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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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| YAKIMOSKI, Blair | Transcona | PC |
| <i>Vacant</i> | St. Boniface | |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 29, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Madam 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.

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): Good morning, Madam Speaker.

We wish—we would like to call bill—we would like to seek leave to call Bill 300 for concurrence and third reading, followed by bill—I'm sorry—Bill 221, first, for concurrence and third reading, followed by Bill 300 for concurrence and third reading.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to deal with Bill 221 this morning, followed by Bill 300? *[Agreed]*

**CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

Bill 221—The Rail Safety Awareness Week Act

Madam Speaker: I will then start with concurrence and third reading of Bill 221, The Rail Safety Awareness Week Act.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (Mr. Yakimoski), that Bill 221, The Rail Safety Awareness Week Act; Loi sur la Semaine de sensibilisation à la sécurité ferroviaire, reported from the Standing Committee on Private Bills, be concurred in and now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lagassé: Morning, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to stand and see Bill 221, The Rail

Safety Awareness Week Act, move to third reading this morning.

As I've spoken before, this has been a direct result of the tragedy that occurred in Ste. Anne to a young lady by the name of Kharma Brown. I think about the good this bill will do over the long run, especially when it comes to little kids and adults learning about rail safety and how to remain safe around rails, and I think about my two little nephews that recently moved by tracks and how this will impact them in the future.

So, with those short words, I am going to sit down and allow my colleagues to speak on this.

Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It's a pleasure to stand up and speak about The Rail Safety Awareness Week Act. I want to acknowledge the member for Dawson Trail for bringing this forward.

And sometimes when there's a tragedy that happens in a community, at first when it happens, there's despair for the family and, indeed, for an entire community. And, as I believe the member knows, I know the community of Ste. Anne a little bit. And the question is, when something like this happens, can anything good come of it. And if, indeed, this bill is some good that comes of a tragic death, and if, after this bill is passed, there are things that can happen, there's education that can take place, there's awareness that results that can save even one life, then I think all members of this House would agree that this has been a worthwhile exercise.

This bill would proclaim the week of the last Friday in September in each year as rail safety awareness week. And I know this session we've actually had opportunity to talk about a number of bills that set out days or set out weeks, and I think there's been some decent questions about what's actually going to happen.

We may stand, I hope, in this case, as one, and support this bill to third reading and pass it into law—what will happen. I think what is helpful is that we have the railways onside, as well as law enforcement agencies and others, saying that they already recognize rail safety awareness week, and they

already have some awareness and education materials, which, I think, this bill is intended to accord with.

Now, in the question-and-answer period and elsewhere, we've tried to get some commitment as to whether this government is actually going to put forward some of its own resources to assist with that. I know that's not up to the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé), so he, quite fairly, can't really answer that question. I hope that the government will—even though railways are a federal responsibility and even though individual municipalities have taken on steps, which I'll talk about in just a minute—I hope that the government will also recognize that keeping our citizens safe is an important priority and they will be onside as a true partner in making rail safety awareness week as widespread as possible.

I think everybody probably noticed there's a story about rail safety in the Winnipeg Free Press just today, and it deals with the City of Winnipeg's response. Of course, every municipality, or just about every municipality, has railways that go through their own boundaries, and the City of Winnipeg is now taking another step to try to make sure that its railway crossings in Winnipeg comply with updated federal safety standards. And the City of Winnipeg, we understand, has issued a formal request for proposals for consulting services to do safety assessments on all 209 railway crossings in the city, to develop a three-year work plan to address safety deficiencies at the crossings based on urgency and severity.

So you think of that, the City of Winnipeg, we know that there are rail lines that cross our city. We know, in many cases, of course, there's grade separations, whether it's the underpasses or overpasses or even some of our aging bridges like the Arlington Bridge just north of the area that I represent in the Legislature. But you think of that, there's 209 different level crossings where streets or roads in Winnipeg alone cross the rail lines. And, unfortunately, each one of those is a place where, if people aren't careful, if they don't make the right choices, there can be a tragedy.

And the City of Winnipeg, as all municipalities are required to, are now moving ahead on this. Municipalities, large and small, were required to compile an inventory of all crossings through their communities by November of 2016, and they've been told to comply with the new safety standards by November 27, 2021.

There's a local firm that was given a contract to complete that railway crossing inventory. And what they found was actually quite concerning and a reason why I hope that the government will partner with railways and law enforcement and others to make sure that we get everything we can out of rail safety awareness week.

That report found that there were 57 crossings—so about a quarter of all crossings in Winnipeg—that have sightline obstructions that need to be addressed by November 27, 2021. That can be a blind turn. That could be trees. That could be buildings. That could be any obstruction to someone actually seeing that a train is coming. It's one thing if you've got lights, it's another thing if you've got barriers, but as we know, many, many level crossings simply have an X, a sign that tell people there's a railway line there without anything further.

*(10:10)

And, although it wasn't a rail tragedy, it was actually a highway tragedy, I think everybody who followed the tragedy of the Humboldt Broncos is aware that the intersection in Saskatchewan had very, very similar problems—trees right at the intersection which prevented a good view down the road. This is very similar. The City of Winnipeg understands its responsibilities and with those sight-line obstructions, they will try to find ways to minimize that.

You know, I was in Kenora just this past weekend, helping our candidate in Kenora-Rainy River, who, I think, is going to win the seat in what may be a very, very fascinating Ontario election, and we were actually driving through Keewatin, which is part of greater Kenora. It runs right along the CPR main line, and there was a number of times where we would cross not just one track, but two tracks because it's the main line and I was actually nervous. I found myself, as I was driving in the big truck our candidate has, because it's Kenora-Rainy River, I felt myself getting nervous to make sure we had a full stop. And, even though I wasn't driving I found myself looking both ways down the tracks; sometimes crossings are obscured by foliage, shrubbery, trees, whatever the case may be. It is a real issue, whether you live in the city of Winnipeg or whether you live in a smaller community or even in a farming area where even though we tend to think that Manitoba is flat and we tend to think that Manitoba doesn't have a lot of tree cover, we know there are still places where there's a lot of work to do.

Madam Speaker, the City also find—found that there's 105 crossings that are not in accordance with federal-grade crossing requirements for either road gradient or crossing angle. And, of course, in a perfect world every street and every road and every highway that crosses a rail line would cross at a 90-degree angle. That's important for a number of reasons: first of all, so that you have good visibility; second of all, for motorcyclists and for cyclists, it is actually a danger if the rail lines are not perpendicular to the road because there's far more chance to hit a rut and have injuries that way.

So there's a lot of work yet to be done. Apparently, this next contract in the city will allow the City to go ahead to get the work completed and hopefully make all those level crossings safer.

That's what the municipality can do. We know certainly that there's more that we can all do as MLAs and in our communities to try to promote rail safety awareness, to make sure the young people are aware just how dangerous trains are and, certainly, in a community like Ste. Anne, how fast those trains are moving.

