

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

**Official Report**  
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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 28, 2015

*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—the honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

## House Business

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Just prior to proceeding to private members' business, I just want to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will be meeting on Monday, June 1st, 2015, at 10 a.m. to consider the process for hiring a new Auditor General.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will be meeting on Monday, June the 1st, 2015, at 10 a.m. to consider the process for hiring a new Auditor General, for information of the House.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** Yes, we're on a roll, Mr. Speaker. So, in accordance with 31(9), I'd like to announce the private member's resolution to be considered next Thursday is Recognizing Jordan's Principle, brought forward by the honourable member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese).

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that, in keeping with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution to be considered next Thursday is entitled

Recognizing Jordan's Principle, and the resolution will be sponsored by the honourable member for Agassiz.

Any further House business?

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing none, we'll move on to private members' business, second readings of public bills.

Are we ready to proceed with Bill 202?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 204?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 206? [*Agreed*]

**Bill 206—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Employer Advisers)**

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll now call Bill 206, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Employer Advisers), sponsored by the honourable member for La Verendrye.

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Brandon West, that Bill 206, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Employer Advisers), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Smook:** I'm honoured to be here today to present this bill and put some words on record in regards to The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Employer Advisers).

This bill creates an office of the employer adviser in the Department of Labour. This office would mirror the Worker Advisor Office currently in place and would provide advisory services and, if needed, represent employers in their dealings with the Workers Compensation Board.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that part of our job as MLAs is representing our constituents. We get phone calls quite often in order for our constituents to help them in navigating the system. And this—what this

bill is about is providing assistance for employers to navigate the workers' compensation system.

We know that there's all kinds of new employers. There's employers with small businesses and small workforces that have never really had to deal anything with workers' compensation. So this bill is going to allow a employer adviser to help them to navigate the system, which I think is very important, and I'm asking for the support of members opposite in order to see this bill continue.

This bill's a necessity in the current structure of the WCB act, Mr. Speaker. There is disparity in our current system that exists between workers and employers when dealing with the WCB. I know, coming from small business, I've had the experience in previous—in my previous life as a business person where you had to—you had questions in regards to what was happening because it's something we don't deal with every day, is the Workers Compensation Board, and it's always nice to have somebody you can turn to.

And, yes, there are worker advisers at the WCB, but this isn't quite the same. It's nice to have somebody there who consistently works with employers, not just employees, to understand the system, to help them navigate it.

And members opposite have always said that they are very much in favour of small business. Small business is a very important part of Manitoba. That's why I feel that it is important for them to support this bill, because worker—like, the employers, at odd times, need services that they cannot access presently.

CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, has spoke on this area, so it's not something new to it. In their latest issue, they had a wish list for Christmas, and one of their wishes was to create a WCB employer advisory office. CFIB is—represents a lot of small businesses in Manitoba, and they feel that it is necessary.

So it's no different than other associations that represent workers feel that it's necessary to have a worker adviser. Employers also feel that there should be an employer adviser because that adviser will be in tune with what's happening today, and it is very important to have this position.

And, as I'll say, small business is the backbone of Manitoba's economy. And without them being able to flourish in this province, they cannot

contribute to the economy of this province as well as they should be.

There's already six provinces that have employer advisers: BC, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador. And I'm just wondering why this has not been brought forward before.

\* (10:10)

I mean, we bring—this government has brought a lot of bills forward, you know, whether it be for consumers or for workers. And they say they're in favour of small business, so I would see that this is a bill that they should be very seriously looking at and passing—sorry, I got that now. So I would, again, ask them to do this.

The employer adviser has been in Ontario since 1985, in Nova Scotia since 2008. And Manitoba's had a long time to look at these different provinces that have these offices. I don't know why they have not taken this on before. The employer adviser act has been in Ontario for that long. Like, there's no reason why Manitoba shouldn't be helping out small business.

This bill would make all parties before WCB equal in terms of access to information and advocacy. This government isn't—is fond of increasing the regulatory burden on business but when it comes to providing services, they're a little bit slow on this and I don't know why they haven't acted on this.

It's also important that in 2005 a Legislative Review Committee recommended the creation of this office to enhance the principles of natural justice. The panel included Wally Fox-Decent, Chris Lorenc, Sharon Rogers [*phonetic*] and Pete Walker. And these are all people who, going back to 2005, were asking for this to be present as far as the WCB goes.

And the—again, I mention the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; I mean, that is their lobby. It would be the same as somebody like the MGEU coming in and asking for something. I'm sure all the members opposite would say, yes, we need to support that. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has asked for this before and I would think that this is a bill that should be supported by everybody opposite.

I would again ask that the members opposite take a serious look at this bill because if they don't, it's showing that they are not interested in helping

small business. Small business, again, is the backbone to this province and I would really, seriously ask them to support this bill and continue on, because it is fair for employers to have the same rights as employees. And I—again, this is something that's very important to the province of Manitoba.

Thank you very much.

**Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** I'd like to thank the member opposite for bringing this bill forward because it gives us an opportunity to put on the record the exemplary history that we have in terms of working together with business and with workers in order to create a safe culture for workers in Manitoba.

We have certainly worked together with the employers to—with WCB, to create a culture where there's a prevention component to it, and working with employers as well as workers, to make sure that everyone comes home safe at the end of the day. And it's certainly our commitment as a government to make sure that Manitoba workplaces are among the safest in the country. And that means working together with business, as well as workers, to make sure that we develop that culture so that the environment is such that it becomes a habit, that safety is not something that you have to think about consciously but that becomes part of the everyday working in the work environment.

One of the things that WCB has done is that they are an administrative tribunal, but they do have a variety of appeal mechanisms that are available to workers, but also to employers. And one of the things that WCB offers to employers is the Fair Practices Advocate and the Fair Practices Office. The Fair Practices Office was established in 1989, in a tradition of the Ombudsman role, to assist both injured workers but also employers when they identify concerns arising out of fairness or natural justice. The Fair Practice Advocate mandate is to hear complaints, investigate and to make recommendations for corrections. And this is something that is not just for workers but it is also there for the employers.

So we believe in working together with small business to help them grow in our economy, to create the good jobs. And we've introduced a number of initiatives to assist small businesses so they can continue to grow and thrive in Manitoba.

And over the fall, we had a gathering of the businesses in the small strip mall that my

constituency office is in. And I know that one of the young businessmen said Manitoba was the first province that he had the opportunity of working in where he did not have to pay a small-business tax, and he really appreciated that.

As said earlier that this is an opportunity to put on the record some of the safety things that we have done to make Manitoba a very safe and progressive province to work in. And we continue to do that, and part of this is with the five-year plan on injury and illness prevention, and over the past two years, we have been focusing on a number of safety issues, and we continue to do that because as we work into it, we find other things that we are wanting to do and create a greater safety culture in our province.

SAFE Work Manitoba was one of the things that came out of the safety—pardon me, the injury and illness prevention that the Workers Compensation Board created. And over the last two years, I've had the opportunity of attending a number of events where SAFE Work Manitoba has presented some of the ways in which businesses, workers can be part of a safe work environment. One of the things that we do is we have SAFE Work Manitoba offer safety and health resources to employees and employers in 18 different languages because we know that Manitoba is a very diverse province, and we are inviting workers from around the globe to settle and work in Manitoba. And, certainly, the opportunity to have safety information provided to employers and employees in 18 different languages, I think, is a huge asset.

One of the things that we've also had is SAFE Work on Wheels, which has been used by many employers to bring to their organizations to help develop skill sets and various safety procedures, and it's a demonstration and on—hands-on kind of opportunity for both employers and workers to see what the effects of poor safety conditions and how to do it properly.

One of the things that I also attended a couple of weeks ago, which was a huge milestone, is that through SAFE Work Manitoba, we've been working with employers to try to encourage more safety associations, and I had the opportunity of being at the Mercedes-Benz dealership to make the announcement through the motor vehicle safety—the Motor Dealers Association, the creation of a motor vehicle safety association, and it's the first one we've had in 20 years. We've been working really hard to encourage employers to see the opportunities of

creating safer workplaces for their—which, in turn, benefits them. And, certainly, one of the big things about the announcement was that by encouraging associations, that also creates an opportunity for businesses to see a reward and a reduction in their WCB rates.

This year, we also created the position of serious-injury support worker, who will act as a resource to access incident investigations and provide referrals to government and community services so that grief counselling, financial aid, advocacy, housing and peer support is there if there is a serious injury.

And that gives me the opportunity to say, since 1999, the time-loss injury rate in Manitoba has dropped by 43 per cent. In 2014, 1.8 days were lost to workplace injury and illness for each full-time worker. This figure has been declining steadily over the past five years, resulting in less disruption to injured workers and their families and also reducing costs to the provincial economy.

Late last year, we amended The Workers Compensation Act to strengthen injury prevention and increase penalties for claim suppression, targeting those employers who put their employees at risk by not reporting accident claims. And in 2013, we passed amendments to The Workplace Safety and Health Act that allow safety officers to stop work at unsafe work sites and give workers the right to refuse unsafe work. But all of this is always done in collaboration with employers because I think the employers also see the value in making sure that their workplaces are safe for their workers because that certainly has an effect on their bottom line as well.

One of the things that we have also done over—through the five-year injury and illness prevention plan is created our Chief Prevention Officer and funded a dedicated Crown prosecutor for workplace safety and health violations so that we can help keep workers safe and help employers recognize the issues that they need to deal with in order to make their workplaces safer.

\* (10:20)

We've also expanded our opportunity for our contact across the province and we added a new Workers Compensation regional office in Brandon, for a total of three offices in Manitoba, including our head office in Winnipeg, but also a satellite office in Thompson that provide initial adjudication of claims

and case management service. So we've made a point over the last number of years at making sure that access to WCB information and support is available right across the province.

