

Third Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 20, 2014

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 and 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.

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed with Bill 201?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 202?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

**Bill 202—The Participation of Manitoba
in the New West Partnership Act**

Mr. Speaker: Then we'll call Bill 202, The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Morris (Mr. Martin), that Bill 202, The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act, be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Graydon: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba's economic success is linked to trade. There's no question about that, that we are a trading province. We cannot afford to ignore opportunities to increase trade. The New West Partnership Trade Agreement removes barriers to trade, investment and labour mobility. Across all three provinces, the New

West Partnership 'encompasses'—'encompasses' an economic region of 9 million people and has a combined GDP of more than \$550 billion. This is the largest trade agreement and labour liberalization that Canada has ever seen.

Mr. Speaker, this has been before this House once before, and I'm certain that after some time to think this over and some deliberation that it'll get full support here today I'm sure.

The key elements of the New West Partnership Trade Agreement are (1) non-discrimination: workers and businesses from the three provinces will be treated equally—just makes good common sense; (2) transparency: provinces will notify each other to ensure that new measures, including standards and regulations, are not unnecessarily different or result in new impediments to trade, investment and labour mobility—just another common sense; (3) streamline regulations: unnecessary differences in provincial businesses and occupation-related regulations and standards will be eliminated—again, just common sense, Mr. Speaker; (4) legitimate objectives: provinces continue to have the flexibility to protect important public interests—which is, of course, important—such as the public security and safety; human, animal and plant life; health; the environment; the health and safety of workers and the provision of social services and health services—again, just common sense; (5) procurement: public procurements would be conducted openly and transparently, ensuring equal opportunity for suppliers in all provinces. And a good example of sharing information, we wouldn't be in the shambles we are with STARS today. We would know what other provinces were doing, and you would act accordingly, not running off in a different direction, costing Manitobans thousands and thousands of dollars—unnecessary dollars, I might add.

Mr. Speaker, under the New West Partnership International Cooperation Agreement, the provinces would collaborate in joint international initiatives, including undertaking joint missions and marketing visits, sharing resources in international markets and sharing market intelligence—again, common sense. The first major outcome of the New West Partnership was a joint mission to China and Japan in May of 2010. We missed the boat, but we do have

that opportunity to get back on the boat, not be stranded on an island somewhere. Since that trip, the western provinces already see more trade with China, certainly more than the rest of Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, common sense is a theme in this whole bill. Under the New West Partnership Innovation Agreement, the provinces will work together to co-ordinate provincial activities in research and development. That would be wonderful, to have co-operation instead of confrontation that we have today.

Under the New West Partnership Procurement Agreement, the provinces will work together jointly to purchase goods and services in order to achieve efficiencies and cost savings. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to have when we have such a large deficit and such a large debt. I believe that Manitoba's participation in trade agreements such as the New West Partnership are integral to the advancement of our economy—again, just common sense.

Mr. Speaker, we have CentrePort. CentrePort Canada is North America's newest inland port, with 20,000 acres of industrial-zone land and a foreign-trade zone unique to Canada. Trade accounts for 15 per cent of the employment in Manitoba, and transportation and warehousing account for 6 per cent of further employment in this province. CentrePort and trade would grow under the New West Partnership—again, common sense.

Failing to participate in what would be essentially a single market that will make our western neighbours highly competitive, will hurt Manitoba. Come on. The New West Partnership is aimed specifically at the expansion of economic ties to Asia, which is a market Manitoba would profit from enormously. This would also decrease our vulnerability to the downturns in the US economy.

The NDP feel that the New West Partnership would not open any doors that aren't already open. It's clear now that it would open doors that we haven't got to yet. We don't even know where the door is, let alone getting it open. They feel that the dispute mechanism is not in a position that is consistent with theirs. Mr. Speaker, openness and transparency—and I'm quite sure that we can negotiate and co-operate to make these small challenges—that's all they are, they're a challenge—we can do that. In Manitoba, we're flexible enough to do that, and we would be the net benefiter.

* (10:10)

The NDP feel that their focus is on a larger pan- and Canadian agreement. Joining the New West Partnership would be a—this New West Partnership, I might say, would be a great start to forming that Pan-Am—or pan-Canadian partnership. It would show that they—we were willing, as Manitobans, to participate in leading the way for the rest of Canada. But if you want to start at the top, the next step is a big step down, and apparently after the couple of times now that this bill has been forwarded here and been in the House, we have not seen—we have not seen—anything here that would suggest that we are forming a pan-Canadian agreement.

Mr. Speaker, we would be competitive with other jurisdictions, and also we would be able to access markets within—our biggest trading partner is the United States, of course, but not limited to that but to international jurisdictions to foster strong positive relations to advocate support in Manitoba's interest in the global arena. We would be able to access these as partners.

So there's—the east-west power grid hasn't happened, and it could. It could, but we just need to co-operate and negotiate. Working alone on any project of this nature—and when I say any project, I'm talking about trade relations and other projects that would enhance Manitoba's ability to compete in the world market, in an international market—would certainly benefit by being a member—Manitoba would benefit by being a member in this New West Partnership.

So what's wrong with entering into that partnership with Canada's top economic performers? I know that we are not a very good performer at this point. We're overtaxed, certainly under-serviced, but at the same time, we have an opportunity to better ourselves. That's just common sense.

So it doesn't benefit Manitoba to sit on the sideline when we could be in an exclusive trade deal with our wealthy economic neighbours to the west and being able to grow our economy by taking advantage of the opportunities that those economies can provide. This agreement would make Manitoba a much more attractive place for investment, and I might point out that we've saw a number of companies leave this province. We've seen job losses in the past six, seven months and as recently as two weeks ago.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I certainly encourage all members opposite to pull in behind this bill, support this bill and let's grow Manitoba.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Good morning. It is, indeed, always a day when we have an opportunity to hear the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) sharing his pearls of wisdom before this House concerning the economy and trade. I consider it a great day, indeed.

Since becoming Minister of Jobs and the Economy, certainly I have spent a great deal of time with individuals in our community and in our province who have much, much more experience than I do on this subject of internal trade, international trade and indeed, those kinds of initiatives that we can put forward to help our economy grow and to help our economy thrive. And I'm very, very grateful for those experts in our community, and indeed, in my department who've given so freely of their time and their sage advice concerning issues of our economy through trade.

And it has become very clear to me in these, I would say, early days that our focus absolutely must be on continuing to open up new markets for Manitoba businesses, but indeed, we should be doing that in a pan-Canadian way. We should be endeavoring to do that with all provinces and territories in Canada.

Our economy, because of the really hardworking people here in Manitoba, and the support that we give to one another, indeed, through partnerships is—has been strong, comparatively speaking, during a time of great economic challenge globally.

Manitoba, certainly because of its diversity, has been able to perform better than others. We know, contrary to what we heard from members opposite, that over the past five years, Manitoba's average economic—average annual economic growth was second-best, Mr. Speaker, in Canada, ahead of Saskatchewan, I would add, behind only Alberta, and this is something, I think, that members opposite neglect to mention. Our total exports increased nearly 12 per cent in 2013, which was the largest increase of any province and three times the Canadian increase of 3.5 per cent.

Manitoba has the great privilege this year of serving as the chair of the committee on internal trade and is working very closely with provincial counterparts and the federal trade ministers to work

to break down trade barriers across the country through the Agreement on Internal Trade. And, without a doubt, I think we want to be open to working with our neighbours and to be working with whichever partners can provide great benefit to the taxpayers of Manitoba. But when you can function in a pan-Canadian way, this benefits everyone.

It's worthwhile to note, Mr. Speaker, that over 50 per cent of Manitoba's exports to other provinces go to Ontario and Quebec. Because of our geographic situation it is absolutely in our best interest to work as hard as we can, not only as now the chair on internal trade, but as a good citizen of our nation, to ensure that any barriers that exist on internal trade can be broken down and can be broken down in a consultative and collaborative way for the benefit of all Canadians. And I'll give you an example of what I mean from our past life—my past life.

Saskatchewan and Manitoba were leaders in developing an oncology drug review process. We understood—I believe all the jurisdictions understood, but Manitoba and Saskatchewan took the initiative to begin a process that was more efficient and more effective in terms of evaluating the value that we could get on oncology drugs. Mr. Speaker, you well know that the cost of pharmaceuticals, particularly for the treatment of cancers, across the board is very, very expensive. And so Saskatchewan and Manitoba got together to develop this oncology drug review process, and it was effective and it certainly showed some advantage for our two provinces together.

But, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't until that oncology review process went nationwide and other jurisdictions bought into the process that we actually saw authentic and meaningful savings for all of Canada, and that is to say, for all Canadian families that are dealing with the burden of cancer. And it is because that partnership was able to expand, not just to two provinces situated in Canada, but across the nation, that Canadians have seen true, real and broad advantage.

Further, Mr. Speaker, when the first ministers agreed to get together and develop working groups on not only preserving the cost and the funding of publicly-funded health care—certainly something that has seemingly been of no interest to members opposite—and also a group on health innovation, and I would say that that group was co-chaired by Premier Wall in Saskatchewan. We worked together on that committee, and in speaking with Premier Wall, which I did a number of times, you know, he

was certainly of the view that the advantage in sustaining universal health care for all Canadians was going to come from all of the jurisdictions working together, not segmenting off sections of the country so that we might actually be rowing in different directions.