Young people may not recognize and even older people, who should know better, may not recognize how quickly a train is moving.

In areas where the lines are twinned, of course, we've heard of tragedies where someone waits for the train to pass, they immediately go, only to have a train coming in the opposite direction they couldn't have seen, then strike them. And, unfortunately, there's been deaths and injuries as a result of that.

So there's a number of things that we're hoping will be improved as we go forward. We know how important railways are, but we know with the history—the history has been—railways have been vital to the development and the economy of our country. The relationship with railways has always been a challenging one, whether you're an urban industrialist or you're a rural farmer, the availability and the accessibility of rail lines are a concern.

And we know right now that there's a labour situation going on right now. I'm hoping that both Canadian Pacific and their union will be able to negotiate an arrangement to prevent a stoppage, but I'm hoping that happens as a proper negotiation.

As we've heard elsewhere, if a company simply believes that a government's going to legislate workers back to work, the company may not be interested in participating in a true negotiation. I

hope this won't be the case and that we'll get a resolution to the CP labour situation.

We also know how important the rail lines are for Manitoba's seaport for Churchill, and we know that that line has now been out for more than a year. We know that the federal government, as of today, has just found a lot of resources for something it considers to be a major work of importance for Canada. I would argue that the same argument can be made for the line to Churchill. We need the federal government to step up and to settle the situation. We need the provincial government, as well, to recognize just how important it is to get the rail line to Churchill going again and we need the provincial government to be at the table as well. Because although we want to avoid tragedies at rail lines, one of the biggest tragedies is if the rails aren't—the trains aren't running at all.

So I, again, acknowledge the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé). Our caucus will be supporting this bill being passed into law today and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): I would like to put a few words on the record again and thank the member from Dawson Trail for bringing this bill forward, acknowledging Bill 221, Rail Safety Awareness Week Act.

As the MLA for Transcona, the railways in part of our community—ranging from CN to Griffin Wheel—which manufactures rail wheels to the CEMR, the Central Manitoba Railway, who has their head office at Candu in Transcona.

Winnipeg, our city, is embedded with railways right across from one end to the other. The member from Minto referenced that—209 railway crossings across this city. I, myself, on the way to work, crossed four—I was counting as I was driving to work, and it's—we take for granted. We see them all the time, but we take it for granted. I crossed four different ones, including the one over by CanWest Global—or, Shaw Park, it's called, I think, now, where the Goldeyes play.

I was there last night with the member from Riding Mountain and the member from Brandon East. They were having some of those wonderful little bones wings at the Goldeyes game. And I talked to my friend Craig—Craig Kozarsky. Craig works at the front there taking tickets and handing out the two-for-one pancakes, and he was telling me

about, regularly, when he works at the Goldeyes games, a couple times a year he'll see the police having to chase some young people running along the track on the bridge.

Education—teaching them how dangerous and how wrong it is, it's important. We have to continue doing this. CN and CP and their programs such as Operation Lifesaver and Look. Listen. Live. are essential to try and help teach it, and I look forward to in September having that and being part of that in Transcona.

This morning I was talking to Jay Cranney, who is the general manager of the Central Manitoba Railway. And I mentioned this is happening and he was very excited. And here's a quote from Jay. His company at CN are—a culture of safety, vigilance and awareness is a critical component to the success of our business. Track smart is the philosophy of our safety culture, which includes the participation of everyone everyday in every job to perform our required duties in a safe and efficient manner.

We need companies like this and we need—this will help, hopefully, educate people.

The tragedies continue as there was in Chilliwack, British Columbia, within the last couple of days. A father, a 40-year-old father of three, who unexpectedly was in an accident just over a year ago and was a paraplegic had his wheelchair, unfortunately, stuck at a railway crossing. And despite the attempts of two women who tried to get him out, the train was unable to stop and he perished—a horribly sad, sad incident for a man who everybody—the accolades are coming in for what this wonderful man and the unfortunate tragedy. We need to make our rail lines, our railway crossings safer.

I thank the member from Dawson Trail for this bill, and I look forward to supporting it and it passing in the House today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): It gives me pleasure to rise and speak about the rail safety awareness week.

And I think when I talked about it at second stage that, really, none of us are against raising awareness of rail safety. It would be silly to suggest ever that any of us were against that.

My question is, what really does this bill accomplish? It's one week out of pretty much every

week of the year that's now named for something—that they get lost in the shuffle. So really my questions come down to—or, my concerns, I guess, come down to what else should we be doing.

* (10:20)

I read in the paper that the City of Winnipeg is reviewing all its rail crossings to ensure they comply with the minimum standard required by federal legislation.

So what about every other rail crossing in the province? What—who's reviewing them to ensure that they comply with the minimum standard? I don't have an answer to that. I'm sure that a lot of municipalities struggle already with the resources that they have to upgrade facilities. I mean, we look at rail crossings in rural Manitoba or northern Manitoba, and where does the money come from, then, to upgrade those? Certainly, this government has cut the infrastructure spending budget, which may very well have gone towards upgrading some of those rail crossings to make them safer. So it's sometimes a bit of a tough sell when this government says one thing and then does the complete opposite.

Certainly, I think every rail crossing should be reviewed to determine its safety, what can be done to make it better. I mean, obviously, the safest railroad in Manitoba right now is the one running to Churchill because there aren't any trains on it anymore, which is shameful in itself, that this government has sat around for a year and done nothing to support those people along that railroad that need that railroad.

So, I mean, a safety awareness week is good. What will be done during this week to raise awareness? Who will do it? Who will be responsible for doing it? Is it up to the rail companies? Is it up to the government? Is it up to the municipalities? Just saying that we have a week set aside to raise awareness doesn't get into the meat and potatoes of what we're going to actually do, what this government is going to actually do to raise awareness, doesn't get into what exactly they're going to do to make rail crossings safer.

Will the Department of Infrastructure or Growth, Enterprise and Trade, or somebody be reviewing all rail crossings in the province? Is that part of what raising awareness will be?

Well, we haven't heard that for sure. Is it just a symbolic thing that will make people feel good for a while and not actually accomplish anything much? I

hope not, because that would be somewhat of a shame.

So we really need to look at the purpose of this, what comes out of this bill, what can people of Manitoba expect, what can families that live not just in the city of Winnipeg, and I realize that sometimes what takes place outside the city gets lost in the message, but what can people that interact with railroads throughout the province of Manitoba, what can they expect from this bill? What can they expect from this government?

How will this government go about making rail crossings safer? Will they, this government, will they do the same as what they've done with the rail line to Churchill and wash their hands of it and say, well, railroads aren't our responsibility, so therefore we're going to do nothing, other than talk about it, which would be the wrong approach, in my opinion, Madam Speaker. But there needs to be more than just talk.

So is the government going to get into the education system to ensure that rail safety is taught in schools? Is that the government's responsibility to do that? What does CN, CP, some of the northern railroads, some of the short-line independent railroads, what's their obligation?