And I think that in all the work that we have done, I think the philosophy that we have espoused is that we want to work together with business and workers to make sure that we are making sure that workplaces are safe, that they are productive, that the economy of Manitoba continues to flourish, and we can only do that by working in conjunction with employers. And I think there are enough mechanisms in place through—excuse me—the Fair Practices Office that if there are concerns from the standpoint of the employer, I think we have opportunities to resolve their issues and provide them the support they need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, good morning to you and to members of the Assembly.

I want to thank my colleague from La Verendrye for bringing forward this bill again. I know it's an important bill not only for him and for many small businesses in Manitoba, but for organizations like CFIB who've lobbied for this bill.

I listened to the member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) intently, Mr. Speaker, was a little bit mystified when she talked about the track record that she says her government has with working with small businesses. Certainly, we know that that track record—*[interjection]*—and I hear the sound of one hand clapping on the other side. And it was the one hand of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), and I'm not surprised he wasn't joined by his colleagues, because his colleagues certainly know that this is a government that brought in an expanded PST onto many small businesses, whether it's those who are doing haircuts in the—*[interjection]* Well, now the Minister of Finance says that the PST is zero—I must have missed a news release this morning—but I look forward to checking my BlackBerry after this and seeing that the PST's been reduced to zero instead of going up to 8 per cent, like I believe that it has happened.

And that has hurt small businesses, Mr. Speaker. The expansion of it to businesses like those who are doing haircuts, for example, we know and we've had examples in this House about how that has hurt small businesses. Minister of Finance has heard those

people who have come and said that it's hurt their business. Now, we know that there are many small businesses who won't go out and express that concern to them directly, but we hear it all the time and he has to know that it has an impact.

We also know that the PST was not only expanded, which was not something promised by the government, but there was an increase from 7 to 8 per cent, and that has to hurt business. And we know that hurts business, whether it's businesses near the Saskatchewan border, because they're competing not with just other businesses in their community or in the province, they're also competing with businesses across the border. That has an impact. That hurts those small businesses and the government is just tone deaf to that. They never consulted with Manitoba businesses about whether or not they should expand the PST. They never consulted with Manitoba small businesses about whether or not they should increase the PST, and yet they have the audacity on a Thursday morning to stand up and say that they have a great record of consulting with small businesses. Well, certainly not on those issues, and they are certainly pocketbook issues which do impact businesses in the province of Manitoba.

But they have an opportunity in a very small but meaningful way to redeem themselves this morning, Mr. Speaker, and how they can redeem themselves is to support this legislation, is to pass this bill.

Now, for those who are, you know, following the debate, they should know that not every business in Manitoba—in fact, the vast majority of businesses in Manitoba wouldn't have the ability to staff individuals within their company who know how the workers' compensation system works, for example. Most of the businesses that we have in Manitoba—the backbone, I would say, and I think it's been repeated in this House—of business within Manitoba are small-and medium-sized businesses. And in many instances there's one or two employees who are working in a small business, and those one or two employees are not just responsible for running the retail operations of the business, but they're also responsible for all the other paperwork that happens. They're not just the ones who are selling the product across the counter and dealing with customers, which is, of course, why most people enter business, because they want to provide a service. They want to provide something to those who are the customers of their business. They don't get into it for all the paperwork; they don't get into it for all the regulation, and they certainly wouldn't have known

how much regulation that there was until they get into the business and, particularly under this government where regulation has grown and grown over the last number of years and red tape has grown and grown over the last number of years.

And so, really—[interjection] Well, and I continue to hear the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) chirp from his seat. I imagine he's going to be the next one to speak, and I don't like to predict these things, Mr. Speaker, I'm not into the prediction business, but I'm willing to predict that the Minister of Finance is going to stand up and he's going to cherry-pick a couple of numbers and say, oh, everybody's happy, everybody's happy here, everybody's happy there.

Well, I challenge him, and maybe we could—and I've made this offer to other members of the past. He's waving some sort of a paper there—we would have a forum. We could have a little community forum. We could invite small businesses and we could talk about regulation and we could talk about taxes and the impact that it has on Manitoba.

Now, you know, they used to do some of that during the prebudget consultations, which were more fulsome, back 10 or 15 years ago. Now they're, of course, much smaller and you have to register and you probably have to be an NDP member to attend, Mr. Speaker, and it's hard to get those meetings established. In fact, I think, in my own community of Steinbach, which is the third largest city and one of the fastest growing areas of Manitoba, we've had one prebudget meeting in the last 13 years, I believe, under this government. That's how they respect businesses who are growing in Manitoba. That's how they respect businesses who are doing well.

Now, of course, it's changed, and so you have to sign up, you have to be an NDP member, you have to be somehow be pre-screened before you can come to these little meetings, and then they tell you what to say. And then it's hard to get the results, and so it's all gerrymandered. But even with the gerrymandering, you—they couldn't still come up with a report that said that businesses wanted the PST, so we—increased—so we know that this is a government that doesn't listen to small businesses and doesn't listen to business people.

But I continue to have the offer open for the Minister of Finance. I'm happy to have that forum to discuss tax—the taxation level in Manitoba. And I know that he's not going to be happy with that, Mr. Speaker. So I look forward to the spin that he's

going to bring forward but I look more forward to him supporting this bill. And he can actually put his talk into action here this morning. Because what would be the difficulty, what would be the negative, about having an advisory for employees, for these small businesses?

It would help the system, Mr. Speaker. It would make things go better. It would help those within this system, whether they are employees or employers. And, really, that's what we want. We want a workers' compensation system that works effectively, that works efficiently for all those who are involved in the system. And really, by having an adviser for those who are into the—in small- and medium-sized businesses, it would do that. It would make the system work better.

Now, that's probably where the government is not going to want to support this, because they're not really into systems working better, Mr. Speaker. And so that's probably where they're going to get hung up. But ultimately, we should all have that goal. We should all have the goal to have a system, a workers' compensation system, that is working effectively for both sides, because when both sides are engaged and know the rules and know how to represent their individual interests, that's when things work their best.

And so I hope that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), if he's speaking next, and it looks like he's getting warmed up in the cockpit there, Mr. Speaker, that he's going to support this legislation and say that it's something that is going to be easy, that it's something that's going to be better within the system. It's not a huge cost factor. It's not a regulatory factor. In fact, it would be the opposite. I think this is something that will reduce costs in the long run. When you have a system that works more effectively and more efficiently, then you actually save money.

Now, that's going to be a lost concept on the members opposite, the issue of saving money. You know, we know they talked about a Lean Council that kind of disappeared, and then they talked about amalgamations that didn't actually save any money. So this would be a difficult concept for the members opposite to grasp. But I want them to walk with me this morning and to think about this, about saving this money, Mr. Speaker. An efficient system saves money. So this is their opportunity this morning to support this, to show that they actually support small- and medium-sized businesses in Manitoba in

a meaningful way, in a way that's going to help them but also help workers. And we always are mindful that there's two sides of the equation when we're talking about workers' compensation.

So I hope that they're going to support this bill. It'll benefit workers. It'll benefit the employers. It'll benefit the compensation system. And by virtue of that, I think it'll benefit all of us as Manitobans. So I look forward to this bill passing this morning, Mr. Speaker.

\* (10:30)

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** It's a pleasure to rise today in the House. I—and now I want to correct the record from what the member of Steinbach put on, talking about how our prebudget meetings that we didn't have—and he, actually, that's not true; we have dozens of them every year. I had one in my area last year and they've rotated around the province. They go everywhere. We tour the province and do prebudget consultations. So, you know, everything that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) claims, you know, a lot of facts are missing from his speech, Mr. Speaker.

You know, it's funny that he talks about finding efficiencies but then he votes against budgets that do so. When we brought forward the efficiencies for the WRHAs, when we merged them from an all-time high—when they had 15 WRHAs, I believe, and we've merged them and we've brought them down, creating efficiencies, they voted against that, Mr. Speaker. When we brought down the school divisions from underneath them when they had over 50 to now around, I think, it's 37, they voted against those efficiencies. We merged Crown corporations saving millions of dollars a year. What do they do? They voted against those.

So the member for Steinbach talks a big game about wanting to make the system more efficient, but what—when we actually—we produce efficiencies and propose efficiencies, what do they do? They stand up and vote against them every time, Mr. Speaker. It's quite comical when you think about it. Every time that we have an efficient motion come through this House, they vote against it.

So, you know, he wants to talk about things he was—one of the words I heard him use was cherry-pick. Well, the doom-and-gloom party over there likes to try to bash what's going on in Manitoba, but the fact is that Manitoba is expected to lead the country, lead all provinces with GDP and

growth of 2.8 per cent in 2015 and again in 2016. Now, I don't like—I know they don't like to hear all of these things, but you know what that does, Mr. Speaker? It buoys small businesses, the very small businesses that they say they're trying to help are going to be buoyed by the fact that our government is making key investments, and the economy is going to be the No. 1 economy in the country. But once again, what do they do to that budget that's going to create that system that is going to help small business? They voted against it. So they're the champions of small business.

They're, like—it's like they're the champions of the EIA 75 per cent rates. The drive-by poverty advocates over there like to say that they championed something because last year they mentioned something. Well, you know what? That's another example of where they failed again, and they're voting against the budget that's doing the exact thing that they're sort of asking for, except we actually expanded on that, which is, once again, going to help small business. Because by our system of helping people on EIA and the rates going to 75 per cent market rate and creating the Rent Assist program, we actually help small business.

And I'm going to explain this really slowly for the members opposite because they might not be able to grasp it, but our system doesn't create a welfare wall where people cannot go to work and the benefit gets cut off right away. So small businesses can actually access the people under our system, because those people can be on the EIA system, get the 75 per cent market rate and then they can take that rent aid and continue on and work in a small business without being cut off. Not like their system, Mr. Speaker, where they would have you stay on that system forever. You can actually work underneath our system, which will help the very small businesses that they proclaim to be the friends of, but then they vote against all of the investments every time.