And so I absolutely believe, Mr. Speaker, that there are values in working with the—working with our partners, but I have seen and demonstrated up close and personally the value of having a pan-Canadian approach. So I would say to the members opposite that our real focus should be on that cross-country approach.

* (10:20)

Now, the member opposite, when he's speaking, seems to imply, Mr. Speaker, that we're bereft of any sorts of relationships or deals or action with our neighbours to the west, and this just simply isn't true. I can cite for the member the MOU that we've signed with Saskatchewan regarding transportation, regarding energy co-operation and improving transmission grid capacity; \$100-million power sale to Saskatchewan subsidizes electricity rates for Manitoba families and for Manitoba businesses. Manitoba families pay roughly \$630 less per year on their electricity bill than our neighbours in Saskatchewan, and I believe that this is a significant point.

I would also add for the member opposite that we were recently recognized here in Manitoba by the CFIB, that hotbed of social democratic thinking, for our work with the western provinces to cut red tape and to simplify cross-border trucking rules across the West. This is not an insignificant point when it comes to trade and getting products to market, Mr. Speaker, and it was Manitoba that was recognized for their efforts and for putting our shoulders to the wheel and getting that job done.

There are major upgrades going on to our major trade corridors, Mr. Speaker—the Trans-Canada Highway, Highway 75, Highway 10, Highway 6, Highway 9—which is going to further improve foreign and domestic trade and create thousands and thousands of good jobs for Manitobans.

So once again, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work going on between and among jurisdictions on breaking down the barriers on internal trade, particularly focused on the Agreement on Internal Trade. I'd reiterate that Manitoba serves as the chair, and taking the broader view and ensuring that we can

have access to markets all across Canada, I think, is going to be the effort that will bear the most fruit in terms of driving our economy, increasing our economic growth and doing all that we can to provide the best possible future for our children and grandchildren because Manitobans deserve nothing less.

Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I just want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), for bringing forward this very important bill on the partnership of Manitoba and the New West Partnership act.

This is a very important debate that we're having here in the Manitoba Legislature today because it's one that will show a big difference between the NDP and ourselves, and our philosophies about growing the economy and creating jobs here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. We believe in partnerships—and I agree with the minister, we need to have those relationships across the country—but this is a great way to start, and so I'm not sure why for the last number of years the NDP government has refused to be a part of the New West Partnership.

We rely heavily on trade initiatives here in Manitoba. Our businesses and our economy is heavily dependent on trade and our partnerships, Mr. Speaker, and it's very important that we not continue in this kind of isolationist way, and living in a silo here in Manitoba, where we've got partnerships between provinces happening all across the rest of the country but not here in Manitoba with the rest of the country. And it's one thing for the minister to say that, yes, we can go to Saskatchewan, we'll have discussions with Brad Wall, the premier there, we'll have discussions with the government in Alberta and British Columbia and Ontario, et cetera, across the country, but discussions are very different from entering into a trade partnership as a block with our western Canadian partners, which is a great start for us here in Manitoba.

We do know that the New West Partnership, which includes Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, equals 9—roughly 9 million people with a GDP of more than \$550 billion, Mr. Speaker, and to be a part of that would be such a great thing for our economy here in Manitoba, and I'm just not quite sure why members opposite don't understand that, and maybe it's just that they continue to make decisions in our province that continues to put roadblocks up for businesses here in Manitoba.

We know that businesses are choosing to locate elsewhere. We know that they are choosing to expand elsewhere rather than right here in Manitoba because of the policies, the ill-thought-out policies of this NDP government, and this, of course, is one of them, Mr. Speaker. Their decision not to join the New West Partnership is merely one of them, but we know, across the board, that their tax-and-spend policies are driving businesses out of Manitoba.

Not only is it driving businesses out of Manitoba, it's driving people out of Manitoba. We know we have the highest net interprovincial out-migration in the country. We are losing more people to other provinces than we are gaining here in Manitoba. Those are the facts put on the record. Members opposite know that, but they don't seem to care about it, Mr. Speaker, because they continue to work in their isolationist way without looking at our neighbours and what we can learn from our neighbours when it comes to growing our economy and creating jobs here in Manitoba. So I think it's unfortunate, and I hope that members opposite take a very strong look at this.

We have brought similar legislation forward in the past for many, many years now. And, once again, we're giving them the opportunity to do the right thing here, to do what is in the best interest of Manitobans and our economy here in Manitoba. If we have a strong economy in Manitoba, it's good for all Manitobans, and it just goes without saying. But I'm not sure why they want to continue to work in the isolationist way that they do in a silo here in Manitoba. It's not what is in the best interest of our province, Mr. Speaker.

So I would hope that other members—and I'm sure there'll be other members across the way that will get up and speak to this, but I hope they take into consideration what is in the best interest of our province, that we need to speak to our neighbours. We need to be—and not only speak to them and develop relationships there, because the minister has already talked about that. Yes, we have relationships with our neighbouring provinces. We have relationships with Saskatchewan, with Alberta, with BC, but how much stronger could that relationship be if we were at the table with the New West Partners? It could be so much stronger than it is right now, and that's where the NDP just doesn't seem to understand what's going on here, Mr. Speaker.

And so, I encourage other members, and I know that there are other members that want to speak to

this, and so I won't speak for too much longer, Mr. Speaker. But I would encourage members opposite to really think about this, because this is a great opportunity for our province—for the future of our province, to grow our economy, create jobs here in Manitoba and create a future for our young people.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise and speak to this.

I thought it was Groundhog Day—*déjà vu* all over again—been there, done that. But I appreciate the avuncular member of—from Emerson bringing this to our attention yet again, so we can discuss some of the good things that we've been doing for trade in Manitoba.

And it's a pleasure to follow the member from Tuxedo who—it was rather interesting how she stood up and talked about migration and population loss. Well, as of the January 1st statistics, 1,272,062 people call Manitoba home, and over the last 48 months—she should pay attention—over the last 48 months, the number we have is 41,895 more people came to Manitoba than left, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I know they don't like talking about the '90s, but in the '90s, 33,000 people more left the province than came to call this province home, Mr. Speaker, so I don't understand the fixation that they have on this notion that people are leaving the province of Manitoba.

I believe in this province. This province is growing and the population is growing, unlike what we saw in the 1990s, and it's growing because of the diverse economic sector that we have, offering jobs, offering opportunities and offering careers for young people to stay here in the province of Manitoba.

Now, trade is a big part of that, and I appreciate again, as the member from Emerson brought it up: trade is a very important part of what we do here in the province of Manitoba. So, I'm sure, especially given the constituency in which he lives, that he will—he should have voted for the budget. I know he didn't, but he should have, because we know the importance of Highway 75 as the trade artery for all these fine manufacturing companies here in Manitoba, and we are going to improve that to interstate flood standards, Mr. Speaker, so that that highway can remain open and it will not disrupt the thousands and thousands of trucks that travel that

route every single day to our biggest trade partner in North America. And, of course, that access is the NASCO route to the—to Mexico, and we are trade partners, punching above our weight here in Manitoba with a significant amount of exports that travel through one of the busiest inland ports in Manitoba at Pembina.

*(10:30)

And, of course, they voted against the budget, but what did we talk about the other day with our plan for the Headingley bypass for CentrePort to transport those goods east and west?

So they talk about trade being important, but they're not supporting the infrastructure that's critical for trade to be conducted here in Manitoba, and we know, through the Conference Board of Canada, that there is going to be a significant increase in exports because of these investments in capital, which—surprise, surprise—they voted against.

Now, I also heard my colleague from Emerson say that this is one of the largest trading blocs in Canada. I guess he completely ignored the Agreement on Internal Trade because that is the trading bloc that includes the entire country, Mr. Speaker. He talked about the New West Partnership Agreement as being significant trading bloc—yes, it is—but it is not the largest. It is the Agreement on Internal Trade.

And, you know, I'm very proud to be part of a government that has led that charge, year after year after year, working on issues of labour mobility, working on issues of internal trade barriers that have existed in the past, and will continue to do so as champions of the Agreement on Internal Trade, because my Canada includes the west coast, includes the east coast, it includes our colleagues in northern Canada, as well.

And that's what the Agreement on Internal Trade does. It addresses trade barriers that have been in place for years. It addresses labour mobility issues that have been in place for years.

And I always talk about the fact that at one time when I was teaching, I had to be a co-operating teacher for a teacher from BC who had 13 years' experience in the college system when I had six years' experience in the high school, but I had to be his co-operating teacher because he couldn't get a teacher's certificate recognized here in Manitoba.

And we have been champions of that Agreement on Internal Trade, where teachers can be recognized for their credentials earned in other jurisdictions when they come here to teach in Manitoba, because there are a lot who come here because they want to call Manitoba home, because we hire teachers every year through our investments in education. And now they can come from other jurisdictions where other governments are cutting programs, and they can come here to Manitoba and they can be engaged in the field in which they studied.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's rather curious to hear the members opposite talk about the trade bloc of the New West Partnership Agreement, because we're talking about the Agreement on Internal Trade that goes coast to coast to coast in Canada. My Canada includes eastern Canada, western Canada and northern Canada.

So when you look at what we've been doing to support trade—and, of course, I had the privilege of serving as minister responsible for Trade for almost three years, and I know how hard the department works to target new markets, to look at diversifying trade and supporting companies that are looking at diversifying trade. And that includes looking at markets where we had traditionally had very little footprint, but we're seeing that expand in the BRICs, as we had targeted before with Brazil.