I mean, we've heard in the past serious concerns raised about rail safety, not just at crossings when you look at the lake 'magnituck' disaster that took place with a runaway train.

What maintenance requirements will be required for things like automatic arms? I know, just up around Cranberry Portage, the rail crossing was out of commission, the automatic lights and one thing, the other. There is no arms, of course, out on the highway, but the automatic lights warning of a train coming were out of commission for months and months. Nobody seemed too concerned about it. We sent letters trying to get some action on it because it impacted people's lives every day of the week, not just one week of the year, but every day of the year.

It's finally fixed now, but what power does the government expect to exert over private rail companies to ensure that rail crossings are safe? And, again, I get back to: this is a nice gesture, but we need more than just nice gestures to make rail crossings safe.

So does the government have an actual plan of what they will do to assist municipalities, cities, rural northern areas? Do they have a plan for how they

will help them address rail safety? Is that part of what they'll do in rail safety awareness week, or will they just say, oh, be careful.

I come out of a world of health and safety where, if the only thing you ever did was tell people to be careful, you were just going to expect more accidents and fatalities because there's any number of reasons why that just doesn't work. You need to actually review the crossings to make sure that they at least comply with the minimum requirements.

Keep in mind that any time governments bring in regulations, they should be viewed as the minimum requirements, not the maximum. You can always do better; you should never do worse.

So we haven't heard anything from the government about how they plan to assist anybody in making rail crossings safer other than this rail safety awareness week, which really doesn't accomplish what I'm sure that the member who introduced it would really like it to accomplish.

I'm sure, that when he talked to that family, that, really, he had the best of intentions to try and make things better. This bill doesn't really accomplish that. It may be a step along the path, but it shouldn't be the end of the path. The government really needs to take this and take the message that the member brought forward from tragic circumstances.

And, certainly, even more recently, there's been tragic circumstances at rail crossings right here in the city that the government really needs to take those incidents to heart when they look at how railroads interact with people, how railroads interact with people in the provincial jurisdiction, and not just wash their hands and say it's a federal problem, not a provincial problem, because the citizens of Manitoba are citizens of Manitoba that expect this government to actually live up to its obligations for the people of Manitoba.

So I would strongly encourage the government to not stop at this, to use this as a starting point to actually work towards making rail crossings safer so that families don't have to worry about their kids, don't have to worry about their friends and family, that rail crossings actually are as safe as they can be for all citizens of Manitoba.

So, while we won't stand in the way of this bill passing, I strongly urge the government to do more, to really step it up.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this bill?

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): When we first came here in 1980, the residence that we chose was at 341 Keewatin, which is about eight houses away from the railroad tracks, the main railroad tracks coming from the west of Winnipeg.

* (10:30)

And it was an entry point towards the marshalling yards of Weston, and it's now part of Tyndall Park. And the dangers that were there were never publicized, that there were times when trains derail. I thought trains always stayed on tracks. Silly me.

And then there's that noise from the railroads when they are trying to couple those boxcars. And I said, wow, it's really, really noisy. I can't get some sleep in this area. And then we got used to it, that the noise itself were music to our ears, and were some form of reassurance that some folks are working the railroad tracks.

And rail safety is one issue that, when we were told not to rebuild our garage because the underpass will be built, and we lost our home. The city bought us out, and the railroad tracks was—it became a straightaway, instead of stopping traffic on Keewatin. And that was 1981 when we were bought out, 1982, and then the underpass was built.

Anyway, we will support this bill because it's a very conscious decision on the part of Winnipeg to be built around the CP rail tracks themselves, and which now divides Tyndall Park, the place we call Tyndall Park, and Brooklands and Weston. It divides that community.

And we are aware that maybe there should also be some form of a more importantly major repairs done to those railroad tracks right on Logan, which is right near Weston. It goes north to south, and my constituency has been very aware that, well, the railroad tracks were there first, and we built our houses around it.

Anyway, we are urging the government to do the same thing for the Churchill rail lines. The Churchill rail lines is in some way related to this because the security and safety of the people of Churchill rely heavily on those railroad tracks that have been, unfortunately, destroyed by nature, the overflowing and the flooding. And I would suggest that this is a

very appropriate bill to do that now because it's related to Churchill.

And, with that, I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this bill?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 221, The Rail Safety Awareness Week Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 300—The University of Manitoba Students' Union Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: We will now move to concurrence and third reading of Bill 300, The University of Manitoba Students' Union Amendment Act.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I move, seconded by the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), that Bill 300, The University of Manitoba Students' Union Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Association des étudiants de l'Université du Manitoba, reported from the Standing Committee on Private Bills, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Guillemard: I just want to put a few short words as we reach the last stage of a two-year process.

This is the culmination of hard work by dedicated students who want to engage the whole student body in the democratic process and encourage involvement at every decision-making stage. I want to thank the UMSU for the opportunity to learn more about their organization. It has been a pleasure to work collaboratively with them over the last couple of years.

Although we have experienced a few hiccups along the way, it has been encouraging to see unanimous support for these amendments to the act by all parties and members of this House. I look forward to watching these leaders at the U of M as

they grow and pursue future successful careers. I have seen for myself how very capable and ambitious each of them are, and I have no doubts that their futures are very bright.

Thank you to the UMSU executive for joining us in the gallery today. We have Jakob Sanderson, the new UMSU president; Owen Black, the vice-president external; Sarah Bonner-Proulx, advocacy VP; Carly Mastro Monaco, student services VP; and Mbuli Matshe for finance. And congratulations to you.

I just want to give a congratulations for the entire process and for achieving the goals that you set out many years ago. So congratulations and thank you.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I'm pleased to be able to speak to this bill briefly this morning.

I think it is a—it's a unique bill, certainly, and it's something that we should all take a moment to realize what we're doing here today. So many of us are new in this House. I believe more than half of us have less than two and a half years of experience, right? We were all newly elected in April 2016 or, in the case of the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), after that.

And for us, this is our first private act that we're dealing with and having a private bill come forward, and something numbered in the three hundreds. So for me, this is a unique experience. I'm sure, maybe, the member for Minto has seen a number of these go by in—go by his desk in his many years in the Chamber, but for most of us, this is something new.

And what I think is also especially unique about this particular bill is that it's about students; it's created by students, and it's created for the students.

And so I want to conclude my remarks, brief as they are, with a quote from their students so that also the comments on the record can be of these students.

So, the former president of the—of UMSU, Tanjit Nagra, had this to say: The UMSU act was created by the students to not only protect the rights of students today, but an opportunity for future students to stand up and speak out on issues that affect their life. Today we are asking for help to further refine this opportunity for the students who come after us, allowing more opportunity for their voices and concerns to be heard and accounted for. And I think that sums it up quite nicely.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: And I would just like to apologize. I should have recognized an opposition member first, and I will make up for that now by allowing two opposition members to speak so that we get our order back.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm pleased to put a few words on the record about Bill 300.