When they were in government, Mr. Speaker, small-business tax, 9 per cent; underneath us, zero. And they vote against budgets like that all the time. We are the ones helping small business despite what they want to talk about across the floor. It's like their drive-by poverty advocacy. It's a drive-by solution for them for small business. They don't want to help the small business, because they don't vote for anything that actually helps them. If they were actually serious about this, they would vote for this budget because 75 per cent of median market rates

for EIA is going to create a system where those people can now go, collect the rent aid and then go work in a small business, help out those small businesses.

You know, we've done so much since taking government in 1999 against—around safety, it's unbelievable. When they took—when they had—when they were in government, Mr. Speaker, their rate of inspection for health and safety was somewhere in the neighbourhood of, I think, it's 1,600 inspections a year. And now that we're in government, we're doing over 12,000 inspections a year. So they want to talk about health and safety; they voted against that budget and all the budgets that we've put in place to put in health place—workplace health and safety workers.

I was part of the five-year review—the five-year plan that we're putting forward that created more workplace health and safety inspectors, more inspections, a visible workforce of health inspectors that have—now have marked vehicles that can show up at work sites, and they're seen around the province.

And what do they do when we put those investments in place? They voted against, Mr. Speaker. They voted against Bill 31 last year, which was to help workers on the highways be safe. So they want to talk a big game about safety and they want to talk about helping people be safe and businesses be safe, but in the reality, they vote against everything that we put in place.

You know, we've seen—the fact that we've seen our rate reduction in injury claims go down since taking government speaks to the fact that we are actually—we actually have a good plan in place. But, once again, they vote against all the investments that we put in place. They don't like the idea that we can actually report workplace health and safety actions.

In fact, I believe it was their past leader that said that workplace health and safety, that businesses can police themselves. I believe that's what he said. And during the election campaign, we don't need more inspectors because businesses can police themselves. Well, we know where they would go with this, Mr. Speaker. We know that the actual health and safety of people wouldn't really matter. It's all about them and big business and saving the bottom line for them, which is actually kind of funny because when they were in government they actually charged a higher business-tax rate to those small businesses.

So they like to talk a big game about that stuff, but they really don't put any supports in place.

We also made it mandatory now in our province that workers receive health-place-safety orientation and that we have employer-employee committees at workplaces so—that way there can be issues that are around the workplace, health and safety are raised.

We have protected highway workers, which they voted against, as I said before.

In 2014 we had—only had 1.8 days lost in workplace injury and illness for each full-time worker, and this figure has been steadily declining over the last five years. But that's because we put investments in place.

They would see a half a billion dollars cut out of the budget, and they would say, once again—just like I've spoke on every other piece of legislation that we work on—they would say that this isn't the area that they would cut. And they wouldn't cut health and they wouldn't cut this and they wouldn't cut that. But the reality is out of \$500 million being cut from the budget, everything would suffer. And I'm sure workplace health and safety would suffer because that's exactly what happened underneath them when they were in government. They didn't invest in workplace health and safety. The department didn't have the resources to go out and inspect workplaces. We put in place resources for those safety inspectors to go around and intend to do more inspections, which helps our—people of Manitoba come back home safe and sound at the end of the day. And that's what we want on our side of the House for every single person in this province, is to be able to go to work, work safe and come home every day fully intact to their loved ones.

The members opposite don't put any resources in places and they haven't voted for anything that we've ever done that put resources in place that help workers come home safe. It's all about business and tax cuts, Mr. Speaker. They propose tax holidays and tax freezes. Well, how would you pay for the inspectors that we need? How would you pay for this programming?

Even underneath this proposed bill they're talking about creating another layer of people to advocate. Well, there's a cost to that. But, once again, they would vote against that cost. So they can talk out of both sides where they want to put something in place, but they wouldn't fund it. It's the absolute definition of hypocrisy.

You know, we've created a Chief Prevention Officer and we've funded dedicated Crown prosecutors for workplace health and safety, and, once again, they voted against that. When we put in more Crown prosecutors last year, when we upped the amount of Crown prosecutors, they voted against the budget that funds that.

So it's really easy for them to talk about all of the things that they propose to do, but when we actually do them, they vote against the resources to do it every single time. I don't understand how they don't seem to get that.

And I think that small business in Manitoba is seeing the results right now of what our government is doing with the largest growth in the country of GDP, a strong economy. And you can go to any business around the province right now, and what we see is people shopping because they have good jobs. There's not deep cuts. Their stores are packed. I was out shopping this past weekend and we see—we saw tons of people shopping. I was out at Lacoste just in my area actually, and you know what? I—there was—the store was so packed that people were parked along St. Mary's Road shopping. People have discretionary income like never before and we are helping small business because this—is our government supports that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\*(10:40)

**Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance):** It's a pleasure to get up this morning and to participate in this debate regarding the government's support for small business, and our support for workers. And I want to follow up on the words expressed by the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) as he talked about the strength of our economy and the great future that we have here in Manitoba as an economic leader.

And this has been verified by independent sources; it's been verified by the Conference Board of Canada, which predicted just today that Manitoba will be one of the nation leaders when it comes to economic growth here in the nation. We'll be just one tenth of a percentage point behind BC. They're forecasting that Manitoba will lead the nation in 2016 and that we'll be in second place in 2017. For the next three years, Manitoba will either be in first place or second place when it comes to leading the nation when it comes to economic growth. And that's a pretty good record, and it's a record that we're

proud of, but it's a record that we were able to achieve by working with all Manitobans. We worked with the business community, we worked with the labour community, we worked with the educational institutions, and I 'thaid', it's something that all of us can be proud of.

But, you know, the only group in the country, the only group that, in this province, that are disappointed, the only ones who are disappointed that we lead the nation in economic growth are the members opposite, the gloom and doom party across the way, Mr. Speaker. The only ones who are disappointed that we're setting records when it comes to creating jobs—20,000 jobs were created last year, which was a record, the highest growth rate in the nation. The Bank of Montreal said that this was a record—first—13-year record that was broken in terms of our economic growth, in terms of jobs. They also said that those people are getting paid more. So not only are there more jobs, those people are getting paid more.

The Conference Board of Canada has predicted that Manitoba's economic growth will be—will allow us to have the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada—the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker, just behind Saskatchewan, but leading the nation in terms of economic growth, leading the nation in terms of job creation. We've doubled the size of the economy since we've come into power. Just this week, it was revealed that Manitoba saw the highest increase in retail sales. The member talks the other day, or just—the member from Steinbach talks about, you know, the economy and gloom and doom. Retail sales are up. Wholesale sales are up. Housing starts are up.

I just want to refer the member to the Conference Board of Canada report that just came out today. Well, first of all, it said—the Conference Board predicted that Winnipeg will be the second—will be the fastest growing city in western Canada, 2.5 per cent, Mr. Speaker, faster than Saskatoon, faster than Regina, faster than any other city across the West except for Vancouver. But the fastest growing city in western Canada is Winnipeg, and it's because we have a stable workforce here, we have competitive taxes, we have a competitive business environment that exists here in the province.

That gives me a chance to talk a little bit about some of the tax cuts that we brought in for small business, Mr. Speaker. We came into office, the corporate tax rate was 17 per cent, the highest in the

land, the highest in—that is the legacy of the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). That is the legacy of the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). That is the member of the—of the legacy of the Leader of the Opposition. That is their legacy: the highest corporate tax rate in the nation. Now it's down to 12 per cent, one of the lowest in the nation.

Well, let me talk about small business. This—many members of the House this morning talk about how this legislation will help small business. But what really helps small business is eliminating their ability—or taking away their requirement to pay provincial tax. We came into office the small-business tax rate was 8 and a half per cent. Through progressive action, it's now zero. It's now zero. It's the lowest in the nation. There's no other province across Canada that has a zero per cent small-business tax rate other than Manitoba. And what have we done this year? We've now increased the limit from \$425,000 to \$450,000. What has this done? Well, this has taken another 2,000 small businesses off the tax rolls; another 2,000 small businesses will not have to pay any income tax to this government, to this province.

When I met with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, when I met with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, when I met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, they all said, well, you know, if you were to lower taxes, we will take that money, small-business men and women in this province, we'll take that money and they will use it to invest in research and development. They'll take that money to invest in building their businesses and they'll take that money to build and create more jobs and more opportunities for here and Manitoba. That is what they promised to do, and we know that is what they will do because we have a terrific story here in Manitoba in terms of job growth. We have a tremendous record when it comes to growing the economy.

And, Mr. Speaker, what do these great members across the way—you know, they pretend that they're the fans and friends of small business. These great titans of industry across the way, what have they done? Every single step along the way, they did—they tried their hardest to block those tax cuts. They did every step along the way. They stood up and they voted against the—our actions have lowered the corporate tax rate from the highest, 17, to the lowest 12 per cent. Every single step along the way they stood up and they voted against it. Our actions to eliminate the small-business tax from 8 per cent

down to zero, they stood up and they voted against us increasing the threshold from \$425,000 to 450, which it took additional 2000 of small businesses off the tax rolls. They voted against that every step along the way. They should be ashamed of themselves. The member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) should be ashamed of herself. The member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) should be ashamed of himself. He proposes—he stands up and suggests he's a big friend of small business. They had their chance. They had their chance to stand up and vote for small business. They didn't. I say shame on them.

**Mr. Peter Bjornson (Gimli):** I'm absolutely delighted to be standing in the Chamber to speak about this resolution as brought forward by the member opposite, and, quite frankly, I'm surprised to see anything proposed by the Conservative Party that starts with the workers' compensation amendment act. The history that they have with respect to labour in this province is actually pretty sad with respect to the relationships that they've had with labour groups, and to even bring in a bill that talks about workers' compensation amendment act is rather fascinating. But, of course, when you drill down you find out what the bill is all about and you'd see that its focus is more on the employers than the employees. But that, you know, that's fine. That's fine.