Unfortunately, now, with Russia and the politics that we see in Russia, we're certainly rethinking that strategy. But India and China and South Africa certainly are very important markets for us to consider.

But Manitoba trade has done exceptional work supporting companies that wish to expand their footprint and look at creating new opportunities throughout the province of Manitoba for manufacturing jobs and for exporting their products, Mr. Speaker. So that is something that we'll continue to do.

And I know the member from Emerson mentioned the dependence on the American economy and how with the American economy being very sluggish in terms of its recovery, that's why we're diversifying. That's why we are looking to the west, looking to the east and certainly looking north as potential for trade and trade routes with our transportation network.

Members opposite should recognize that sometimes there's significant advantages to being

located in the middle of the continent, Mr. Speaker. People need to recognize that, and we recognize that, through our investment in CentrePort Canada, through our investment in supporting trade networks throughout the province. But that starts not only with the concept of CentrePort, where we're seeing significant growth, but it is supported by investments in infrastructure to support that growth.

Now, members opposite—it's rather curious, some of the things that they've put on the record with respect to capital and with respect to our investments in these initiatives such as CentrePort, which I believe is a game changer for the province of Manitoba, and I know that, having been on a trade mission to examine other jurisdictions and what they've been doing with inland ports, we've had significant opportunities to do it right, and we are doing it right with our investments right now, Mr. Speaker.

Having been to Guanajuato in Mexico, having looked at the transportation hubs in Chicago, in Memphis and in Dallas, that was a pretty hectic four cities in four days, I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, but it was really eye-opening to see what can be, and CentrePort is very critical for the future growth of this province. And it is a centre port because we're located in the middle. They have to recognize the importance of that geography.

It's not just about being part of western Canada. It's not just about being part of the eastern provinces' alliance with the southeast United States and Canadian prairie—provincial alliances. It's not just about being part of NASCO; it's about being part of an Agreement on Internal Trade. It's about being at the table, negotiating trade agreements with the federal government. It's about finding more opportunities and more markets for Manitoba products to be exported all over the world, and we've seen incredible success.

You know, I heard the member opposite talk about some situations where there haven't been successful opportunities for Manitoba manufacturers, but he forgets there are very, very, very many examples of very successful companies in Manitoba such as Boeing, such as New Flyer, such as Canada Goose, such as Behlen Industries, such as Winpak, such as Buhler Industries. And New Flyer recently announced a deal with the city of Atlanta to purchase 89 new buses which will support their growing workforce. They're a leading manufacturer of heavy-duty buses in North America, and through

their—our electric vehicle strategy we've been working with them to support their efforts to become the world's foremost manufacturer of electric buses.

Now, it was curious, I also heard the members opposite talk about the east-west grid—speaking of electric buses that's the best segue I can provide at this particular moment. But talking about an east-west grid, you know, the east-west grid has been a vision for a long time of this government, and our current leader and previous leaders have all supported this idea of an east-west grid. But do you know what? We need to have a bipole for the integrity of supply and the consistency of supply to provide that east-west grid for an export of Manitoba Hydro. So I guess they're realizing the importance of Manitoba Hydro.

But if we need to—if we're going to export hydro power, we need to build Keeyask and Conawapa. So maybe there's a bit of a conversion on the road to Damascus here for members opposite. Maybe they finally recognize that in order to be growing the Manitoba economy we need to invest in hydro. We need to invest in infrastructure and we need to continue to work on a trade strategy that is the Agreement on Internal Trade that is coast to coast to coast here in Canada, not just sub-regional trade strategies which don't necessarily serve us very well as a trade partner.

We have to focus on a national trade strategy. We have to focus on infrastructure investments and we have to focus on doing what we do best here in Manitoba, working with our partners to grow our economy, and we're committed to do that. Maybe members opposite should have demonstrated that commitment and should have voted for the budget which would build on our trade infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, a little late now.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and second the resolution put forward by my colleague, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

I was listening with great interest, the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald) talking about economic outlooks. I noticed the minister didn't note that RBC just lowered Manitoba's GDP growth forecast for the province as weaker than expected momentum in the manufacturing sector. Closing out 2013 has caused it to lower GDP outlook for Manitoba in 2014 to 2 per cent from 2.3. Now, I know when we put comments like this on the record the members opposite will accuse us of fear

mongering. I'm not sure what they call it when RBC makes comments like that, but I don't want to digress too much.

But, of course, I mean, these kind of—this kind of information, Mr. Speaker, should lead the government to look at new opportunities, new opportunities for investment, new opportunities for interactions with our trading partner. The minister earlier implied that this agreement will do the opposite, will actually close Manitoba to those opportunities. But as I've seen in my short tenure in this House, we have a government that will literally put anything on the record that they feel, whether right or wrong, that they feel further enhances their argument.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba depends on inter-provincial trade more than any other province in this great country of ours; 43 per cent of our trade is with New West Partnership provinces, and we need to encourage those ties and make them stronger. The government's opposition to this partnership makes no sense considering signing it would give us a huge economic boost to the province, providing at the end of day additional revenues to a province that under this NDP government remains a have-not province.

Even though the constitution prohibits explicit internal barriers to trade, a network of implicit trade barriers has developed nonetheless. These barriers have taken the form of excessive regulation that obstruct the flow of goods, money and workers. However, thanks—first, the implementation of TILMA between Alberta and British Columbia, and now its successor, the New West Partnership—which now includes Saskatchewan—that has changed for these three provinces. It has created a new common market of almost 9 million people with a GDP of \$550 billion. What makes it unique is it takes a top-down approach to liberalizing trade with all areas included an exemptions permitted only where deemed essential.

* (10:40)

For businesses, it will remove duplicate registration, permit and—permitting and recording requirements, eliminates residency requirements, it makes transportation easier and extinguishes unfair subsidies.

For labour, workers in an occupation regulated in one province will be recognized as qualified to practice in another. With some almost 250 occupations having to reconcile their standards,

occupations as wide-ranging as acupuncturists, funeral salespeople and water-well driller, will soon be—or are able to move seamlessly between the three western provinces.

The cost of existing trade barriers is difficult to measure because the barriers are intermingled with legitimate regulatory requirements put forward by the provinces. Estimates, however, put that cost of internal trade barriers at 1 per cent of GDP or \$12 billion.

Governments can still pass laws to protect workers, consumers and the environment, however, the laws must be designed to achieve a legitimate objective, cannot be more restrictive than required and cannot be thinly-disguised, protectionist measures. It also exempts such things as water, taxation, royalties, regulated rates, labour codes, occupation health and safety rules, procurement of health and social services, social and Aboriginal policy.

The fact that it also has a dispute resolution mechanism with teeth is a much-needed improvement. Without penalties there is no meaningful consequence, and we've seen this time and time again with the government opposite with their end run on the legislation requiring a referendum on the PST. This lack of penalties and one of the main reasons the Agreement on Internal Trade that the minister so eloquently highlights, signed by the federal, provincial and territorial agreements—or governments in July of 1994, has really failed to meet its potential. More than a—more than almost two decades after being introduced, probably less than 15 per cent of its obligations have been reached.

With 13 separate government entities involved, it is virtually impossible to reach a consensus. I note that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had commented that we need to help the country as a whole, that we don't want regional blocks, we want one economic union for the whole country. Mr. Speaker, all valid comments, but I'm a realist and I recognize that things start in steps, and the New West Partnership is a step towards improving that internal trade barriers.

Survey data for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has consistently found that small and medium-sized enterprises are solidly in favour of eliminating internal trade barriers. Their most recent survey of its members found that 73 per cent are in favour of the New West Partnership. The reason is clear: for every

government barrier, the number of businesses that are harmed outweigh those that benefit by a factor of five to one. Small and medium-sized businesses here in the province of Manitoba support an agreement that makes it easier to do business and creates a level playing field with the same rules for all sectors, all workers, in all regions.

The only ones who really benefit from trade barriers are special interest, Mr. Speaker—special interest that are able to secure special treatment at the expense of consumers and taxpayers. It's interesting when the government talks about reducing barriers, one of the first things that they did after their former colleague, the NDP Cabinet Minister Mr. Smith, lost to Mr. Borotsik, was to hire him, and it cost almost a hundred thousand dollars a year, and task him with, quote, removing barriers to internal trade and bolster provincial mobility. Another—a glaring example of not only NDP patronage, but another glaring example of the NDP failure to find any success in those kind of appointments. I mean, the fact that you have to hire the former minister to do what he should have been doing as a minister, I think speaks volumes about this government's priorities.

So, Mr. Speaker, for the cost of, you know—the cost of a 25-cent pen, this government could have saved a hundred thousand dollars and simply signed the New West agreement. So, with those comments, I would urge my colleagues opposite to recognize the fact that the New West Partnership is an opportunity, to seize that opportunity, and let's start Manitoba on that path towards have-not status.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): It's a great pleasure for me to rise and put a few words on this particular bill. I think I have spoken on this even the past year. While I understand the intent of the bill is not bad, I mean, it's pretty obvious that we are talking about developing trade between provinces and all. But I think the approach is—we're talking about west, we—they are talking about west; we are talking about the whole country, a pan-Canadian approach. So, east and west, north and south. Canada is a small country compared to the big nations that you think are trading partners. It's a small country and we don't want to divide this country into 10 small little countries and fight each other. And we don't want to divide east and west and say this is our territory, this is your territory.