We understand this bill is the result of the hard work being done by our student leadership here in—at the University of Manitoba, and so our caucus is certainly in support of this bill. Our caucus wanted to do our due diligence, and when the bill first came forward, we wanted to satisfy ourselves that, indeed, this was the will of the UMSU executive. We're satisfied it is, and so we're prepared to have this bill pass today.

Now, it was great that members across the way applauded these student leaders being here. I hope that the PC backbenchers in this Chamber today will be as supportive and as welcoming when UMSU comes back here to continue raising important issues on behalf of their members.

* (10:40)

And, you know, what have we seen from this government, so far? We've seen a war on accessibility for students here in the province of Manitoba.

One of the first things this government did is did away with the tuition fee tax rebate. This was a tax rebate that gave back students—wherever they went to school, whether it was in Manitoba or elsewhere—gave them back 60 per cent of their tuition by way of a tax rebate, as long as they remained in Manitoba. And it was a strategy to retain young people who'd finished their degree, to get them to put down roots here, to start their careers here and it was also a way to attract students that maybe had graduated from Dalhousie, or UBC, that maybe hadn't thought about how good we have it here in the Prairies, to try and attract young people. And unfortunately, this government did away with the tuition fee tax rebate, without giving students anything on the other side.

And what did this government do to tuition rates? Well, they changed what the practice of our government had been. When we first formed government in 1999, we reduced tuition fees by 10 per cent. We then froze university tuition for an entire decade. And then we passed a law saying that

future tuition increases would only increase by the rate of inflation. And, unfortunately, this PC government has changed that law and they've now allowed universities to raise tuition by the rate of inflation, plus up to 5 per cent. Well, in this first year, the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, did exactly as we expected—exactly as these students expected and they're raising tuition fees by the maximum permitted under that law.

So the students that these fine student leaders represent are now going to be paying 6.6 per cent more for their tuition this fall than they paid last year. For a student taking a full load, it works out to about \$250 for just this year alone, unless you're an international student, in which case your tuition will go up by more than \$1,000. And there's a number of other things the university has done to try to deal with this government's disinterest in properly funding universities.

My daughter, I believe, you know, Madam Speaker, she's a science student. She's doing very well. She's very interested in taking a co-op programme next year. We found out her co-op programme fees are actually going up by over 50 per cent. We can afford it. Our family can afford it—lot of families that can't. And that is not right.

We also know that this government reversed a great decision that was made by our government when we were in power, by providing insurance coverage—providing Medicare for international students who come here.

Generally, I don't have to tell anybody in this Chamber, students tend to be healthier than the general population. They don't actually create a big draw on our medical system and it's—it was the right thing to do. For the government of Manitoba to say, all right, if you are a foreign student and you're committing to getting your degree here in Manitoba, we are going to cover your health-care cost. It's one less thing you need to worry about. All you have to worry about is coming over here, perhaps learning in a different language, living in our climate, dealing with an entirely different culture.

Those are things you'll have to deal with on your own, with some help from the university, but we'll take care of your health-care needs. You can tell your parents back home not to worry, that you're covered here, because this is a great province and this is a great country.

And, unfortunately, this government doesn't see it the same way. And they've rolled things back. They've cancelled coverage for international students. The University of Manitoba, to its credit, has said they're going to maintain that coverage for international students for another year and they will find a way to make that work.

But we know that after that year, it's going to be very, very difficult for the university and it's going to be very, very difficult for foreign students, because in addition to the additional \$1,000 of tuition they'll pay this year and next year, they're now going to start paying an additional \$400 every year for something that was covered before this government started taking it out on students. And, quite honestly, that's just not right.

And what else happened at the University of Manitoba? Well, last year, of course, my daughter was a first-year university student, used to working as hard as she can. And she was one of 30,000 students that faced a strike at the University of Manitoba. And the worst part is that now we know why this strike happened. This strike happened because the Premier (Mr. Pallister) interfered in labour relations. The Premier directed the University of Manitoba to freeze wages and also directed them not to tell the faculty association.

And then when this all came to light, the university, of course, then had to pull the offer they had off the table, and not surprisingly, it wound up in a strike that resulted in three weeks of confusion and a lot of concern for students. For those same foreign students who might have been planning to head home for Christmas, it meant they were staying at the university because there was only about a week off. But even for students from Manitoba, even students living at home, it was a very, very concerning period.

And now the worst part is the end result of the Premier's interference is that the University of Manitoba has been ordered to pay the members of the faculty association \$2.4 million in compensation. And the U of M has no choice but to pay this.

But the government is not stepping in to say to the U of M, yes, you know what, it's actually our fault. Here's the money. University, you're—we're going to make you whole. We'll pay the cost. That's not happening.

So now the U of M, thanks to this Premier and thanks to this government, now has a further hole in

their budget, and the fear is they're going to continue to take it out on students either by finding other ways to extract money from students or cutting services and programs that students depend upon.

So, all this is to say that I'm certainly hoping that the good spirit that the member put on the record today and the support that I saw my colleagues across the way give to these fine student leaders is not going to evaporate at the end of today when this bill passes into law.

These students know that they can count on New Democrats to fight for accessible, affordable, quality post-secondary. They need to know that this government is as well.

So I hope the next time these students come back here to raise an issue, they know that they'll have some backbenchers in the—on the PC side who will actually be brave enough to confront this Premier (Mr. Pallister), to confront the Minister of Education, to confront this Cabinet, to tell them that Manitoba's future depends on a strong University of Manitoba. It depends on quality, accessible, affordable education, and that's what we're going to keep fighting for, and that they should step up and start doing themselves.

So we are pleased to see this bill pass, but, as you know, there is an awful lot more work to be done, first of all just to undo the mess that they've made on this file for students in the past two years, but to keep moving forward on making post-secondary education far more accessible, not just for the rich and the children of the rich, but for everyone who believes that they want to pursue their dreams in post-secondary and who wants to pursue their dreams right here in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this bill? Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 300, The University of Manitoba Students' Union Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please canvass the House to see if, prior to considering today's resolution, there would be leave to put first the question on PMR 16, Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day, sponsored by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Mayer)?

Madam Speaker: Prior to moving into today's resolution, is there leave to first put the question on private member's resolution No. 16, Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day, sponsored by the member for St. Vital?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no. Leave has been denied.

* (10:50)

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, please, could you canvass the House to see if it is the will of the House to call it 11 o'clock?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to call it 11 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

RESOLUTIONS

Madam Speaker: The hour being 11 o'clock, we will move to the resolution on Recognizing Lyme Disease Awareness and Prevention.