**An Honourable Member:** Have you read it yet?

**Mr. Bjornson:** Yes, actually, I have. The member asks if I've read the bill, and, yes, I have. I was having trouble sleeping the other night.

But anyway, as you go through this, Mr. Speaker, and you talk about what we've done for small businesses as well as for workers in this province, there's clearly no comparison between the two parties, and, actually, it was myself as a teacher being attacked as a labour organization by the members opposite, which is what brought me to this Chamber in the first place, in terms of their history and how they dealt with the 'teachees' profession in the '90s. So when you talk about the two parties, there's clearly no difference—or a clear difference between the two parties, I should say.

And as the former minister responsible for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, it's curious, because every time I talk to employers, their biggest concern, the biggest concern that they would raise with me was having trained workforces. That was their concern. They wanted to have a well-trained workforce and they were concerned about labour shortages. So that's signs of a—that, you know, that's

a good problem to have. Growth is a good problem to have and managing that growth means having the proper training in place, having the proper programs in place to support our young people so that they can get good jobs in our communities and in the many vibrant businesses that we have throughout the province.

I think the Leader of the Opposition even said yesterday, if I'm not mistaken, he said we have a great economy in Manitoba, something to that effect, saying how diverse the economy is, and that diversity of that economy depends on having a well-trained workforce. So when they reference the CFIB—[interjection]—CFIB tends to focus, yes, on taxes; they tend to do that. But the rest of the businesses that I talked to when I was minister was talking about training; we need to have a skilled, trained workforce.

\* (10:50)

Now, the thing that I'd like to ask the members opposite, when they are saying that they're going to bring in a balanced budget and they're going to cut half a billion dollars from the budget, how is that going to impact the training that's going to be necessary to provide the workforce for those businesses that keep saying we need a trained workforce, Mr. Speaker. Well, I guess, hopefully we'll never find out. Hopefully we will continue to govern in this province and continue to do the things that we do best in terms of supporting families, in terms of supporting young people who want good jobs, in terms of providing the best opportunities for training for those families and for those young people in Manitoba so they get the good jobs that they need to succeed and contribute to our community.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's really curious when we hear members opposite talk about business and the relationship—again, just as my colleague from Selkirk, the Finance Minister, and the honourable minister said, they had an opportunity to support small businesses and talk about the reduction in taxes, and they did nothing. They did not support that. They always talk the talk about cutting the payroll tax, they promised to do it four times and they never did it, and we've made moves on that particular legislation that has allowed for groups to be exempt from that in terms of \$60 million less through that through our initiatives.

So we are continuing to move forward in supporting our businesses in creating a competitive

climate, and I think members opposite are the great deniers here; they're denying the fact that our economy is strong, that it is one of the best in the country, that we have among the lowest unemployment rates in the country, that we have one of the best skilled and trained workforces in the country, Mr. Speaker, and that Manitobans are quite confident as we move forward, as we have been moving forward in very difficult economic times, that our plan is indeed working.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I remember when I was the minister attending to a small business that was celebrating the zero per cent. It was a new shop in Osborne Village where they—it was a muffin shop, actually, and they had—or a cupcake shop, I should say, and they had taken the cupcakes and formed zero with the cupcakes to indicate the percentage of business tax that was being paid by small businesses in Manitoba.

You know, it's also something I'll often hear the members opposite chatting from their seats saying that we on this side we don't know anything about business, and I'm rather curious where they draw those conclusions. I myself did run a small business successfully for several years, started when I was 14. And, you know, some of them make fun of what the business was; I don't care. I actually—I had to work five years teaching to get the same salary that I was drawing from that small business, but of course I was teaching when they were in office and we were getting salary cuts when they were in office.

So, you know, I have some experience running a small business. I know the sacrifice that was involved in running a small business. I know other members of my party, of this caucus, who are business people, and for them to suggest that we have no authority to talk about business is quite frankly really disrespectful, Mr. Speaker. For them to suggest that they know about business and we do not know about business is really quite ridiculous, but they make those assertions all the time.

And, of course, they know so much about business. When they were in office, they were charging 9 per cent small-business tax, and here we are at zero per cent, Mr. Speaker. And here we are providing all kinds of different supports for training and providing all kinds of different supports for young entrepreneurs who want to hang out their shingle as tradespeople in rural Manitoba, with grant programs, working with a variety of different community organizations, non-profits,

nongovernment organizations that are—have a mandate to support the development of business in the province of Manitoba, including—it used to be the young entrepreneurs organization, Futurpreneur, I believe, is the name of the organization now. And I've seen many young entrepreneurs who have benefited from that who have set up businesses who are doing very well and contributing to our community and expanding their businesses as they grow, because our economy is growing.

So, when you look at this particular bill and you look at their record versus ours, again, it's kind of refreshing to see that we're able to have this debate, but of course it's not something you often see coming from the members opposite anything referencing workers' compensation or programs to support workers. But again, Mr. Speaker, the contrast between the parties is quite clear in terms of our records.

So again we thank the member for bringing the bill forward, and again it's an opportunity to speak about the things that we've been doing to support small businesses but also, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the way that we support workers.

And, you know, our five-year plan on injury and illness prevention through the WCB and—had created the SAFE Work Manitoba initiative, and we've often seen those ads on television promoting safe work. And I know that it's really important for me as a parent whose children are now entering the labour force, that they need to understand that if they are asked to do something that they do not feel safe doing, that they can refuse that work.

And I know that my son suffered a minor back injury at work, and he knew exactly what to do with respect to that back injury in reporting it and what not. And he, fortunately, does not seem to have the same issues with his back that I have with mine, but after suffering that injury he knew that he should take the appropriate measures and report it and ensure that his supervisor was aware and that he should not be asked to do a—continue to perform the duty that he had been doing at the time where he suffered that injury.

But SAFE Work Manitoba is a very important part of what we've been doing, and we've seen the commercials where it talks about understanding safety in a number of different languages, recognizing the diversity in our province and the number of new Canadians who are coming to our province who are contributing to our society. And we know

that SAFE Work Manitoba has set goals to develop more industry-based safety associations, and I think my friend—colleague, Minister of Labour, talked about the Manitoba Motor Vehicle Safety Association, the first safety association in 20 years, and that there are many more safety associations to come because we feel that that is the critical part of providing safe workplace environments and engaging many different people in that discussion to ensure that those safety mechanisms are in place.

And, of course, we also created the position of serious-injury support worker to act as a resource to access incident investigations and providing referrals to government, to community service, grief counselling, financial aid, advocacy, housing and peer support.

We're continuing to support our workers and I know that this government has a great record and will continue to do so, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge):** It's my pleasure to rise today and to speak a little bit about the work that the Workers Compensation Board has been doing, continues to do with employers as well as employees, and some of the work that they do, the very good work that they have done and continue to do, helping injured workers getting back to work.

One of the things that we know is that the longer an injured worker is off the job, the more difficult it is for them to make that transition back to the workplace. And I know from my time being the minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board, that they take their role of working with employers and injured workers very seriously when it comes to making sure the supports are in place for an injured worker to return to work. And sometimes that can mean modified work; sometimes that can mean putting in place technology or other equipment that the injured worker needs for a reasonable accommodation for their disability, and I know that they take that role very seriously.

I also know that the Workers Compensation Board recently is become more responsible for the prevention agenda in Manitoba, preventing workplace injury. And they are also doing extremely good work bringing together employers and employees who want to work together to make safer workplaces. I know that recently, if not imminently, they will be announcing the formation of the first employers' association whose goal, whose

mandate is going to be to help create a safer workplace culture within that industry.

And so much of workplace safety does come back to the culture of a workplace. We want workplaces who make safety not only a priority, but where working in a safe environment is part of the everyday culture of the workplace.

I think it's also important to put on the record the work that the Workers Compensation Board has been doing with its partners in the employer community and its partners in the labour community, specifically the Manitoba Federation of Labour, on ending the practice of claim suppression. Claim suppression is an insidious practice that we know has happened in various workplaces where the injured worker's right to put forward a claim under the work—for workers' compensation is actively denied and thwarted by the employer. And there are many examples of this.

When I was minister, we commissioned a report by Paul Petrie, who looked into this and went and talked to employers and found very real examples, and in some places found that in a workplace they were very proud—

\* (11:00)

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

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Fort Rouge will have seven minutes remaining.

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 6—Improving Manitoba's Long-Term Personal Care Home Strategy

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m., it is now time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution to be considered this morning is entitled Improving Manitoba's Long-Term Personal Care Home Strategy, sponsored by the honourable member for Emerson.

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Tuxedo, that this resolution be read today in the House—[interjection]—seconded by, yes—okay, done that. I read the resolution? Okay.

WHEREAS there are currently 125 licensed personal-care—[interjection] What? [interjection] I did that. [interjection] Okay.

I move, seconded by the MLA for Tuxedo—right—that,

WHEREAS there are currently 125 licensed personal-care homes, PCHs, across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds; and

WHEREAS all trends point to an increasingly aging population who will require additional personal-care-home facilities; and

WHEREAS by some estimates, by 2036, Manitobans will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal-care-home beds, an annual increase of approximately 250;

WHEREAS from 2009 to 2014, the provincial government has inadequately increased the supply of PCH beds by a mere 68 across the province, with a decline of 43 throughout the Prairie Mountain RHA since amalgamation; and

WHEREAS the number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia-related illnesses who require personal-care-home services are steadily increasing and threatening to double within the current generation; and

WHEREAS the last personal-care-home review in many areas, including the Swan River area, currently under administration of the Prairie Mountain regional health authority, was conducted in 2008; and

WHEREAS occupancy rates across the province are exceeding 95 per cent, with some regions, such as the Swan Valley, witnessing 100 per cent occupancy rates; and

WHEREAS there are more than 1,750 Manitobans awaiting placement in a PCH; and

WHEREAS these high occupancy rates are creating conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and home communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial government be censured for their lack of progress in increasing PCH beds, stripping many Manitobans of their right to age with dignity; and

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the provincial government be urged to immediately enact a province-wide review of the long-term-care needs of residents of Manitoba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED—correction, Mr. Speaker—

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial government be censured for their lack of

progress in increasing PCH beds, stripping Manitobans of their right to age with dignity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the provincial government be urged to immediately enact a province-wide review of the long-term-care needs of residents of Manitoba; and

BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the provincial government recognize the stresses placed upon the health-care system by the aging population and be urged to increase the availability of long-term-care spaces, PCH beds, in communities across the province.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

WHEREAS there are—dispense?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense.