So, I think with this approach I would say that while the intention of this bill is not bad, I think we

need to expand. We have discussed this in the past and we are already working with both sides, eastern, western provinces and developing trade between them and we are also doing international trade. As a special envoy for international trade, I'm taking a great pride in suggesting that—I was recently in India and the Minister of Agriculture from Saskatchewan was there. Before that the Alberta Premier had made a deal with the industry there—on the pork industry, MOU signed. So, I was very happy to see the Canadians are going there and we also see companies from Quebec, we see also companies from our government from Ontario, Halifax. They're all going there to make relationships with that country.

Not a bad idea but let us work together rather than say we'll compete, each other, and then try to cut each other's throat. That's not a business climate that we want in this country. We need to work exclusively together but dividing the territory and making, say, exclusive this, not that, is something that will be offending Quebec and Ontario where 50 per cent of our internal trade goes to those two provinces. So we don't want to offend them to say—*[interjection]* Yes, of course, what I'm trying to tell, express here, that the intent is not bad but expand it, don't limit it, expand it, because Manitoba has a huge amount of potential of business development and growth in every sector you can imagine.

I like to say that I was in India—on one of the best pride we have in our province is the Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie, that state of art facility that takes the farmers' produce and gives it, you know, to the process to the shelf, marketing on the Superstore shelves. So with this concept we have been working with several jurisdictions in India and I was very pleased to say—I have not even reported to the minister here, that two provinces of that country has agreed to sign a relationship between Manitoba Food Development Centre and them. And, also an agricultural aspect that they want to really see how we can build relationships and I think this kind of approach makes us understand that there is east of our province, there are some producers. We can get their products, their technology, work together and make deals in a country like India and China and Brazil, so, sky's the limit.

But I would like to say, Manitoba stands very, very tall in the eyes of several jurisdictions I've talked about in the sector that I mentioned about, is agriculture and food. Second thing we are

extremely good at and I was really surprised that the chairman and managing director of National Thermal Power Corporation in India, which generates 33,000 megawatt of power—I met with him and he said, yes, we have heard about Manitoba Hydro, that is one of the best run corporations in technology, hydro technology, transmission and distribution. So they are interested in working with us. So, I think we have to really look. A little bit of vision has to be brought in and out of the narrow to see how we build them and how we make things happen even though Saskatchewan has bought relationship with us in the power sector and I think we go to British Columbia, you go to Alberta, you go to Quebec, you go to Ontario. These are small jurisdictions compared with the huge world market I'm talking about. China and India is about, you know, 2 and a half billion people. So, you just look at that market and try to see, can we do it by isolating ourselves rather than can we work together.

*(10:50)

I would also like to say my own constituency in St. Boniface Industrial Park, last year when we went with the trade mission, I was surprised the Chamber of Commerce business council people, they were all there, I saw the Challenger sweeper, which is the street sweeper, right in Transcona, in the Windsor Park—I mean St. Boniface Industrial Park. That equipment is in Gujarat state.

So, you think we take a great pride right from Manitoba; you go and look at the product in there. Then we talked about New Flyer Industries, one of the best bus manufacturing with, you know, lower ride, is one of the safest, one of the environmentally best, and I talked to some people there who are looking for transportation sector in the—in their growing country, that they were very impressed to know that our bus is manufactured in Winnipeg, which is not even known to a lot of people in the world. Where is Winnipeg? Where is Manitoba? Frankly, we have not—we have failed in promoting our province aggressively for the last 30–25 years, to say we have everything possible. We have New Flyer Industries, which is one of the best. We have Bristol Aerospace, we have StandardAero; in the aeronautics and air aviation, we are one of the best in the world.

But we have not promoted ourselves. Rather than go and try to limit and go only to Alberta, Saskatchewan, let's go to the world, let's go to east, west, work together for the whole country and build

a unified together form to go and sell our systems and products and produce here to the entire world.

So I would say—I also met some people in the state of Jharkhand, where I was educated. That's a very mineral resource-based province. A lot of Aboriginal people are living there, and they are very rich in mineral resources. One of the guys I talked to, he was very interested to build a relationship here to get the nickel and cadmium to manufacture batteries in the North. And you know that one of the companies who bought Federal Pioneer here, Crompton Greaves, was talking about also building more mineral resources relationships with Manitoba. So I take a tremendous amount of pride to see how we can do that.

One of the things that I like to share with our friends across, and they should be very excited about it, that the pork industry that I was, at one time, that classified as enemy of that industry, I was not; I was an enemy of location of the plant. But pork industries are Manitoba's strength, Canada's strength, and now there is a market has opened up in India, in the northern India, that the people want to have the pork industry. There is an industry if you want to come and set up a shop here. The High Commissioner told me very clearly the Alberta premier has signed a deal on a collaboration and I—and we should work with—have not even briefed our minister on that. We have to work with Alberta on that issue and I will be very, very excited to say yes, we can work with Alberta on this particular file to save the pork industry. We can develop together because we grow this thing here in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and we will have no problem in making that kind of relationship.

So I am absolutely not going to say no to the west. I'm going to say yes to the west, but also yes to the east. We have to expand. We have the Arctic Bridge concept going on, which the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) has been working on, to make sure that we get the Arctic Bridge, which is the air shipment. We have CentrePort that connects up to Mexico. We have the Churchill port and we can develop and we will have sea. So you have road, you have sea and you have air shipments. The sky's the limit, Mr. Speaker, in terms of building Manitoba to the world.

But let us not make this mistake of trying to isolate, make a bigger thing smaller. Make it universal; make it bigger, and I think I would be delighted to speak on this.

Thank you very—

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

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on this today. I want to touch in on a lot of what the member before me had talked about, is how that, you know, Manitoba—we've got a geographical advantage to everybody. We're in the middle of the continent. We have a northern port in Churchill and we use—we're utilizing that and we're always looking—we're looking at new opportunities up there.

We also ship—50 per cent of our goods are actually shipped to the east of us in trade, and a lot of our goods are shipped down to the south of us. And you know what we're doing to help that—and the members opposite speak a big game about trade, but they voted against this latest budget that's actually going to help us transport goods by using Highway 75, the main trucking route. We're going to be investing record amounts: \$250 million, I think, was the—is the number that we're going to be investing into that highway. Runs right through a lot of the members opposites' constituencies, but you'd never know it. All they do is complain about how little investments they have. But Morris just saw a brand new whole upgrade of their main street in their town. And this is a major trucking route, and we're going to fix it so that way when there's a flood we don't see disruptions in trucking routes. You know, we're going to invest that money, but they voted against it.

So, you know—and I saw in their alternate budget how, you know, last year in April the Leader of the Opposition had said that they would slash across the board, 2 per cent cuts across the board, and job losses would definitely be in the mix to balance. Well, you know, this year he softened that stance. Not even a year later he decides that he's going to—now it's going to be 1 per cent across-the-board cuts. And they're going to magically find big billion dollars—or hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of savings. And this New West Partnership, they threw a tag number on it of, you know, I think it was \$15 million in savings because we're joining the New West Partnership. It must be nice to be in opposition and throw out false numbers without research.

But you know what's fantastic, Mr. Speaker, is we all know they don't use research. They don't like science. They don't like research. They don't like numbers. They just want to come and say, you know what, we're going to find savings here and we're

going to say it's worth this much, and they hope that Manitobans believe it. They're going to say it enough times, and they think that Manitobans will believe it. Well, you know what? I'm going to be out making sure that Manitobans hear the real side of things, that we're investing in infrastructure that does trade.

You know, when they were in power, if they thought trade was so important to the west, why didn't they twin the highway all the way to the Saskatchewan border? Oh, it's such an important investment to go to the west. They're so keen on the west. The highway was only two lanes underneath them. You know who made it four lanes? Our side of the House. We made it four lanes. Because we know it's important to go to the west. We're not saying it's not important to have partnership with them. We do a lot of trade with them. We don't have to join this partnership to do trade. We do trade with them; 43 per cent of the trade in this province goes across into the western provinces.

And, you know, their short-sightedness about—they forget that they didn't twin that road. It's so important to go there. They voted against the new investment, the bypass to Headingley that's going to get us to CentrePort which is—CentrePort—oh wait, wait, wait. Hold on. Trade was so important. They think trade is the best thing ever. Did they invest in CentrePort? No. It was our government who did that. Mr. Speaker, we invested in CentrePort along with their federal cousins. We'll give them credit. Their federal cousins came on board realizing that this is an important thing. It's too bad they won't get on that same train, or let's call it on the same semi because it's—what's it going to do? It's going to eliminate some of those traffics from the semis driving through and they're going to get to CentrePort faster, which creates a better trade route, which is a better situation for all of Manitoba.

Now, they talk a big game about this stuff, but when it comes to putting their vote where their mouth is, they don't stand up for Manitoba. They stood against infrastructure investments, \$5.5 billion. That's a huge, huge investment towards us wanting to do better things in trade in Manitoba. Where did they—where were they on it? They all stood against it, right? They stood against the budget that voted for the twinning—or of the twinning of the highway to Saskatchewan that would actually increase trade to Saskatchewan and Alberta and BC. They voted against that. So it's not—it really must be great for them to be there to be able to just say whatever they

want and not have any of the facts and figures to back it up.