Res. 18—Recognizing Lyme Disease Awareness and Prevention

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I move, second by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook),

WHEREAS May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month; and

WHEREAS Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium transmitted in North America by the bite of an infected blacklegged tick, or western blacklegged ticks; and

WHEREAS the highest risk period for Lyme disease in Manitoba is from May to July; and

WHEREAS Lyme disease is difficult to diagnose, currently has no cure, and successful treatment of symptoms can take a long time; and

WHEREAS prevalence of the disease has exploded in Manitoba from one confirmed case in 2009 to twenty-nine confirmed cases in 2017, with many more cases unreported or unconfirmed; and

WHEREAS reported Lyme cases in Canada increased more than six-fold between 2009 and 2016; and

WHEREAS many patients still struggle to get diagnosed and treated; and

WHEREAS the symptoms of Lyme disease can become very severe when left untreated, causing arthritis, heart palpitations, brain inflammation, nerve pain, dizziness, blurred vision, and a compromised immune system.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to raise awareness of the effects of Lyme disease in Manitoba, encourage better treatment and diagnosis of the infection and promote prevention strategies.

Motion presented.

Mr. Graydon: Since the first doctor-reported case of Lyme disease in Manitoba in 1999, prevalence of the disease has exploded, with instances proliferating in recent years. In 2012, there were 29 confirmed cases in Manitoba, and in 2014, there were 44 positive cases diagnosed.

Since Lyme disease is often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed due to the hidden and dormant nature of its symptoms it can confidently be concluded that in 2014 there were consistently more than 44 actual cases in Manitoba. In fact, a local veterinarian in St-Pierre confirmed 40 cases in dogs alone.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Given the serious nature of the disease and its proliferation in recent years, the Manitoba government should make a dedicated effort to offer and encourage screening and treatment of Lyme disease and all associated symptoms.

Unfortunately, under the former NDP government, the exact opposite was occurring when attempting to convince Department of Health officials or doctors to test for Lyme disease was the equivalent of pulling teeth.

In 2014, according to Dr. Allan Ronald, a pre-emptive infectious disease doctor, Lyme disease is similar to West Nile virus 10 years ago, an emergency illness in Manitoba. Despite this reality, the 'efficy' of Manitoba's mismanaged health-care system under the NDP can only prove the diagnosis on acute Lyme disease in somewhat between 15 and 20 patients a year. Despite the NDP's lack of

action, the government issued a media bulletin May 13th, 2015, encouraging Manitobans to take precautions to minimize risk of tick exposure.

It is clear that the previous NDP government was aware of the problem; they just did not want to do anything about it. As a result, patients have been—have—are having to go to clinics in BC, the Sophia Health Institute in Seattle, the Altru Clinic in Roseau, Minnesota, to seek 'trintment'—treatment. Manitobans deserve to know that the health-care system they rely on will be there when they need it most.

People with untreated Lyme disease infection may experience a variety of symptoms, sometimes on and off for years, including dizziness, steepness—stiffness of neck, irregular heartbeat, joint pain and swelling, blurred vision, headaches and a compromised immune system. Therefore, everyone who suspects they or a loved one has contracted Lyme disease must pressure for the necessary treatments.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since the—since we have formed government, we have made huge steps in the mess that was left to us by the former NDP government in the health-care system. Our plan to provide better care sooner is working. In three months, following the initial phase of the health and healing of our health system campaign, the average emergency room wait times were 1.47 hours. This is 20 per cent decrease over the same period from last year's. Our government committed to reducing ambulance fees by 50 per cent during our first term. We've reduced these fees to a maximum of \$340 already, and we'll further reduce them to \$250 by 2019.

We also hired 29 new full paramedics in 2017 and will hire 60 more in 2018. There are 89 more doctors practising in Manitoba in 2018. We will continue to focus on improving our physician recruitment and retention efforts. There are more than 2,700 physicians now practising in our province.

We made a commitment to improve patient access and wait times for diagnostic tests like MRIs and for surgeries, including hip and knee replacements and cataracts. We have received a final report of the Wait Time Reduction Task Force report. Acting on the recommendations of that report—and will help us in achieving our goal of shorter wait times and better care sooner.

We're continuing to make progress towards the development of a provincial clinic and preventative services plan with the creation, in 2018, of a Shared Health, which will provide co-ordinated clinic and business services and ensure consistency of health-care services across the province.

Under the NDP, Manitobans waited longer for access to emergency rooms than anywhere in Canada, averaging more than 5.5 hours in one facility in Manitoba.

Further to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to congratulate the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), our current health care—Health Minister, who has done a great deal more work than what I've just outlined. He is also in the process of developing a tick-borne disease collaborative-care service, a Lyme clinic, and his ongoing and involved staff from Manitoba's Health, Seniors and Active Living, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, including a variety of both specialists and allied health professionals, Shared Health Services and the centre for health innovation.

It is envisioned that the Lyme clinic—not a bricks-and-mortar service. Rather, the Lyme clinic will be managed by a small core team: primary-care assistant, nurse and medical lead who will assess referred patients and co-ordinate their journey between specialists. The team will co-ordinate the development of a specialized patient-care plan.

In situations where patients present with complex symptoms, consultation with an infectious-disease specialist is recommended as per provincial 'communicatable' diseases.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to point out that today in the gallery, we are accompanied by a number of people who have been working either to treat Lyme disease or are working to make people aware and helping people get medical help.

They include Dr. Jason Bachewich, Dr. Rusk, Dr. Janice Fyfe, Marnie Le Page, Heather Allan, Jan Cmela, Ryus St. Pierre, Brian Watson-Colter, Janice [phonetic] Lewis Anderson, and these are representing Manitoba Lyme-and-tick-borne-disease illness groups. I want to congratulate the work that they do.

There are a number of other people that would have loved to have been here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people that I worked with four years ago, working to find solutions and help people with Lyme disease and to get them diagnosed, people like a nice lady

from Emerson, Mrs. Wood, who has since passed. She would have loved to have been here—had Lyme disease for many, many years, and it would hit her, and then she would have to fight to get service from doctors under the NDP government. And I worked with her many, many times over the years, but finally, she succumbed to her disease.

There are many other people that I have worked with in the past who have spent thousands and thousands of dollars going outside the province to be diagnosed and for treatment because it wasn't being recognized here in the province.

As I've pointed out, veterinarians in this province have been reporting Lyme disease for many years prior to when the health-care system reported it.

So, on those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to welcome the people here in the gallery today and thank them for the work that they do.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: The first question may be addressed by a member from another party. Any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties. Each independent member may ask one question, and no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): First question is, what do current supports for Manitobans living with Lyme disease in 'manitoda'—in Manitoba look like?

* (11:00)

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): The current support right now is that because we're in the process of developing a clinic, right now it is going from doctor to doctor basically.

And I would suggest that because of the committee, the Lyme disease and tick-borne committee, they are directing patients or people that feel that they do have Lyme disease, they're directing them to where they can be dealt with, where they weren't being—which wasn't being done in the past.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Can the member please elaborate on who he consulted with before drafting this resolution, such as Lyme disease patients, doctors or experts? Thank you.