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

*WHEREAS there are currently 125 licensed personal care homes (PCH) across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds; and*

*WHEREAS all trends point to an increasingly aging population, who will require additional personal care home facilities; and*

*WHEREAS by some estimates, by 2036, Manitoba will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal care home beds—an annual increase of approximately 250; and*

*WHEREAS from 2009 to 2014, the Provincial Government has inadequately increased the supply of PCH beds by a mere 68 across the province, with a decline of 43 throughout the Prairie Mountain RHA since amalgamation; and*

*WHEREAS the number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia-related illness who will require personal care home services are steadily increasing and threatening to double within the current generation; and*

*WHEREAS the last personal care home review in many areas, including the Swan Valley area, currently under administration of the Prairie Mountain Regional Health Authority, was conducted in 2008; and*

*WHEREAS occupancy rates across the province are exceeding 95%, with some regions such as Swan Valley witnessing 100% occupancy rates; and*

*WHEREAS there are more than 1,750 Manitobans awaiting placement in a PCH; and*

*WHEREAS these high occupancy rates are creating conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and home community.*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Provincial Government be censured for their lack of progress in increasing PCH beds, stripping many Manitobans of their right to age with dignity; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Provincial Government be urged to immediately enact a province-wide review of the long-term care needs of residents of Manitoba; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Provincial Government recognize the stresses placed upon the healthcare system by the aging population and be urged to increase the availability of long-term care spaces (PCH beds) in communities across the province.*

**Mr. Speaker:** The resolution is in order.

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to this resolution today. And I guess I don't have to put on the record that I have a special interest in seeing that these care homes are what I would expect to use when I get old.

The resolution is related to the provincial government's capacity, or lack thereof, to provide efficient long-term-care provisions for Manitobans. And these seniors have the—have dedicated their lives to working hard and growing Manitoba into the amazing province that it is, and they deserve to age in dignity and with respect, close to their loved ones and to their home communities.

Mr. Speaker, what we've seen is many, many, many areas now that the—there are no facilities or the facilities that are there are full, overcrowded, and we see people moving or being moved to a personal-care home 50, 60, 70 miles away, some is 35 miles, but none in the communities that they were raised in or in the communities that have the 55-plus and the other senior facilities.

We know that Canada, and therefore Manitoba, is witnessing an avalanche of an aging population,

and in tandem with the aging population, rates of dementia are becoming more prevalent, requiring better equipped personal-care-home facilities. According to the Alzheimer's Society of Manitoba the number of Manitobans living with Alzheimer disease or other dementia-related illnesses are steadily increasing and threatening to double within the current generation.

While there are hundreds upon hundreds of Manitoba seniors awaiting placements in a personal-care home, we're witnessing precious hospital beds being used as a PH-PCH replacement. And, Mr. Speaker, we have many dedicated nurses working in these care homes that—and what we're seeing instead of having in a PCH where a person that has been panelled and should be in a PCH, they are in a hospital. We're using valuable nurse time looking after these people at a very high cost to the budget, to the Health budget of Manitoba. I don't think that's a good use of our time, of the nurses' time. And also what we're seeing now as a result of this is that we see the ORs are closing in some places in the province, and I'll mention the one in Altona that's recently closed because of a shortage of nurses. As the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) has said, there's a shortage of nurses. We can't open the OR; we're looking at doing that down the road, perhaps in the fall; who knows?

These types of promises have been made by the NDP government in the past. We're going to do—we're going to balance the budget by 2014; we won't raise the PST; we won't raise taxes. They've made all kinds of promises in the past and, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that they have been unable to keep those promises and, in fact, I'd like to think that when they made the promises, they knew they weren't going to keep them. They did them for political reasons only, and that's not the reasons that Manitobans have elected a government. They elect a government to look after their best interests, not the political interests of any political party.

The substitution of having PCH-panelled individuals in a hospital is just cost-prohibitive. It's not the best option to allow seniors to age with dignity and respect and, additionally, as hospitals are beds they use for long-term care, they can no longer serve the needs that they were designed for.

The NDP have failed miserably to anticipate this—the plan for the needs of the aging population over the last 15 years, and this resolution is urging a drastic and necessary change.

Mr. Speaker, I might point out that prior to introducing this, I asked some of the members on the other side of the House if they would second this motion, and they flatly refused. So they don't believe that seniors in this province are worth supporting at all. They had an opportunity to do the right thing today, and they turned that down.

According to FIPPA information provided by five respective regional health authorities, straight from the source, from 2009 to 2014 registered PCH facilities have only increased by a net of one. Fifteen years and we have a net of one new facility in the province, my goodness. It shows that when facilities are brought on line, old facilities which are essential are decommissioned. One net new facility in five years will not address the needs of Manitoba aging population. According to credible FIPPA information provided from respective regional health authorities between 2009 and 2014, the NDP only imagined to—only managed to increase the stock of PCH beds by a mere 68 across the province.

This mere increase of 68 beds over five years amounts to an average of 14 new PCH beds annually, and this is a desperate cry—desperate cry—from the 250 annual increase needed necessary to fulfill the 3,600 that we need—or the 5,100 that we need by 2036.

\* (11:10)

So the amalgamation—FIPPA documents show that the Prairie Mountain Health region saw a reduction of 43 beds. As the expenditures in the Health Department exceed 40 per cent of the total government expenditures, the proof is in the pudding that Manitobans are paying way more and getting substantially less than they deserve.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give the members opposite the opportunity to get up and correct the record and step forward and support this resolution.

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** A pleasure to rise today.

And while I do agree with the fact that we need to have our family members treated with respect and dignity as they age, I guess I'm going to be looking forward to seeing the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) stand up and support our budget that puts in place the resources to do such building projects.

Every single time they stand up—it's much like my last speech on the last bill, Mr. Speaker—they

stand up and they ask for more and more and more, but they're proposing a half a billion dollars' worth of cuts when it comes to their budget. So I would like to actually see a plan put in place by the opposition and by their leader on how they're going to afford to build these PCHs with the half a billion dollars' worth of cuts that they're proposing.

Every time they stand up and they ask for something, they're asking for more. Well, we're delivering, but we have to do it in a way that is responsible and that is within our means. And even though the members opposite think that, you know, our budgets aren't good and they vote against them, they certainly love when we invest in more PCHs like we did recently in Morden and Winkler area. We built one—we're building one there. We've actually built six more since taking office in '99—millions of dollars of investment. But, once again, every single time the members opposite voted against those investments.

So if they were willing to work with us on a budget and support a budget that would have hundreds of millions of dollars more, we could build more PCHs, we would entertain that idea to—if they were willing to say that our budgets were actually good and invest in that kind of stuff, we could look at building more PCHs. But obviously underneath their plan they wouldn't be building any more PCHs or roads or schools or hospitals or anything else.

You know, the member opposite, he was talking about health care. You know, the member for Emerson was saying that there's a shortage of nurses. Well, imagine what the shortage of nurses would be underneath their government, the one that cut 1,000. We've had over 3,700 net new nurses in Manitoba since taking office in '99. Now they say, oh, that's not enough. Well, you're right, and we're going to continue to build and we're going to continue to educate. And you know what part of that is? Building the new schools that educate those nurses, Mr. Speaker. I know that they think that nurses just pop out of the ground somewhere and we don't have to pay them, because they vote against every budget that has the funding in place for 3,700 new nurses.

And we also hear them talk a big game about doctors, Mr. Speaker. But, once again, we've graduated the biggest classes of doctors after they cut the spaces and we've added more new doctors. They just like to use the number that there's 2,900 doctors lost—or 2,300, sorry, lost from Manitoba. Well, then

there's actually 2,900 gained, because we have a net gain of over 600 new doctors in Manitoba. But, once again, they voted against the funding that put in place the training for those doctors; they voted against the funding that put in place the salaries for those doctors. You cannot have it both ways, and with the member from Emerson is trying to talk about is spending money that he's voting against. He's voting against the very budget that could build more PCHs and is going to build more PCHs.

Since—in 1999, when the members opposite were in government, there was only 69 supportive housing units in the whole province. Today we have over 700, Mr. Speaker. We are working on it.

And I know the member opposite was talking about a province that's aging. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is one of the younger provinces because we have a really strong economy and attracting young people here, so we're actually one of the younger provinces.

And we are looking after our seniors when we talk about doing things like we built more PCHs. We spend—more supportive beds in the province. We've increased the property tax credit for seniors so they can stay in their homes longer. The members opposite vote against that every single time. In fact, when we came into government, they had—their was at \$250, the property tax credit, and they were looking at taking it away completely. There's a document that the leader of their—their old, old, old leader of the opposition was talking about taking out the \$250 tax credit altogether. Well, we didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. Instead, we boosted it to \$700 and then we boosted it for seniors to \$1,100, and now we've added the seniors tax credit on top of that, so they're up to \$1,500 in tax credits.