You know what? Here's a fact. Mr. Speaker, in the recession in 2008—I know the member for Morden and Winkler—yes, Morden and Winkler—he decided the other day to—he—it didn't exist. There was no recession in 2008. Must be nice to be on their side of the House where their money is so—they have so much money that they didn't notice that the world crashed. The rest of us did. But anyway, in 2008 there was a giant recession and other manufacturing sectors in this country lost thousands of jobs. Do you know what happened here in Manitoba? We actually went up—we went up. We went plus 1.1 per cent in Manitoba, and that is impressive in a recession when other people were losing jobs. We were actually gaining jobs. But, you know, the naysayers of the world, the negative nellys on the other side of the House want to gloom and doom about how bad it is here. But the reality, it isn't. How about asking New Flyer today? They announced that they have record fourth-quarter profits in Manitoba, in Winnipeg, employing people here—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) will have four minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 5—National Military Driver's License

Mr. Speaker: The time being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution that we have under consideration this morning is titled National Military Driver's License, sponsored by the honourable member for Brandon West.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the MLA for St. James,

WHEREAS the military personnel make sacrifices to protect the rights and freedoms of all Canadians and civilians around the world through peacekeeping missions; and

WHEREAS military personnel regularly spend prolonged periods of time away from home; and

WHEREAS military personnel regularly relocate from province to province within Canada as their postings require; and

WHEREAS a military driver's licence would make it easier for military personnel to transition between postings; and

WHEREAS it is in the best interest of all Canadians to support the military personnel of Canada.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to adopt a national military driver's licensing program in partnership with other Canadian jurisdictions and governments and to consult with the Department of National Defence regarding this matter.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West, seconded by the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers),

WHEREAS military personnel make sacrifice—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House to consider the resolution as printed in today's Order Paper? *[Agreed]*

WHEREAS military personnel make sacrifices to protect the rights and freedoms of all Canadians and civilians around the world through peace keeping missions; and

WHEREAS military personnel regularly spend prolonged periods of time away from home; and

WHEREAS military personnel regularly relocate from province to province within Canada as their postings require; and

WHEREAS a national military driver's license would make it easier for military personnel to transition between postings; and

WHEREAS it is in the best interest of all Canadians to support the military personnel of Canada.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to adopt a National Military Driver's Licensing Program in partnership with other Canadian jurisdictions and governments and to consult with the Department of National Defense regarding this matter.

Mr. Helwer: It is a pleasure to rise today and put a few words on the record in support of this resolution

and the proposal to create a national military driver's licence.

Before I begin, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all members of the Canadian Forces for their sacrifice and dedication to our company-country. It is without this sacrifice that we would not enjoy the freedoms we do today, including that of debating in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, there are over 5,300 regular and reserve military personnel here in Manitoba as well as thousands of military veterans and families.

As they move between bases in Canada, we find that they often have difficulty changing their licences to those provinces in which they move. There is a national licence for military personnel to operate military vehicles, but what we are looking for here is an opportunity for Canada to create a national licence for military personnel themselves, because when they—they are not allowed to use the military licence when they operate their own vehicles.

What this would enable them to do is as they move between postings, they would not have to go to their local provider of licences to do all the transferring that's necessary, and it's often detrimental especially to women in the Armed Forces, Mr. Speaker, because they may have been married during their career or prior to their career, and their birth certificate may be in their maiden name and they may have other ID in their married name. And when they go to change their driver's licence, it can cause difficulties, backlogs and delays and often, these locations are not adjacent to the base. They may be on remote bases, so it can cause difficulties especially for women in the military.

There's also an issue here in Manitoba that we do not accept the military identification as a valid ID for licences, and that is something that we could easily change through MPI to accept that military ID and that would go one step towards this type of a licence, Mr. Speaker.

So what I would like to see in this regard is—it's obviously something that Manitoba cannot do alone. We have to be able to talk to the other provinces. We have to be able to ask the federal government and the Department of National Defence if this is indeed something that we can look at for military personnel to make their lives a little bit easier because sometimes when they are transferred into bases, they are dispatched immediately to, you know, venues such as Afghanistan, as we've recently returned from,

and they don't have a chance to go through all the proper legalities of renewing or transferring their licences.

So this would enable them, Mr. Speaker, to make it—their lives a little bit easier as they're moving between bases, as they're moving between going overseas and that type of thing.

And again I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that this is only for military personnel. This—it would be lovely if we could do this for spouses, but they are not employed—engaged directly in the military. They may be employed by it, but this is solely, at this point, looking for military personnel. We want to look at baby steps and see how this could work out.

Obviously, MPI would have to be engaged in the discussion, and I think the minister has already done so. I have had some discussions with personnel in MPI, as well, and talked a little bit about what this might look like. So there is some thought going into the process already as to what could be done, how you could transfer merits across the provinces, how you could make sure demerits, unfortunately, follow you across the provinces as well. But those are the things that are—are all things that we have to think about as we're looking at this, Mr. Speaker, because we do want to make sure that it is not a blank cheque in a driver's licence that you can operate without following traffic laws, obviously, but it is something that would be just for the military personnel. Obviously, all the laws of the particular province and the vehicle registration requirements would still apply to these individuals, but we're just looking here to see if this is something that we can do to make their lives a little bit easier.

Now, I know there are many that would like to speak on this resolution, Mr. Speaker, and I ask the members opposite—I ask for and welcome their support for this resolution, which will certainly make it easier for members of the Canadian Forces to move across the country and fulfill their duties. I ask all honourable members to give this resolution the attention it rightly deserves, and I hope members opposite will join me in supporting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): I'm very happy to speak to this morning's private member's resolution, and I would like to thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing forward the private member's resolution to adopt a national military driver's licensing program. I appreciate his

consideration of our military and that he has brought forward something that will continue to build on some of the other initiatives that have taken place in Manitoba under this government in an effort to improve the lives of those in the Armed Forces, as the member opposite stated.

Our military folks and their families experience unique challenges that change from province to province when members of the Armed Forces are posted to a new location or when transitioning from duties abroad to home. In my role as military envoy, I have begun to hear about some of those challenges directly. As I meet more and more of the members of the military living here in Manitoba—and, in fact, recently, I met with the commander of 1 Canadian Air Division, and Canadian NORAD headquarters arranged a tour of the operations centre at the Billy Bishop Building at 17 Wing. It was an incredible experience. He provided a briefing on the operations of Canada's NORAD role. And I have to say, truly, that this is an experience I wish more people could have, as it highlights the work that our military perform day in and day out quite invisibly, but work that has very significant impacts on our safety here in Canada and abroad. And to think that it takes place less than 10 blocks away from my house.

During the more than two hours discussion that we had, we talked about some of the challenges that were often experienced when moving from one province to another. Those in attendance expressed sincere appreciation at the changes that have been made in Manitoba to accommodate the specific challenges that a life in the military may inadvertently bring as servicemen and -women move with their families.

Now, what I like about this private member's resolution is that it is not just a nod of respect to our military. While symbolic gestures are important and absolutely have their place as a way to remind all of us, young and old alike, what our veterans have done and what our active military members continue to do on our behalf—things such as designating the Trans-Canada Highway west of Winnipeg as the highway of heroes, bringing the Yellow Ribbon of Support campaign to the Manitoba Legislature, or holding a special service of remembrance on Armed Forces Day where a candle is placed on each of the military graves in Brookside Cemetery on one of the largest—sorry, it—the—it is the largest military cemetery in Canada. And I'm really looking forward to having that experience myself. These are all ways—all important ways for us to show our Armed Forces and

veterans that we appreciate and value their work and their sacrifices.

* (11:10)

But this resolution has practical implications for those serving, and it is important that we continue to find ways to ensure that members of the military stationed in Manitoba are given support that not only recognizes and expresses value for their work, but also are concrete ways that work out some of the significant issues when members of the Armed Forces are posted to a new location.

This resolution follows in the tradition of some of the other initiatives brought forward by this government, such as passing legislation to protect reservists' jobs and seniority while 'deployed'—deployed on overseas missions, allowing members of military families deployed outside the province to vote in provincial elections, allowing military families to bring their driver's licence merits to Manitoba and allowing commanding officers to sign for military personnel so they can get their driver's licences right away.

We brought in changes so military personnel could find a family doctor more easily, something that I was specifically thanked for during my NORAD tour. Continuing support to the family resource centres to assist veteran's families and work with the federal government to ensure the needs of veterans are being met—something that I feel is particularly important.

We also assist and support family resource centres to help military families, such as the \$200,000 investment in the military family resource centre's child-care centre. We also introduced a tax exemption for military personnel which was meant to exempt employment income earned by military personnel serving on high-risk deployed operational missions outside of Canada from income tax.

Making the lives of military personnel easier to navigate, especially when moving from one province to another, is a step in the right direction. And while it is a good step for this province to take, I do recognize that it will require other provinces to agree to join us to make this a reality.

As the resolution states, a request to raise this with our federal counterparts will be needed. Indeed in order for this resolution to move beyond Manitoba's borders as this resolution outlines, we will need to work in partnership with other Canadian

jurisdictions and their governments and to consult with the Department of National Defence.

I think I can safely say we all feel good when we are able to put politics aside and agree to work together for something that we recognize has merit and that we can agree is beneficial for others. And when it comes to our military I think everyone in this room feels that we should do as much as we possibly can to support them.