Mr. Graydon: I want to thank the member for the question.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I got a lot of information from Lyme disease patients, such as Mrs. Wood from Emerson; Gail Scott from Gilbert Plains; Liz Cole from Altona; Brian Watson-Colter; Clara Friesen, Steinbach; Marnie Le Page; Dr. Chan, British Columbia; Dr. Ronald from Manitoba; Michelle Miller; Lee Cunningham; Jim Moore of Ste. Anne; the Sofia health clinic in Seattle; the Altru Clinic in Roseau, Minnesota; and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester and many, many more.

Mr. Marcelino: Why are investments in research for the treatment of Lyme disease important?

Mr. Graydon: I want to thank the member for that question.

And the reason that they're very, very important is because the Lyme disease affects many people in a lot of different ways and which prevents them from working in many cases. It prevents children from attending school or competing at school. It is a huge, huge cost on the health-care system when they're—they don't know what they're treating the patients for to begin with and the treatments go on and on and on. And when they do finally find it, the patients are at the end of the road and in many cases don't get the proper service that they require. That's why it's very important.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Would the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) please tell the House why he feels so passionate about bringing this resolution forward this morning?

Mr. Graydon: I'd like to thank the member for that question, as well.

Because of the past work that I have done. At the same time, there have been members in my family that have had Lyme or—have had Lyme and went through a doctor's. One of them was my cousin's grandson. And his mother took him to the doctor at 10 o'clock in the morning, when the bull's eye showed up on her son's stomach. And the doctor said, I'll give you some salve. And she didn't take that as an answer.

She went to another doctor. At noon, she went to another doctor and got no service—

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

Mr. Marcelino: If the member from Emerson thinks this is a very important issue, why did he have to politicize the matter during his remarks?

Mr. Graydon: I'd like to thank the member for that question.

I wasn't politicizing at all. What I did was pointed out the neglect from the past government and what we are doing to deal with it. As a matter of fact, I gave the past government every opportunity to deal with this. I met with the Minister of Health, actually, back in 2015, to have this dealt with in a positive fashion.

So I wasn't politicizing it at all. I was pointing out that it should have been done a long time ago.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The member for Emerson has said that there is a Lyme disease clinic or that a Lyme disease clinic is being developed.

Can the member clarify the status of the clinic and, if it's in development, when it is expected to be open?

Mr. Graydon: Thank you very much for the question from the member.

And I would point out that at this point, when things are being developed like this, they want to do it properly so that it is servicing Manitoba and all Manitobans. And so I can't give you a definite answer. It isn't completed yet, but it is in a development stage. And if you'll pay attention to what we have said we were going to do in the past and what we have already got accomplished, you can bet on it that it's going to get done in the near future.

Thank you.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): I'd like to thank the member for acknowledging the importance of veterinarians and disease surveillance in Manitoba. And can the member from Emerson please tell the House how this resolution will encourage further awareness of Lyme disease and its prevention in Manitoba?

Mr. Graydon: The message of awareness and prevention needs to come from many levels of grassroots to government. We need involvement from Workplace Safety and Health. We need programs, caregivers, educators, health-care providers, coaches and parents to understand the message.

The culture surrounding the ticks is difficult to change, and we need a broader approach to the problem. The resolution is working to bring together working groups on the topic of Lyme disease and increase awareness and lead to greater prevention.

Mr. Marcelino: Who has the member consulted before bringing forward this bill?

Mr. Graydon: I don't know why the member wasn't listening previously, but this is a resolution. It's not a bill. And I've consulted a number of people. I've pointed them out in the past. I consulted people such as Mrs. Wood, Gail Scott from Gilbert Plains, Liz Cole from Altona, Brian Watson from Colter [*phonetic*], who is with us in the gallery, Clara Friesen from Steinbach, Marnie Le Page, who is also one of the people in the Lyme disease and tick-borne illness committee, Jim Moore of Ste. Anne; the doctors—Dr. Chan, Dr. Roland [*phonetic*] and the Sofia health—

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

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I'd like to thank the member from Emerson for bringing forward this resolution, as Lyme disease is an issue in southeastern Manitoba. I know of a couple people personally that have—are suffering with it.

Can the member please explain what type of symptoms Manitobans should be looking for if they feel they are suffering from Lyme disease?

Mr. Graydon: I'd like to thank the member from—from La Verendrye for the question. It's a very good question. There are so many different types of symptoms that you can be experiencing from Lyme disease because it hides so many things, but the symptoms can include fever, headache, fatigue, insomnia, joint and muscle pain, swelling of joints, Bell's 'palsy', brain fog, rashes, numbness, ringing in the ears. And early treatment of tick-borne diseases is essential. Otherwise, it can become chronic, and symptoms can be worse.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further questions?

Time for question period is over.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any speakers on the debate?

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Lyme disease is a very chronic infection that has affected one of my friends. Her name is Roslyn. She used to work with a bank. And it was misdiagnosed, undiagnosed,

as such. And then it was a very different type of symptoms that she had. And I was of the impression that she was just not really treated well. And she moved to Vancouver and found help there with some specialized doctor. And she has since been treated with a little bit more specific—or Lyme-disease-specific treatments.

* (11:10)

And—but there's no such thing as an epidemic, way back. There were some cases that were reported. And then sometime in 2008—or was it 2009—my wife discovered a tick right on my back. And she took it out without realizing that it was a deer tick. And it was right on my spine and it was painful when it was taken out, and it took me quite a while to recover from the—they call it the target, I had. And it's a good thing that I have not been diagnosed yet as suffering from it. Maybe that tick does not have it, meaning it has not been transferred to me.

But Lyme disease is a serious concern for all of us because we live in a very forested area, which is Manitoba. We enjoy the forests and the wildlife that comes with it, specially in Birds Hill. But my deer tick, the deer tick that got to me, was at Victoria Beach, when we trialed it—when we tried walking the trails.

And that was really a very unnerving experience for me to know that the deer tick was with me for quite a while before it was discovered by my wife—shows you that I don't usually take my shirt off. But it is a very problematic disease, because as I grow older I find that I have joint problems that I ascribe to being old, and I don't even know.

So I thank the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) for making this a—or proposing this resolution that will make us a little bit more aware that there are dangers to the outdoors that we should be aware of.

And I was told that there are some remedies that could be applied so that you prevent the deer tick or the tick from even attacking you by using tea tree oil. A spray of tea tree oil with some other—it's a concoction that, if sprayed onto your boots or to your clothing, will dissuade ticks from sticking to you. And I always find it fascinating that some of those natural remedies might really be working, because when my grandkids and I walk those trails that are really unexplored—there are some walking trails right around the Birds Hill park—my grandkids usually remind me about the tea tree oil.