And I hear the member opposite laughing, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), but I'm sure that he's one of those people who's probably gone out and applied for his senior tax credit and he's getting back taxes. What he also seems to forget is that underneath his government in '99, the salary that he makes right now, he'd be paying over \$3,000 more in tax. Our tax structure, we've actually cut it back so people are paying less taxes despite what the members opposite like to say.

Tens of thousands of seniors rely on home care every day. What do they want to do, Mr. Speaker? Privatize home care, taking it away, taking good services away from people. Instead, what do we do? We bolstered home care. We've made it better.

We've invested in it. We've created more—we have more home-care workers than we've—than we had underneath their government.

So they want to talk a big game about investing and doing things for seniors, but the reality is is when we see what they've done and their record on it, it was abysmal. And they've also voted against everything we've done to try to make it better for seniors. There are 125 licensed PCHs in Manitoba today. That's six more than there were in 1999. I mean, I don't understand why the member opposite can't see that. We're building a new one in the Tabor Home of 100 new beds in Morden-Winkler. That's the—another one that they voted down.

They froze health capital spending during the economic downturn in the '90s when they were in power. You know what we did, Mr. Speaker? We spent more, and it worked. It created jobs and it made our economy—right now, we are the No. 1 economy. What they did was freeze that, and they made people suffer. Child-care workers, there was less child-care spaces. There was less PCH spaces. Hospitals were crumbling. Nurses were being fired. Teachers were being fired. So the member for Emerson wants to talk about supports for seniors, well, that's what we've done, 3,700 more nurses. Those nurses are helping seniors. More personal-care homes: We've added 100 beds in the south Winnipeg at the Winnipeg Mennonite Seniors Care centre.

Manitobans can know that there's one party in this Legislature that supports them in building, and it's ours. They do not build. We've seen time and time again, everything that they've done was mothball projects, cancel projects, 'spreeze'—freeze capital spending, and they don't spend on—and they fired nurses, they cut spaces in medical spaces in school. How is that going to help the seniors? How is having less doctors and less nurses going to help seniors in our province? How are freezing—how is cutting a half a billion dollars going to cut—help the seniors in this province? How will those cuts help the seniors?

You know, I just keep seeing this double standard over and over and over from the Leader of the Opposition and his party that they want everything and everything done now, but they won't vote for the funding to be put in place. It's such a double standard. And when they were in government, what did they do? They just cut and cut and cut. So, Mr. Speaker, they can't have it both ways. You know, we've more than doubled funding

for home care from one point—\$149 million to over \$328 million last year. But what do they do? They voted against that. Is that what the—is that where—the savings that the Leader of Opposition talks about? He would cut a half a billion dollars? Is that where he would start, by cutting \$328 million from home care? That certainly wouldn't help seniors.

He would devastate the health in—the health care in Manitoba, which would hurt seniors. He would cut so deeply to the training programs that we train new nurses; he would cut to the doctors programs. And you don't have to imagine this. This is exactly what he did when he was in government. It—they say that your past record dictates future performance. Well, his past record was cut, cut, cut, cut, cut, freeze spending, don't build personal-care homes. They didn't build a thing when they were in government. They didn't build a single thing. And you know what? We've increased our personal-care homes; we've looked at 200 million more in hundreds of more beds in—for our personal-care-home strategy in 2011. We're moving very quickly to have more nurses, more home care, more home visits, mobile doctor units so they can go around to the—to all of the people in their homes, letting the seniors stay at home longer, tax credits.

I know the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) makes fun of the seniors' tax credit, but I'm sure that, you know, the seniors that actually get it, they're appreciative of it, Mr. Speaker. Underneath their government, they would cut that credit. They've made no mistake that they want to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget, which would see tax credits for seniors gone, nurses gone, doctors gone, personal-care homes probably mothballed and closed because you cannot afford to run these things underneath the cuts that the opposition is calling for.

\* (11:20)

It's absolutely the height of hypocrisy when they talk about building more in our province, but they want to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget. They cannot have it both ways. And, you know what? The people in my area are seeing this. They understand that the Leader of the Opposition is all about reckless cuts and they understand that those reckless cuts will only hurt the people who need them the most.

On our side of the House, we're investing in personal-care homes, investing in hospitals, investing in nursing, investing in doctors. You want to look at all the personal-care homes being built—six more

since coming into power and there's more to come, Mr. Speaker. Just watch—the member for Emerson can just watch and see.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** It's my pleasure this morning to rise and put a few words on the record with respect to the resolution brought forward by the member of Emerson for Improving Manitoba's Long-Term Personal Care Home Strategy. And I thank him for bringing home this—bringing this resolution for debate today. It is important. It is important for our seniors. It is important for our communities. And I believe that the member's resolution serves to underscore the urgency of the need to act in this important area of policy and creating capacity for our seniors, for our grandparents, our grandmothers and grandfathers, our community members, who are in need of that level of health care.

I would want to at the beginning of my remarks also state that I'm aware that the member for Emerson was at the recent Age and Opportunity expo just, I believe, this past week. And he was the only MLA in attendance there, representing the PC Party. I know that that was a great context in which he was able to convey with seniors and hear their concerns about personal-care-home capacity.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the member for St. Norbert's (Mr. Gaudreau) comments, he spoke a number of times about what he called hypocrisy.

I would submit to you that one look no further than the NDP's policies on the provision of health care, which state a fundamental intent to provide the right care in the right place and at the right time. And then this NDP government has the audacity to put in place an alternate-placement strategy in the southern region and elsewhere in the province of Manitoba, that takes seniors, who are panelled and awaiting placement in a personal-care home, and at the very moment in their lives when they need the system to respond and to make available to them, a place in their community. Instead, under this minister's leadership, and under the policies of the NDP, these seniors who have worked, who have lived, who have raised a family and gone to church, and volunteered in the community, and given back and built businesses and contributed to enterprises and coached little league or hockey, in a community, they are sent away from the community.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues and I, I know colleagues on both sides of the House can tell heartbreaking stories of family after family who come into the constituency office or call us or email, and they say, is this for real? Is this really happening? Does my mother, does my father, does my uncle have to go here? I could use the time allotted to me to do nothing more than anecdotally report to you, case after case of seniors sent away from loved ones, sent away from children. I will only—I'll give one. I'll give one example. They are all egregious. They are all a betrayal of trust.

But the one that sticks out to me most was a Mr. Peters from Winkler. Now, I visited Mr. Peters to deliver to him a certificate congratulating him on being married for 75 years. And I remember showing up at his house and saying, surely this isn't right. Like, did my assistant get this correct? Are you married for—and he chuckled and he laughed, he says, yes, I'm 95. I was married at the age of 20. His wife was not there. She had just been put into care. We had a great visit. We had coffee. And three months later, the family of Mr. Peters was back in contact because now he was 95. His wife, who had always lived around Winkler, there was no space for her at Salem Home or Tabor Home. And she was placed, I believe, in Crystal City.

Now, I say nothing to fault the level of care provided by the Crystal City facility. In no way would we disparage the efforts of communities to receive these seniors sent to their homes. But, what I will say is that Mr. Peter's had his wife, in a fragile state, with the—with onset dementia, sent away to that home, and he did what any loving spouse would do. He took heroic measures to go and visit her. A 95-year-old, climbed behind the wheel and made the one-hour drive, not once, not twice, but he was making the drive out to see her. He started by doing that to visit her at hospital and then he was trying to do that and the family finally stopped him. What they put in place instead was this—when—oh, I correct myself, Mr. Speaker. I remember now, she was placed at Morris. She was placed at Morris. The reason I remember that is I was called by the two sons of Mr. Peters, both of them. I mean these are the kids, but they were both retired. Remember their father's 95, and they told me of the hardship to the family because both of these sons took it upon themselves to co-ordinate with dad so he could visit his wife in hospital.

How they did this was from St. James one would leave home and travel Highway 3, come to Winkler,

pick up dad, go to Morris to see mom, return to Winkler from Morris, drop off dad and return to Morris one more time to see their mother, back to St. James. The next day the other son would step up, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I could tell you story after story after story of that kind of heartbreak.

And we know, I know that my colleagues have reported in the past, you take a senior citizen who is approaching that age where they might be experiencing dementia and the effects of Alzheimer's which is ravaging—you take them out of everything that is familiar to them and you place them in unfamiliar surroundings; they will not thrive. And then when they do not thrive the staff and the doctors and the attending medical experts who do not know them will prescribe psychotropic drug treatments because they're getting out of hand. And when the parents or the kids come next to see mom or dad, or grandpa or grandma, everything has changed; fundamentally the situation has changed. Mr. Speaker, this is a situation of the greatest importance and it is a situation in which the NDP is failing.

Mr. Speaker, I represent the communities of Morden and Winkler. You have heard me many times mention Salem Home and the CEO Sherry Janzen. You've heard me many times mention Tabor Home and the CEO Sherry Hildebrand, hard-working boards of directors, hard-working CEOs. *[interjection]*

Now, I can hear the member over across the way there, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) chirping about we built that, we built Tabor Home. It is true; just this last week we started pounding in the foundation, the footings for Tabor Home. The issue in this province, while the community is very grateful, is not this government being able to take credit for one ribbon cutting after 20 years of lobbying. The issue, the fundamental failure of the NDP is the fact of the matter that in the 16 years they have governed they have built less than 400 personal care-home beds, when we know that the Centre for Health Policy in Manitoba has clearly reported that by the year 2036 there will be an additional 5,100 beds required to meet what they call the rising tide of seniors who will be tipping exactly into that demographic when they will require these services. This is a catastrophe waiting to happen. Just do the math. If you just do the math on the time that has elapsed—or I should say the duration of time between now and then and the amount of beds needed, you need 250 beds per year planning in advance to get there—*[interjection]* And this member continues to

chirp even while he knows that his government has added, I believe, 63 beds since this Premier (Mr. Selinger) has been in power, 63 beds.

Mr. Speaker, it's like the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) said, the equivalent of one personal-care-home facility. So this is huge.