When it comes to Armed Forces we can all agree that we should together to support the military and their families, so I would like to again thank the member from Brandon West for bringing forward this private member's resolution and I also would like to strongly encourage my colleagues to support this resolution so that it may pass.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It is indeed a pleasure to rise this morning to speak to the resolution brought forward by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) and I do want to acknowledge the member for Brandon West for bringing forward this important resolution.

Recognize that certainly there's a large military component out in western Manitoba at Canadian Forces Base Shilo, clearly a lot of the military people will be residing in Brandon and the areas around Brandon. And certainly in my riding in Spruce Woods, which in fact Canadian Forces Base Shilo is a part of Spruce Woods, there's a lot of military people living not only base but throughout that constituency as well.

And certainly the issue of driver's licences—I've heard this issue raised by the military personnel and their families on a number of occasions, Mr. Speaker, both as my time as an MLA and prior to that as my time in the insurance business when we dealt with Manitoba Public Insurance in terms of driver licensing and vehicle insurance. So it certainly is an issue that the military families face on an ongoing basis. And certainly given the nature of their responsibilities, they are moving around our country from province to province on a fairly regular basis so it does have a direct impact on them.

And each jurisdiction has their own set of rules; each province has their set of rules in terms of driver licensing requirements. So each time they move they're facing different sets of circumstances in terms of obtaining driver licences and, of course, vehicle registration as well. So it is a bit of an—quite an issue

for them when they do move from province to province. And each province, of course, has their own rules, but then, of course, each province will change their rules from time to time as well. I know we've done that in Manitoba, and it's—we've tightened up the rules in terms of identification for driver licensing and some of the documentation that you have to provide to secure a Manitoba driver licence, Mr. Speaker. And, again, each province will have their own rules around that identification and the documentation that you have to provide. So each time the members will be moving from province to province, they will find different rules associated with obtaining driver licences. And this is an intent of this resolution is to make life simpler for them.

And I think what we're trying to do here is we're trying to signal to the federal government that, hopefully, they can work with the provinces to provide a framework where we could have just one driver licence for military personnel, and it would get away from some of that extra burden that they would have to put up with, Mr. Speaker. And we know the military do move fairly frequently in some cases, so this is something I think is very important. And I see this as a first step in trying to get this issue resolved.

The other issue, I think, that comes into play here is the whole idea of a merit and demerit system, which you're familiar with here in Manitoba. And when people move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, they quite often will lose any merit rating that they have, and that's—to me, that's not a fair system, Mr. Speaker. If a military person was in Ontario, had a fine—a stellar driver licence, had full merits and full discounts on their insurance there, they move to Manitoba, they may not. Manitoba would not recognize, you know, the full merits that they have accumulated.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's a bit of a non-incentive for a lot of the military people when they look at that side of it. So, hopefully, the—when they—hopefully, we will get to a discussion where we can have a Canadian-based, Canadian-wide driver licence system, and hopefully we can recognize, you know, the driving record of military people in that. But, again, this is the first step to try to get towards that discussion.

I know we've got over 5,300 regular and reserve and military personnel in Manitoba, and certainly that's just in Manitoba alone. So this could impact certainly a lot of people, not just in Manitoba, across the country, and I believe make their life a lot easier.

And I just wanted to say we do appreciate the good work that those people do on behalf of all of us here in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, it's timely that we bring this resolution forward. I know we just had our—the last of the military people that were working in Afghanistan just return home this week. So we certainly recognize the great work they did in Afghanistan and certainly the sacrifices they made on our behalf there. So this is certainly a timing issue as well that we recognize the good work that the military people do for us.

And I do know there is already in National Defence—do have a driver licence system within the department, so I hoping we can build on that current system that's in place there. And we just want to send a signal to the Canadian government that hopefully there will be some options that they can move towards, work with the other jurisdictions across Canada to put something in place to make life a little easier for our military families.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do want to thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing this resolution forward. And I want to thank the member for St. James (Ms. Crothers), Manitoba's military envoy, for seconding this resolution.

You know, when it comes to support for our active military, for the families, for their veterans, I want to state for the record how important it is that members of this legislature are able to speak with one voice. And I think there are few things more important than doing what we can to recognize those who are serving our country, those who have served our country and, of course, the families of those involved in the military.

This is not always a place where we speak with one voice. It is a place where—and I put on the record this is not just on one side of the House—it's a place where righteous indignation, where hyperbole and where conflict is often part of the game plan. I'm very pleased that we're not there, for at least this hour of the morning.

And I do want to put on the record, in just the last few days I've heard both the member for St. James and the member for Brandon West speak very passionately about some of their experiences dealing with current military personnel. And when these two individuals stood up, it was actually very moving,

I would say, for everybody in the House. So I'm glad that we're dealing with this this morning.

* (11:20)

I think it's quite clear from the comments put on the record where the member for St. James—spoiler alert—there is certainty that the NDP caucus will be supporting the resolution that's been put forward by the member for Brandon West.

We will be looking to other jurisdictions across Canada for support in moving ahead, and assuming that this resolution passes, which I'm feeling pretty good about this morning, we will then work with the federal government to see what we can do to move this ahead.

I can say there's been a lack of enthusiasm by other jurisdictions. I am aware that certain other jurisdictions have put on the record their opposition to moving down this path. As Manitobans, we do punch above our weight when it comes to working with the federal government and our provincial partners to try and move things ahead, and I do undertake—this will be something we take on.

It would be my plan, when this resolution passes, that I'll write to Minister Nicholson, who's the Minister of National Defence in the federal government. It would be my intention to send a copy of this resolution, and also to explain, based on the record being generated here today, why this is a matter of importance for members of the Manitoba Legislature, for Manitobans and indeed for active military personnel.

And as well, I can put on the record that the registrar of MPI, who's responsible for driver and vehicle licensing, attends an annual meeting of registrars across the country, and certainly Manitoba will be putting this on the agenda of that national meeting to see if there are other things we can do, perhaps to exercise some influence on some other jurisdictions that may not be as interested in following us.

Of course, our government has been a strong supporter of the military in Manitoba, and we do support both current members and our veterans and the services that they receive, and again, I'm pleased we can stand with one voice to speak on this issue in support of our military.

Driver licensing, of course, is a provincial responsibility. Each province has its own ability to have its own system. The member who spoke last

talked a little bit about some of the challenges when there's merits and demerits and different systems that different provinces have. That means there are some details to work through, but not something which is insurmountable if other provinces are prepared to come online.

I think it is important to talk a little bit about some of the things we've done, both respect to licences, but generally to make things easier for military families. We want military families to feel comfortable when they move to Manitoba. Frankly, we want military families to stay in Manitoba once their military careers have ended, and we've had some success in doing that. We'd certainly like this to continue.

It's important to notice that we changed the rules not that long ago to make it easier for military personnel to obtain their driver's licences. Even though driver's licences are a provincial responsibility, there are certain things imposed on provinces by the federal government in its relationship with other countries which have required certain additional hoops to be jumped through when a provincial driver's licence is sought.

And certainly, military people face this challenge. When someone doesn't have the requisite time in Manitoba, the general rule had been that they have to find a guarantor, someone who has known them for a certain period of time. We acknowledge if somebody's transferred in from Cold Lake or they transferred in from Gagetown or any other Canadian Forces site, they may not know someone in Manitoba for two years who can certify they are who they say they are. And that's why MPI has worked with other jurisdictions to make sure that their military commander can act as that guarantor to ensure that a military person is able to obtain a driver's licence on a timely basis.

And at present, it's also worth noting that individuals who are in the military do have a form of military driver's licence. It is limited, though, to individuals driving military vehicles for work purposes. And I acknowledge the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) point that we want this to be easier for driving any vehicles at any time for military personnel.

One of the other challenges for military families when they move between jurisdictions—sometimes many times in a career—is making sure that they have a family doctor. And the challenge exists in Manitoba as it exists in every other province across

Canada, and I'm very pleased that Manitoba was the first to step up and take some extra steps to assist military families in making sure they've got a family doctor.

And, indeed, what happens when a military family is transferred out, of course, another military family generally is transferred in. And working with family doctors across the province, we've made sure that family doctors hold those spots so when a military family relocates to Manitoba, they know that having a family doctor is going to be a given, and I think that's very, very important.

There are other areas of support that our government provides to military personnel when it comes to driver licensing alone. MPI offers a certification program with the military here in Manitoba in which we recognize class 1, or large truck licences and air brake training provided by the Canadian Armed Forces, and what that means is they can apply with MPI to have their licence upgraded to a higher level without the need for testing.

It should be noted that NATO personnel and their spouses are entitled to operate under valid home jurisdiction civilian licences, and they can do that indefinitely. With other folks who come to the province, there may be a time limit. With our NATO partners we don't require that to be the case. We also waive driver testing to NATO personnel and their family members that transfer in if they have a valid civilian driver's licence in their own jurisdiction. MPI also accepts the Canadian Forces in Europe military licence, or CFE, for exchange to a Manitoba class 5 or class 6 licence.

And, really, the last thing I want to put on the record is we support military families, and we talked about how we work together—perhaps a bit ironic today when the previous hour was spent effectively debating the merits of a regional trade deal as opposed to a national trade deal—is how the Agreement on Internal Trade has actually had big benefits for military families. When we talk about trade deals, usually for most people that means making the flow of goods and services easier. Well, we see it a different way, and, indeed, the Agreement on Internal Trade has a section on labour mobility—I was very proud to sign on behalf of the Province of Manitoba—which acknowledged the trade of people moving across jurisdictions as well.