And Lyme disease as a chronic infection is a very—it's not yet as recognized as an epidemic, yet. But we should be able to do something about it by providing the preventive programs. But how do we do that? It needs money. And considering the austerity program of this government, I am just wondering if they would even spend anything towards Lyme disease. And considering that there have been cuts to the hospitals and the ERs that were closed, and considering the closure of some of the QuickCare centres, I really am not sure whether this government is really sincere in providing supports for those programs that prevent diseases such as Lyme disease.

And my real concern, actually, is that as I grow older, I should, maybe, go to my doctor and ask for a specific diagnosis, whether it's Lyme disease that I'm suffering from now, I still have some memory functions, I haven't lost my brain yet. But—somebody said, it's debatable. And I wish that we could proceed with this resolution to at least raise our awareness about this Lyme disease and make a point that the government must spend money and not be cheap about it.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Lyme disease is a sneaky condition that can even fool doctors. If it is not recognized and treated in its early stages, it can cause life-long health issues, and in severe cases, even death. I am proud of my colleague from Emerson who has taken the time to research, meet with stakeholders and bring awareness about this very prevalent condition in Manitoba. Without knowledge and education, far more people will suffer needlessly.

Lyme disease has been the topic of many newspaper articles recently, because the bacteria that causes the illness is transmitted by ticks. The highest risk time for exposure to ticks is from May to July every single year. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in the height of tick season. And therefore, the risk of contracting Lyme disease is very high. I am fortunate to have avoided exposure to Lyme disease, so far. But all age categories are at risk because ticks do not discriminate when they are searching for food. My family and I enjoy spending time out at the lake each summer, with long walks that sometimes takes us through the woods. I've always been paranoid about ticks, but not because I was knowledgeable about Lyme disease. The tiny creatures have always made me squirm because they have eight legs and therefore, are in the arachnid family. With my phobia of spiders, it isn't such a leap to include ticks in the

panic reaction behaviours associated with insects of this category.

I have had a total of two experiences with ticks in my forty years. I will openly share the embarrassing details and my irrational reactions, because I suspect I am not alone in experiencing this particular phobia. The first encounter happened on a field trip to Sandilands in grade 4. The day was beautiful and the class and I had a wonderful picnic in the middle of the swaying trees. The trip was educational, as we learned about the difference between evergreen and deciduous trees. We were warned by our teacher not to wander off the path and do not panic if we were to discover ticks along our journey. We had all dressed according to the instructions given by the school: long pants, tucked into socks, long-sleeve shirts and hair tied back under a baseball cap. As we settled onto the bus, after the trip, a classmate yelled out that he had found a tick on his leg. I felt badly for him, but fortunately the tick had not yet bitten him and the teacher easily removed it and threw it out the window. I was so relieved that it had not been on me and relaxed in my seat for the bus trip back to our school.

My calm did not last very long at all. Within five minutes, as I was chatting with a friend, I felt something move on my hand. I looked down, and saw the creepy little insect moving onto the middle of my right-hand nail. What happened next is an example of what not to do in this situation. For the first three seconds, I froze with a cold sweat. Then natural instinct kicked in and I let out a horrifying scream, while flailing my arms in the air. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know what happened to the tick that was on my finger, because by the time the teacher had settled me down, it had disappeared. For the remainder of the one-hour trip back to school, I was hyper-aware of my twitches or slight movements near me, convinced that I must now be infested with ticks. It wasn't until I was able to get home and do a full body check, and shower, that I was able to relax again, confident there were no more ticks on my body.

Although I continue to hold a general distaste towards ticks, my theatrics when coming across them has reduced to a simple whimper and begging of others to please get them off my body or off the body of my children. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would never suggest that others develop the same fear of ticks that I deal with, but I would encourage everyone who enjoys the outdoors, to be just as vigilant in checking

their bodies after excursions in tall grass or forests. The key to prevention when it comes to Lyme disease is to spot the dangers early and to get treatment when the telltale signs of the bull's-eye rash forms around a tick bite.

* (11:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, chronic illness, regardless of the illness that you're talking about, takes a huge toll on patients and families, especially when the condition is not completely understood or when it could be misdiagnosed.

I am so proud of my colleague from Emerson for bringing awareness to this very important topic and I hope that we can achieve support across the parties in this House on this resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): I thank the member from Emerson for bringing this important private member's bill.

It is worthwhile to discuss this very important issue because Lyme disease is a very scary illness. I personally came to know of a person who contracted Lyme disease. He was an outdoors person. He was not even close to his retirement age when he contracted the illness. And he was a top bureaucrat in the Manitoba government.

I don't agree with the member from Emerson when he said that under an NDP government this was not given proper attention, resources or support. From what I know, our—that bureaucrat, when he discovered that he had this bite, went to a doctor, of course, was concerned, and he sees family doctor. And his family doctor referred him to specialists. And the specialist, to make a long story short, was able to come up with a treatment.

So I tell my member—my colleague, there were resources. Our health-care professionals were compassionate, diligent, qualified and did the right decision. And this person, somehow after resting for a few months and whatever treatment protocol he was given, recovered and went back to work as a bureaucrat. Within a year, though, you know, the system—the immunity being compromised by this illness, he contracted a different kind of illness. But I could only surmise—I'm not a medical doctor—I would say that because his immunity or the system was already compromised with—by contracting that Lyme disease illness—or by contracting Lyme disease, he succumbed to that other kind of illness, and he

passed away to the sadness of many, many of his friends and colleagues and, of course, specially the family.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know why we will accuse a former government or impugn health-care professionals who, at that time, are—were compassionate and diligent and wanted to provide treatment to this person who contracted the disease. I don't think any health-care professional will ignore willingly and knowingly this kind of situation and not act on it immediately. And I don't think any kind of government, whether it's a Liberal government or an NDP or a PC government, will deny any constituent or any citizen the support and treatment, especially in this kind of illness. So it's not good to politicize this private member's resolution. It's not right; it's not fair to make that accusation that, under the NDP government, this was not resourced.

Now, it's in their hands. The ball is in their hands. Let's see what kind of resources will be set aside for this illness. We're all for supporting our research. We're all for equipping our health-care professionals the right resources to combat this Lyme disease, because many people would like to enjoy the outdoors, so let's give them that opportunity to enjoy the outdoors.

As we know, it's—this Lyme disease is on the rise in Canada and in Manitoba, yet diagnostics, treatment and public awareness are still inadequate.

It is expected that as climate change leads to environmental changes more hospitable for the development of infected tick populations, the number of endemic areas in human cases of Lyme disease in Manitoba may increase. So that is a red flag for us, that we should not overlook environmental changes, and we should even be more attuned to these changes so we can help in our small way as laypersons prevent the increase in this kind—increase in this particular disease.

