirk in bringing this forward, but I am concerned in terms of the lack of commitment on the

government to be here to support this particular resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the Métis—the Manitoba friendship centres have contributed to the social fabric of our society in many different—many different ways. There have, over the years, been thousands of Manitobans that have directly benefited by the programs that had been offered through the friendship centres. There have been individuals that have gone through the centres, as the member himself from Selkirk has pointed out and ultimately been representatives inside this Legislature—in fact, I

would suggest to you that have been involved in virtually every aspect of Manitoba's economy and social structure. And, in part, it's because of the friendship centres.

I would hope that we'll see this resolution and—again come before the Legislature, Mr. Speaker—

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

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