And for military families it has often been difficult in our country for them to carry on their occupation or their trade or their profession when

their spouse gets transferred to a new jurisdiction. An example of that, which is a real example, would be spouses who've been daycare operators or have worked in child care in different provinces. They're transferred to another province, their intention is to continue to supplement the income of their spouse who's in the military and to use their experience. Until quite recently it was frustrating for people moving across provincial boundaries.

Now, with the Agreement on Internal Trade, which is a national agreement, it allows military families to be able to take up their regulated trade or profession or occupation wherever they may go, meaning that somebody who's been running a daycare in New Brunswick, when they come here to Manitoba with their spouse they'll be able to also operate at the same level, and, for example, add to our incredible child-care investments.

It works other ways, as well. There are many tradespeople who may not have a Red Seal certification but who may be in a regulated trade. The Agreement on Internal Trade also makes it very easier, and I have heard from many military families who appreciate Manitoba's leadership on this issue to make it just that little bit easier for families to adjust as they continue to move.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to support this resolution today. I commit to the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) and all members of this House that I will take this up with Minister Nicholson and, as well, MPI will be taking this up at the next national meeting to see if we can take some additional steps to make things just a little bit easier for a deserving military personnel.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I'm—it's a pleasure to rise in support of this resolution. I would like to thank my colleague from Brandon West and colleague from St. James for seconding this resolution.

I think it's very important that we take this opportunity to recognize and thank all of the military personnel and their families, not only the process of military actions outside of the country, but even inside the country. The training measures that they take to be prepared to protect us should the need arise is actually very risky ventures, and certainly they put their life on the line every day.

And I see that very often, because we do have a training facility, non-military training facility at

Southport Aerospace for many of the flight training. They do all of the rotary wings and multi-engine training is actually done out of their now. And they—there is a class there almost all the time, in fact, sometimes we have multiple classes there, and it—I was at a graduation not too long ago where I think we graduated about 18 members, 15 of which were Canadian. The other three were NATO members from the UK, in this case, and they had come here for rotary wing training because that is the base that we do that out of, and, certainly, it's a great opportunity. It's a great addition to our community. They're very welcome members of our community.

* (11:30)

But this actually does drive home the problem of licensing. Many of the Canadian members have a great deal of difficulty getting their licence transferred and current for Manitoba situation, but the NATO members are fine because as has been pointed out, they have a longer period of grace, which does create some problems because we have no public transit system in Portage. So, that if they need to go off the base at odd hours and they are, frankly, 24-7 when it comes to the training process. They do night flights and all of that. They do find it very difficult to—if they happen to live off base, to get to the training facilities, and I have certainly heard some complaints about that from people saying, how are we supposed to get there? And they don't often come with their families because they usually are there only for six to nine months, occasionally a little longer if they are getting trained on two types of aircraft at the same time, and that has created some problems for them.

So this would certainly provide a solution and I would encourage all members to support this resolution. We certainly—these are very busy people. Just to give you an idea of how many of—in the last graduating class, there were 15 Canadian graduates. There were 300 applicants for those 15 positions. So it's a very elite level that they're operating at and that training, as I mentioned, goes basically all hours of the day including night flights and in different conditions. They're up in the air when, frankly, sometimes we're not even out on the highways. So, it certainly—because they want to be prepared for any circumstance. So it's certainly very trying and there has been, in the past, more than a few accidents. Certainly, they strive for zero situation but—and we've been very fortunate—there have been no loss of life and no serious injuries. But I can tell you when you look at a helicopter that has screwed itself into

the ground, you wonder how anyone can walk away from those. There's not a great deal left.

And, so, certainly I don't think these people should have to worry about other situations, things—details like being able to drive here in Manitoba. I think we should do whatever we can to accommodate them with a national driver's licence. They're here for a very short period of time and in our case it's a very intensive training period. They don't have a lot of spare time and certainly they don't have a lot of access to public transport or even to the issue of getting their licences updated.

So I would certainly encourage all members of the House to support this. And as I said earlier, I think we owe military personnel a great deal of thanks. It's been said many times that you don't want to have to deal—to use your military, but the best preparation—best way to avoid having to use them is be prepared and we certainly have a very good military and we are working—striving very hard to have them prepared to deal with any set of circumstances.

It's interesting to note, actually, we have one of the helicopter pilots that actually flies for STARS is also located in our community. He's ex-military, got his training at the base at Southport, certainly more than qualified to do what he's doing and certainly providing another level of service to Manitobans that is appreciated by a lot of people in rural areas and we're glad to see the choppers back in the sky.

We were quite concerned when they were grounded for the three-month period and certainly we want to see that service available to all Manitobans but particularly to those that are in locations where it's difficult to get in in some circumstances in a timely manner with other emergency vehicles. And you don't have to be very far from the city of Winnipeg for that to be the case at certain conditions. So, certainly, we want to respect and recognize that too.

We also have had a great number of people that have served in the military, particularly on the air force side, that have retired into our community and I would certainly like to take this opportunity to express my respect for them. They're great members of the community, often very active in the community. They're very disciplined people, given the nature of their training. They get a lot done and, frankly, they're some of the best volunteers you can find in a community because they're—they've moved around so much, they see the opportunities and what

can be done in the community. And it's great to have them on board.

So, that said, I would certainly like to encourage everyone in this House to strongly express their support for this resolution. I would encourage the government to pursue it as quickly as they can at an—on a national basis. Sometimes these things take a long time to get done—I understand that. But this would be one that I would doubt that there would be much resistance to. Maybe some technicalities, as was pointed out the member from Spruce Woods, in terms of merits and that sort of thing. But surely we can resolve those when we're all in agreement that the benefit is mutual for us both.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): I'm pleased to put a few words on this resolution from the member from Brandon West, and I'm also pleased to say that I represent the area that is 17 Wing in the province. My dad was with the air force. I think he would be very distraught if I said he with the military. He was always proud of being with the air force. And as an air force brat—and that term is used affectionately—I had the opportunity of moving around the country, following my father as a child, and so I understand the importance of resolutions like this and others.

And I think that the military is an important part of all our communities. I know in St. James and Assiniboia there's lots of volunteers. And the military reaches out—not just the base, not just the family, but the entire community. And I think that leads into the scouting groups, the cadet groups—all the different volunteer organizations in the community are touched by the military and, again, the air force.

One—before I go too much further on the resolution though, I'd like to recognize Mr. George Apps. Many years ago, when I was first elected, he came to me and he said, as a veteran, I want veteran licence plates. And he came up with the idea first. I had sent it to the minister at the time. And I'm very, very pleased that he started that initiative. He, as a former veteran, really was proud of it. He bought one right away. And that has really led to a lot of pride and recognition for the military.

I'd also like to say thank you to the former member for St. James and our first military envoy, Bonnie Korzeniowski. Because together we started the practice in 1999 of meeting with the military on a regular basis, listening to their concerns and knocking them off one at a time. And I'd like to

congratulate the newest member—the current member for St. James (Ms. Crothers) as her role of military envoy, because that tradition's continuing.

And back in '99, it was funny, because there was lots of issues. And simple issues that, actually, I am pleased that we started the process of finally meeting with the military as a provincial government. It hadn't been done prior to this, I understand. I'm pleased that we do continue to meet. And simple things, like the fact that there's now a traffic light at the corner of Ness and Whytewold. Rather than traffic accidents, we have a traffic light. And it was funny, because the colonel who was in charge of 17 Wing at the time was so excited about the traffic light that we actually commissioned a little statue and gave it to him as a retirement gift, and that was his gift.

But I think that this is a good proposal, because I think anything we can do to show recognition of the military, to show the commitment of what they've done in our community and for our country and for our world, is important. So I think it's important to continue to look to make that well and better. So when people get transferred in—I'd like to reiterate some of the things that we've accomplished.

One of the things that was unbelievable is back in the year 2000, I found out that demerits could be transferred to licences, but not merits. So they had found a way to transfer demerits, if a person had a bad driving record, but couldn't transfer the merits. I'm pleased to say that was the first thing that the former member some St. James, Bonnie Korzeniowski, and I took on. We won the battle, and both merits and demerits get credited, and hallelujah. And so that allowed people to get that done.

We also worked very, very hard to make sure that they didn't have to go run around to make sure that they had a notary sign their documents. Their commanding officer could sign the documents, and that made it a heck of a lot easier.

* (11:40)

The other thing that we found out was it wasn't just the militaries. Military was important but also their families. And throughout the years we talked about how not just the licence, but other services were important, like family doctors. They mentioned that it was frustrating because often people would be here for a year or two years, and they could get a doctor because the military provides doctors for the serving personnel. But their kids, their families, their

wives, their spouses couldn't get a family doctor. And so I am pleased that we provided an expedited way of having people get doctors.

The other issue that came up, and I think it was 2002-2003, was the lack of daycare spaces. If you were here a short duration, then what would happen is that you couldn't get into a daycare. And so I'm pleased that we contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the MFRC daycare, which provides daycare services for infants, for young children, and even before- and after-school programs for military personnel and others, and I think that's important.