Here's what I would like to convey. Here's what I'd like to put on the record in the short time remaining. I know and many of the members here know how much we have capacity and expertise, how much we have intent and compassion in these personal-care homes all across the province. But rather than work co-operatively with personal-care homes, especially private and faith-based ones, this government in 2012 brings Bill 6 with provisions that say we will now select your CEO; we will remunerate them however we see fit; and if you run a surplus we will invest it wherever we see fit in general revenues.

This is the kind of slap down. This is the—a kind of appropriation mentality. The NDP wants to own them. They don't want to co-operate with them. And I have never been so proud of an MLA as to have attended the Bill 6 committee hearings, as I know the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) did, as I know other members in this House did, and saw the positive advocacy with which the faith-based community and with which the private-personal-care-home experts came that committee, and they said you shall not act in this way. You will not proclaim these provisions because they run afoul of every single agreement that has ever been made.

\* (11:30)

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to see they defeated those motions. Nothing has changed over there; the same failed policy. The need is now to co-operate. The need is now for a new model. The need is now and they continue to fail.

Will they do the right thing and start addressing this coming tide of seniors needing personal-care-home capacity?

### House Business

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

**Mr. Speaker:** On House business.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce, again, that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs' meeting on Monday,

June 1st, 2015, will meet at 12:15 p.m. rather than as previously announced time of 10 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, June the 1st—or meeting on Monday, June 1st, 2015, will meet at 12:15 p.m. rather than the previously announced time of 10 a.m.

That's for the information for the House.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Now to continue with the resolution debate, the honourable member for Radisson.

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** This is with great pleasure that I rise to put my thoughts on this very important resolution which I think all members here, basically, would have believe faith that we must look after seniors.

But when the member from Emerson said that he was asking somebody to support, he should have looked at the draft and anybody with a sensible mind would not support this resolution because it says to censure. When you work together you don't censure somebody. When you work together you work together with a plan. There is no plan here except criticism of things we cannot right. You don't want to censure some government that has improved the funding from \$149 million in '99 to over \$328 million last year. That's not worth being censured, that's worth being praised.

So I think the idea of building more personal-care homes—Mr. Member, I request you to see—you and I and all of us, we will be seniors one day and we would need personal-care homes. The approach has to be seen how do you do that, and member from St. Norbert said, you need money, you need funds to do that. Therefore, you have to really look at a solution which is sustainable solution.

So let me put some more thoughts on what I will bring—add on in particular debate here is that I have—it's a very emotional issue, but I have myself, culturally, Mr. Speaker, seen some of my community members who have left the world, have gone to personal-care homes, and I have also witnessed some of my family members whose relatives have gone to personal-care homes in the US.

I have been standing here for last 12 years. We are talking about Canadian medical system—Canadian social system is unique. We don't want

to Americanize it, and I think the approach has to be very clear. We are trying to build health-care systems, personal-care systems which are universal. It does not differentiate whether you can afford or you cannot afford. Every person, every senior who needs health and care should be cared by a system which is universal. Therefore, I think it's not something that we have to repeat ourselves. We have talked about so many times here that we have—our government has done remarkably well on this issue, particularly looking after seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that there are records here that say that '99—since '99, we have added over 1,000 personal-care homes and supporting housing beds and expanded home care to meet needs of the growing number of seniors. There are 125 licensed personal-care homes in Manitoba today, six more than '99. We have gone from the 69 supportive housing units in the whole province in '99 to over 700 today. That's a more than tenfold increase.

And as I mentioned that just a few days back, a friend of mine lost his wife with cancer, but she decided, in the last days they know—knew that she not going to survive and they wanted to come home. But I must say, I was so moved when I heard that she was resting in home in her own surroundings but, yes, she was getting the home-care attention by nurses going to their home and looking after her. That kind of dignity is so unique, so wonderful for us to realize that our wishes of how we want to leave the world in the last days are cared and not really machined and programmed by a total dependence on money, and that is what the difference is.

So I think that when we talk about dignity, we talk about the dignity for all and literally not letting them go in a most undignified way. I used to be in the board of Deer Lodge foundation before entering politics, and I remember a number of years, then, I used to go and visit wards and look at patients. And I knew this—some of the dedication that the, you know, front-care workers that—nurses' aides and nurses, very compassionate, very much involved with looking after—not a mechanical, but very from the heart. And that is how I think is the difference when you look at the Canadian values and look at American values. This is what you find the difference. We are very compassionate people.

We need to really continue that, and I think that my argument here would be, yes, we definitely need more, but we need to also understand the quality of

services. We also need—we need nurses, doctors, which we are recruiting, and as I mentioned a million times here, we have seen the number of doctors being increased, including my children. When they left, there was hardly any possibility at that time in the mid-'90s to be engaged here in employment. So they left. They go back; as you know, my daughter, she's in Washington, DC, and now she compares the medical system of US and Canada, including seniors, and tremendous difference, Mr. Speaker, tremendous difference.

So I would say there is no doubt that we need to really look at such resolutions very compassionately and see how we do, but not with a butcher knife and censuring for good work that we have done. So I'm a little bit surprised that the resolution could have read a little bit more co-operative, workable; I would have said yes, we could look at it. But I think I would definitely agree with the side that this particular resolution is not—I'm not going to vote for it.

Therefore, I would say that investment in the personal-care home—and I have much to share with you, Mr. Speaker. In our riding, your riding and my riding, in Transcona, I think the ex-minister of Health, member from Southdale and I, with the member from Rossmere, we opened the Park Manor west seniors home with, I think about 100 beds, something like that. They were very, very happy that, yes, Park Manor Personal Care Home to develop a new facility that will include at least 100 new beds. The new facility will be next door to the 100-bed personal-care home of the East Park Lodge independent living complex for seniors.

So these are very unique examples of how we have built in the communities that seniors live, and then they go to personal-care homes where they're looked after very well and they pass the last days with a tremendous amount of dignity.

So I think that it's important for all of us to realize we are here to help our seniors. My mother, who died at the age of 100 years, three days shy, died in her own home with dignity. And I witnessed that and I wish I could leave that way when I go to heaven or hell. But when I leave the world, I want to die with dignity, and my children will do that. But I think what society is good enough, Canada is good enough that we don't have to depend on anybody else but the social network, social safety and the society itself that looks after the seniors in their last days.

\* (11:40)

So with those thoughts, I must say that I'm going to support our government's continued effort looking after seniors and our passion to build more personal-care homes as is our policy to make sure our health care and personal care is absolutely intact, and no budgets should slash that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** It's indeed an honour and privilege to rise in the House today and speak to this resolution brought forward by the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) entitled Improving Manitoba's Long-Term Personal Care Home Strategy. I think this is a very important resolution to be debating today.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that seniors should be given the opportunity to age with dignity in our province. Yet, under this NDP government, they are preventing that from happening in many cases. We know that there's more than 1,750 Manitobans currently on a wait-list to be panelled into personal-care homes. And we know that over the last 15 years since this government came into power, that they did not take into consideration the aging population that is before us. And it's been no surprise. We know the baby boomer generation is an aging population, and we know that they will be looking and seeking out care for themselves and for their loved ones in our personal-care homes. But the fact of the matter is this government didn't properly plan over the last 15 years, and now there is an extreme shortage of these personal-care homes in our province.

And not only that, Mr. Speaker, I think what one of the most egregious aspects of this is that Manitobans who have lived in communities all their lives, some, you know, 70, 80, 90, 100 years, many of those people, once they have found a personal-care home to move into, often, more often than not, that personal-care home is outside of their home community. And it's unfair and it's—to their families. It's unfair to themselves, and I think it's unfortunate.

I do want to talk just a little bit about, because I do have personal experience with my father with respect to personal-care homes. And I can recall back when Dad—we originally found out that he had dementia, and as a family we sat down to discuss what we needed to do, and we decided that we needed to go forward with the panelling process into a personal-care home. We were told at the time, Mr. Speaker, that there was a two-year wait-list, and so we went forward with the application process. And, unfortunately, I popped in to see—to visit Dad

one morning on the way to work, and I found my father on the floor in the kitchen, and he had obviously been getting himself some cereal, and the cereal was sort of spread all over the floor, and he had collapsed on the floor. And he had forgotten, I guess, that he had already taken his heart medication; he took another dose of it, and so this caused his blood pressure to drop significantly. So I called the 911 and these incredible paramedics came and helped and took him to the Grace Hospital where he was admitted into the emergency after some time.

Long story short, Mr. Speaker, it's a scary thing for families to find this, of course. But when he—when Dad entered the Grace Hospital, they knew that they couldn't let him go until they found a place for him to go. He—they couldn't send him home the way he was, and he was very confused and had deteriorated very quickly. And so he ended up staying at the Grace Hospital in a bed there for three or four months. And, again, that's taking up a bed for someone in the acute-care facility that should be used for acute-care patients, not for seniors who should be in personal-care homes.

So from there they found a spot for him at Deer Lodge where he went for more assessment. Again, they couldn't find a place for him to go in the community. So they then—they kept him there for two or three months until finally we found a place for him at the St. Norbert Personal Care Home which was—is a great facility, and I just want to commend all the staff there and what an incredible job they do.

But the point of this, Mr. Speaker, is that we have 1,750 people waiting on a wait-list. A lot of those people will have complications over the last—over the next little while and they'll end up in our emergency rooms; they'll end up in our hospitals. They'll end up taking up beds in our acute-care facilities which then backs up the whole system because those people should be in personal-care homes or at home with home care where appropriate.