I also think it's important to say what else we continue to do. I found it passing strange that the military could serve our province and country and be overseas in Afghanistan or Europe or one of the 154 places where they've done peacekeeping missions, and what happened, then, is we would disenfranchise them. They couldn't vote in our provincial elections if they were out away from our province for a long period of time.

I am pleased that we were the government that allowed the military families and military service-people who were doing service around the world to vote. I thought it was really strange where they would be defending democracy in Afghanistan or in Cyprus or wherever, but they couldn't vote in Manitoba elections.

And simple things—simple things—that came to us, like the fact that if a person's insurance came due while they were serving overseas, it would be automatically renewed and we'd fix it up at the end, rather than say, oh, your car is now disinsured.

It was really important to see how we have moved forward. And I think that we have more to do. But the key is that a lot of this movement has been done under our government. And it's been done, I think, because what we've had is we've had a series of military envoys that really have passion and care, take their role very, very seriously. So I think I'd like to congratulate the new member for St. James for doing a good job and continuing the tradition. But I'd also like to say thank you to our government who has started a dialogue. Many people think that the national defence is just a federal issue. I believe that the military is important to our entire society. I think that they are huge contributors to our communities. And so I think that we all have a debt of gratitude to them, whether it's fighting the flood, whether it's doing any other service to our province and to our country. I think they've got a great role. And I've

been pleased to be involved with them, whether it's with the military run—I do admit now it's now a walk and run instead of just a run, that—when it started. But I am pleased to continue to be involved in this.

I'd like to say thank you to the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing one good resolution forward that we can move forward on. I hope that the Conservative Party starts continuing to bring more resolutions, because, you know what? It isn't just an NDP thing to support the military. It is something that even the Conservatives could do—positive, progressive things—to support the military. So I would encourage them to look at others.

I know that I will continue to work with the member for St. James (Ms. Crothers) and the people at NORAD headquarters and 17 Wing, et cetera. But it's not just the serving members, by the way. I think we also have to look at what we do with the reservists, because that's an important piece that we've moved forward a little bit on. But it's also their families.

And so I thank the member from Brandon West for bringing it. I think there's more to do. I'll be pleased to be part of government that supports this resolution and look forward to having the Conservatives continue the tradition of discussing the military with us, and seeing how we can help them, co-operatively, between the opposition and government, to move these issues forward. Because I don't think it's a partisan issue; it's a patriotic issue.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put a few words on the record with regard to the private member's resolution put forward by the member for Brandon West, the National Military Driver's Licence. I think it's a very, very good piece of work done by the member for Brandon West. As the former member representing Shilo, I had talked to many families who felt that these extra burdens, these—this red-tape kind of processes actually added to the stress the families faced when they serve in the military or have family that serve in the military. So if there's anything that we can do as legislators to assist in reducing the stresses to families, I think is a good thing. So I applaud the member for Brandon West bringing this forward.

We know that when military personnel move from province to province there are a number of challenges not only in moving the family, but also in

ensuring that they have the proper civil requirements as well as military requirements, and it creates a lot of stress on the family. I know that a number of women whose husbands are serving overseas are left in communities or, you know, provinces where they have to do a lot of the legwork in getting their own personal licences up to date and in place in new jurisdictions, and often they have to figure out ways to get the children to child care, and often these families don't live in the same communities where the child-care offices—or the child-care agencies are.

So there are so many challenges, and I know, just recently moving, how stressful it is for everybody in our family and trying to get things changed over and moved over, and I can only imagine when you, for a living, are continually moving or having a spouse leave for extended periods of time. It can add great stress and distraction to your family and the well-being of your family.

So I think this resolution, in seeking to create a national military driver's licence that military personnel can use as they get posted across the country, is excellent. Currently the Department of National Defence has 404 driver's licences used by the military to allow their personnel to drive military vehicles both on base and off base. The basic requirement for this licence is to pass a defensive driving course. Currently, Mr. Speaker, military personnel do not need a provincial driver's licence to—in order to obtain their national military licence. So when military personnel drive military vehicles on provincial roads they are technically subject to The Highway Traffic Act and any and all provincial laws. So infractions incurred while driving with a DND 404 do not count against a provincial driver's licence, but are handled internally by the military. So when not driving military vehicles, military personnel are required to use their provincial driver's licence, and that's where they get into having to renew yearly and are expected to pass relevant tests in specific provinces.

So, Mr. Speaker, the aim of this resolution is to create a national military licence that military personnel can use as they get posted across the country. It takes away some of the stress and the red tape that they have to go through when they're doing their jobs representing Canada at home and abroad, and it would make it easier for military personnel to transition between postings, as I had said earlier. There's a check list that every family has to follow when they're moving, and to reduce the check list in this way would definitely provide time better spent

in other areas, including spending time with a family while they are together and not being posted overseas.

So we appreciate the comments from government's side in supporting this resolution, and I believe that this is a great step forward in providing a working relationship or a partnership with other Canadian jurisdictions and governments to work towards implementing a national military driver's licence program across Canada.

So, again, I want to thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing this forward and I support it wholeheartedly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:50)

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): I just wanted to take a couple of minutes to thank the member from Brandon-West for the resolution to get a national military driver's licence to make it easier for the military personnel to transition.

I think it's an excellent resolution, and I'm hoping that we'll be able to do some work, as the member from Minto mentioned, around the country trying to build support for that. It seems like something that clearly should be done in our country, and I really just wanted to thank—take this opportunity to thank our veterans and our military.

I noticed at an appreciation night not long ago over in Point Douglas, just thanking the military for their relief work done in the Philippines and DART, and I think it's always good for us to remember all the different kinds of work that our military does and all the different ways that they help us whether it's, you know, in Afghanistan, or in floods, or in other disasters that we might have around the world.

I know that personally I'm so grateful to them. My dad was in the military and certainly taught me from the time I was little how much we owe them our freedom. And I read an article recently with regard to Afghanistan, and it was written from the point of view of how that has helped women in Afghanistan who, perhaps people might recall, under the Taliban, female children were not even allowed to go to school, and many of those things have changed now. And I know I'm grateful for the people who went over and did that work for us.

I'm pleased that we've done many things that are in the power of the provincial government to do here in Manitoba. I note through MPI they've offered a certificate program with the military in which we can recognize class 1, which is large trucks and air brake training provided by the Canadian Armed Forces, and they can apply with MPI to have their licence upgraded without testing. MPI also waives driver testing to NATO personnel and their family members that transfer in if they have a valid civilian driver's licence. They accept the Canadian Forces in Europe military licence for exchange to a Manitoba class 5 or class 6 licence. And I know that we've done many other things in Manitoba trying to make it easier in a job that, I think, everyone in the House recognizes as incredibly difficult.

And I'm glad that we're doing those things, as many of the things as possible, that we can in Manitoba, and so I would just again like to thank the member for bringing this excellent resolution forward and I hope that we are going to be able to talk the rest of Canada into going with this.

Thank you so much.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): It's a great privilege to stand up and acknowledge this bill being brought forward.

I'd like to share some information personally. My son-in-law is in the military. He served in Afghanistan, come from the Shilo department, and we shared many stories of the challenges anybody that's in military services. But to go through the challenges and the mental challenges that a number of the soldiers—as we hear about the tragedies that a lot of the military personnel are dealing with today—and I want to ensure everybody here today is that—I'm very fortunate my son-in-law is very happy to be back in Canada, and being here. And my wife and I, too, we are blessed with two grandsons that, I think, to all of us who have grandchildren really appreciate, you know, the love of our grandchildren and sincerity of what's being discussed today.

But I do want to share some important commentary to our military folks, and this being proposed and the opportunity of this being—it's a small price to pay and to explore of the services, the life—the potential life sacrifices that our military people put out today.

And to fact is that, you know, when we talk about—a member opposite brought in the search and

rescue and the fact is that my son-in-law who—we have two grandchildren now and daughter—and he chose that, you know, Afghanistan—he did not want to go back, and he was fortunate enough, he was very fortunate enough to go through the task of getting into search and rescue and he is fortunate enough to have spent three years in Gander, Newfoundland, serving with search and rescue and now has moved over to Kingston in Nova Scotia and still be serving with the military in search and rescue, SAR tech.

And as grandparents, the wishes will be some day that hopefully the two grandchildren and our daughter and son-in-law will be stationed in Winnipeg because there is a search and rescue here. And if not, at least be involved in the STARS helicopter services because we definitely have a common denominator with STARS and the military services that he is involved in today and will be for a lot of years.

And I'm very, very proud to stand up today and recognize first and foremost the military people that have served in Afghanistan, for the ones that we've lost unfortunately in the services and the scars that remain with a lot of them of what they witnessed.

And not to be repetitious, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm very fortunate to have my son-in-law back with all his, you know, all his sincere love for the family—and we're one big happy family. And I just have to say I—we're so fortunate.

So it's a great privilege to stand up today and make that known that I appreciate the 'resolun' brought forward by the member opposite and, you know, God bless for those people that stood for our military service because I think it's—we're very fortunate in Canada to reward or recognize the driver licence issue as a small reward for what the military people serve in our country.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on the resolution?

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find agreement by everyone in this House that this has been passed unanimously by members of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to let the record reflect that this resolution has been passed unanimously? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Swan: I think, since we're so agreeable, we might also find agreement for you to call it noon.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Is it the will of House to call it 12 noon? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 20, 2014

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