But the fact of the matter here is that without the proper planning in place as a result of 15 years of mismanagement of this by this NDP government, these are the kinds of tragedies that are happening to families. And we were lucky, you know, that I found Dad in time, that I was able to call 911, that he was able to live through that. But I suspect that there are many other families that are facing very similar things, Mr. Speaker, and, again my heart goes out to those families, having lived through that myself with my siblings.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, the important part of all this is that we need to ensure that there are places for our seniors to go, that there are places for them to go and live the rest of their lives with dignity, with—considering all the things that they have done for us, our parents, our grandparents, over the years,. You know, they come out and support us at our sporting games; they volunteer in the community; they've been taxpayers in the community for years, all sorts of things that they have done for our communities. We owe it to them to ensure that we look after them in a dignified manner to ensure that they can live the rest of their lives with dignity in the care of facilities that are within their communities.

And so I would encourage members, all members of this House to support this resolution. It is an extremely important resolution and it is one that recognizes the importance of our seniors in our communities, the importance of our parents, our grandparents.

And so I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to all members of this House supporting this resolution brought forward by the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

Thank you.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources):** Mr. Speaker, you know, if—I hear a lot of talk about dignity and respect. And I look at the resolution itself, and if there is any—if there is any intention for any kind of non-partisan nature or support for this resolution, the resolution itself wouldn't have had such negative connotation in the words in it, like, words like censure, stripping. You know, it reminds me of the cynicism—and just talk to the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). In 1995, just before a provincial election, when the then-provincial government came out and announced all of these plans for personal-care homes that they hadn't done. The only thing that had been built or was built was two casinos that were over-budget. Not a bed, not even a defibulator, and, you know, I said at the time to the media, as soon as they have an election they're going to cancel those projects. And they ridiculed me and they laughed and they put articles. And you know what happened right after the election? They cancelled it. They completely cancelled the programs—completely. Ask the member for Charleswood, she was there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it reminds me a lot—*[interjection]* You know, there's more factual information in Alice in Wonderland than I have

heard from members opposite talking about personal-care-home beds. It reminds me of saying—to do a sports analogy, it reminds me of saying well, gee, the Jets made the playoffs this year and they did pretty good, but, boy, they didn't have a scorer in the top 10.

You know, Mr. Speaker, they cherry-pick—you know, they cherry-pick. They forget that we opened six personal-care-home beds. They forget that. They forget that we opened ACCESS centres. They forget that we opened QuickCare clinics. They forget that we have expanded home care. They forget that they tried to privatize home care and take it away from Manitobans and make people pay for home care. They forget that they made people pay for ostomy supplies. Can you believe it, a government that made people pay for ostomy supplies. That's what they did. They did it in their budget, and they didn't even build a personal-care-home bed, not a government personal-care-home bed.

\* (11:50)

And, you know, they have the gall to talk about—they had the gall to talk about spiritual places. They were at such war with St. Boniface Hospital that I'd be surprised they could walk within a block of St. Boniface Hospital, particularly after they closed one of the faith-based institutions, Misericordia hospital.

How dare they talk about seniors when they're not even supporting the budget that sees increased revenues to seniors on their property taxes, that sees increased benefits to home care, that sees more personal-care-home beds? That's not an honest opposition; that's a nitpicking, cynical bunch.

Their record was terrible when it comes to health care. They fired nurses, they fired doctors, they stopped training for lab techs, they stopped training for all of the health-care professions. There would be more home-care beds if they'd lived up to their 1995 commitment to build them, Mr. Speaker.

Notwithstanding that, Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that are affecting us now is the diversity and the extent to which the—what members don't—opposite is—don't understand is that we have more seniors that need to be provided with home care and places and support in homes where they want to stay. And within personal-care-home beds, both the complexity and the severity of individuals who are in those homes is far more diverse than it used to be. At one time in personal-care-home beds, 80 per cent of

people were mobile; now it's exactly the opposite. In fact, the stats—it used to be 70 to 80 years old was the age in the personal-care-home beds; now it's much higher. That's because people are living longer and because we're able to keep people healthier and more mobile for longer periods of time. So the complexity—particularly brain injury and brain damage—is significant.

Now, I ask you, what was done during the lean, mean Tory years for brain-damaged or Alzheimer's patients? I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker: nothing, unless you count the two casinos they built, which actually I don't think it counts for that. Nothing; they cancelled the projects—they cancelled the projects.

Mr. Speaker, brain-damaged, Alzheimer's and brain-dementia issues are significantly increasing. They're a significant part of the population. They have to be built into the health-care system. They have to be built into the personal-care-home system. We have to build home cares—personal-care homes, like we did in Thompson, that allow for patients—and I think, if memory serves me correctly, in The Pas—that allows for patients who have dementia to have the opportunity to be physically active and walk the hallways, to have the kind of accommodation and structure that they're building into holy family nursing home now that allows for people who have dementia to be able to function effectively in a personal-care-home environment. That's the environment now.

The members opposite—who did not build any personal-care-home beds, who did not recognize the need for personal-care-home beds, who did not train any personnel—don't even have it right today. Today the complexity, Mr. Speaker, of those that are entering that particular phase of their life is such that we have to build needs-based facilities to provide for those individuals. It means additional training; it means additional costs in terms of the construction.

They do not know what they're talking about. The personal-care-home beds that they refer to in the homes that have opened, I visited—you know, I even had a—one by the name of a Mr. Don Orchard attend the opening and the ribbon cutting of a personal-care-home bed. I also had former MLAs from places like Steinbach open personal-care beds with us and thanked us for building them during our term—homes that they did not build, homes that they cancelled.

So let it be very clear and obvious that this resolution is not well-intended. It's inaccurate. It

doesn't reflect—not only the reality, but it doesn't affect—it doesn't even suggest the needs and the requirements that have to be met in our environment, Mr. Speaker.

Home care, aging in place, is required for seniors who want to, like the member's opposite father—I—that's a very touching story. I'd similar experiences with my own father. But I suggest that her father, like my father, probably wanted to stay at home as long as they could—wanted to stay at home as long as he could. And the approach today would be to provide the services in-home for as long as possible, and only when those services cannot along—can be safely provided in the home, then took—then to have the person move into a place where the appropriate care is provided, Mr. Speaker.

That's the complexity; that is the challenge that is totally disregarded, totally inaccurately referred to by the member. Now, the member's out of touch, I understand, with the reality of the health-care situation. But I wish the members would pay more attention to some of the comments and pay more attention to some of the aspects that we're bringing in with respect to the particular budget that's before us now.

You know, Mr. Speaker, all we've heard in question period from the Leader of the Opposition is talk about severances. Severances—you know how many severances were paid when they laid off 1,000 nurses?

You know, they should be talking about the budget. They should be talking about the increased funding to personal-care-home beds. They should be talking about the increased funding for capital projects for seniors. They should be talking about home care for seniors. They should talking about the exemption, the tax breaks, that are given to seniors. Instead, the Leader of the Opposition has got his head in the sand, and all he talks about is severance. All he talks about is little political issues that he wants to make political issues in this Chamber. They don't talk about real issues.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if they were really sincere, if this was a real resolution, they'd join with us. They'd either support the budget or give some constructive alternatives. We have heard nothing. All we hear from the Leader of the Opposition is his own legal opinions, which aren't very good. The last time he went to court he got booted out. He went to court and said, I'm going to fight this in court. He got booted out.

Now he's talking about legal issues yesterday, and he's—you know, Mr. Speaker, get with the—you know—welcome to reality. Face the issues that Manitobans face. Stop playing political games. Let's get on the budget. Let's talk about real issues. Let's talk about seniors. Let's talk about home care. There was a while when members opposite said that we should do everything that France does. France is perfect. They had their—one of their candidates and critics there—everything's perfect in France. You know, in France, what the problem is, they didn't have home care. So during a heat wave, when thousands of people died, they actually had to put the deputy minister of health in jail because they didn't have home care. They tried to privatize home care.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, if that bunch gets back in, our health-care system will be under the privatization threat again. They did it with home care, they did it with MTS, they would do it with hydro and they'd do it with every single aspect of health care they could get away with. Let's not mistake their intentions. They should talk about what they're really going to do. The only thing they ever built was privatized centres. They went after the spiritual-care-home places. We put in legislation to protect spiritual-care homes. We passed it in this Legislature. Let the record show who supports seniors, who looks after the best interests of seniors. It's certainly not members opposite, who are so out of touch that this resolution shouldn't be supported—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

It is—the honourable member for La Verendrye.

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to put a couple words on the record. I have a letter from a constituent of mine who's dearly concerned about the charges that are being levied against their father in the PCH. The PCH facilities are now charging for medical supplies, lifts, slings, et cetera—

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Chomiak:** Point of order. Believe it's a rule of this House that if one reads from a personal letter, one ought to table the letter in the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** Yes, I don't—I listened carefully to the member for La Verendrye. I don't think he was

quoting specifically from personal correspondence, and I don't think he's obligated to table this.

But, of course, I understand why the members are sensitive. They should be sensitive. This is a serious issue that they've ignored for many years, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), I'm going to ask for some clarification on this point of order from the honourable member for La Verendrye.

Is he reading? Because I understood him to say that he was reading from a document that had been provided to him by a constituent. Are you reading from a personal letter?

**Mr. Smook:** No, I'm not.

**Mr. Speaker:** Not. Okay, that seems to provide some clarification to the House.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, I must therefore rule that there is no point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for La Verendrye, to continue.

**Mr. Smook:** Yes, Sir. I just wanted to say that I was not reading from a personal letter, but I'm very concerned about what was happening.

**Mr. Peter Bjornson (Gimli):** And, actually, having a resolution that talks about personal-care homes, it's a wonderful opportunity for me to congratulate Betel Home, celebrating 100 years of delivering fine quality service and care for the community of Gimli.

And my grandfather, Gudmundur "Mundi" Bjornson, was 98 years of age when he passed away and enjoyed many of the last years of his life in the personal-care home at Betel. And my father, having been on the board of directors, and my mother, who attends to read to the old people, as she says, even though—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Gimli will have nine minutes remaining.

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, May 28, 2015**

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