As Lyme disease is on the rise, it is more important than ever before to ensure that Manitobans know what to look for. We need better education and better prevention of the disease by knowing what to look for, by avoiding ticks, moving to better diagnosis and working together to ensure that Manitobans are prepared for the warm weather ahead.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need investments in education so parents, kids and families know how to dress when enjoying the outdoors. Families need

to be educated about the tick-infested areas wherever possible, particularly in spring and early summer when nymph ticks feed. Adult ticks are a bigger threat in fall. Ticks favour moist, shaded environments, especially leafy, wooded areas and overgrown, grassy habitats.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the month of May is a great time to revisit investing in education. Before school is out for the summer and children head off to camp and other outdoor activities, it is important that they know how to be safe. Training kids in school where they are given an education on many essential life skills is a great way to raise awareness of Lyme disease.

And hearing from my colleague that a natural remedy such as tea tree oil could help deter insects, and especially ticks, very soon, I'd—would like to head off to a health store and buy essential tea tree oil. And I have learned that you can mix it with coconut oil, virgin coconut oil, so it's not pure tea tree oil and use it as a spray, so thank you for hearing that. I've heard of tea tree oil being used to clean surfaces, but now that it's good for that, I'll try and do that.

* (11:30)

And at this point I'd like to thank our health-care professionals, our doctors, our nurses, our researchers, who are working hard in solving, finding the mystery and finding a cure, a solution, to this Lyme disease problem.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to thank the MLA for Emerson for bringing this resolution forward. Lyme disease is an important and serious condition and it needs to be taken seriously.

It's appropriate that the MLA from Emerson is bringing it forward because the southern part of the Red River Valley in Manitoba has been the area where a high proportion of the cases have—coming from, and I have, like the MLA for Emerson, talked to Elizabeth Wood and others who have contracted Lyme disease and have a history with it, and paid quite a bit of attention to it.

Sadly, it hasn't always been taken as seriously as it should have been, but I'm glad that it is going to be now and I look forward to the Lyme disease clinic developing.

The bacteria is interesting because it is a spirochete and it is a spirochete very similar to the

spirochete which causes syphilis, and both Lyme disease and syphilis can be associated in their chronic phases with very serious neurological and other complications.

And it is interesting that those who have looked genetically at the bacteria, the spirochete which causes syphilis and the spirochete which causes Lyme disease, have found that there are 476 shared protein coding rings; that's to say that there's some significant similarity as well as some differences.

Spirochetes kind of look like squiggles but they move a bit like corkscrews. The significant thing about the spirochete nature of the organism which causes Lyme disease is that their ability, as with the spirochete which causes syphilis, they have the ability to worm their way into tight spaces in our bodies in a way that externally flagellated bacteria can't. In fact, they can drive in this spirochetal way just about anywhere that they want, that they're able to cross basement membranes, the linings of organs like intestines, crossing endothelial barriers—barriers which would normally keep other types of bacteria out of the body, and so that syphilis and Lyme disease both need to be taken particularly seriously because the symptoms, as they progress in a chronic form, if it's not treated adequately, can be very brutal with damage to multiple organs, joints, brain and nervous system as a result of the spreading inflammation.

Now we need to be very concerned about Lyme disease for a number of reasons. As I've said too often in the past, it has been missed and not treated adequately. For many years, it was said that there's no Lyme disease in Manitoba, but I've received information about a woman who had a tick bite and a rash in 1990 and two positive Lyme disease titres, but was dismissed as not likely Lyme disease because it doesn't exist, or it didn't exist, or it was believed not to exist in Manitoba at that point.

As I've said, it's a very serious condition when it becomes chronic and so it needs to be treated well and quickly when at all possible.

One of the reasons why it can be more serious and tougher to treat is that there can be, from time to time, co-infections, that the ticks which transmit Lyme disease can transmit other infections as well, and so sometimes, it is a matter not just of treating the Lyme disease but of treating the co-infections as well if you're going to get somebody healthy, and I'm sure that the physicians in the Lyme disease clinic will be experts in this whole area.

With the climate change, this Lyme disease concern is likely to get worse, and whereas it was most frequently found in the southern Red River Valley, it's now being found much more broadly. And interestingly enough, it would appear that it can be spread by birds from time to time, we—who take deer ticks beyond where one would normally consider that they would be found and endemic.

It is really good that we're going to have the Lyme disease clinic because, as I see it, that clinic will likely function not just to treat Lyme disease, but a source of information to other physicians and to people around Manitoba who want to know what's happening with Lyme disease in the province, and being able, in this fashion, to be effective in an area of prevention.

I would suggest that it will be important to have some research going on in conjunction with the clinic to make sure that what we are doing is adapted well to Manitoba and we are incorporating and using the very best possible treatments.

There is, I think, the opportunity, particularly with the 'infectsh' disease—the federal laboratory that we have here, to have work done on a vaccine to prevent Lyme disease, which could be used in areas where it's endemic, could be used for people who are going to be out in the field in areas where there are considerable amounts of Lyme disease.

I think there may actually be a vaccine which is used in dogs, for example, and that there's no reason that this vaccine could not only be developed but could be tested here, and that would be very useful.

The Lyme disease can be very difficult to treat when it becomes chronic. Sometimes that can be because of the co-infections. Sometimes that can be because the spirochetes are, as it were, hiding in difficult-to-access places for antibiotics, which would be able to treat and to kill the spirochetes.

And I have personally talked to individuals who had Lyme disease, a chronic form of Lyme disease, who were able to get on high doses of—and long-term doses—and who, on such high and long-term doses, having had their lives devastated by Lyme disease, are able to function much better.

This is an area which, in what I know, is still quite controversial, but I would add that from the anecdotal evidence that I've seen, talking with people who've had Lyme disease, that it's something which needs to be taken into consideration.

I want to thank all those who are involved in developing the Lyme disease clinic. I want to wish you well. It is an important initiative for Manitoba. It is one which will become even more important as we have continuing increased warm weather and climate change.

And I wish you well, and I hope that you're able to set up, as I'm sure you will, a wonderful clinic which will be a resource to all of Manitoba.

So thank you.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Thanks to my colleagues for their previous comments on this resolution before us today. As many of my colleagues have done already, I think I'll start with a personal connection to what can be a very serious illness.

There was a very good friend of mine back in our university days who ended up just kind of out of the blue having some very diverse and serious health issues. The arthritis symptom, in particular, presented itself. And back then, of course, when someone shows up at the hospital or clinic or doctor's office and presents with arthritis-like symptoms, the possibility of Lyme disease and a bacterial infection underlying those symptoms was not commonly thought of.

* (11:40)

And she ended up having—of course, like, she had Lyme disease, and it went undiagnosed and treated incorrectly for close to a decade until she ended up finding a doctor who was open to that possibility, and they explored it and discovered that, indeed, it was Lyme disease.

And I think that short story, that short example, fits with a lot of what has been said in the Chamber already. Our medical health professionals are adapting to the understanding that Lyme disease does, indeed, exist in Manitoba, whereas, previously, that was not well understood. That was not part of medical training. It was not part of common practice. And because the disease impacts different patients, different people, in so many different ways, up to 100 different symptoms, very diverse, it's completely understandable that this has not traditionally been something that our medical professionals have been on the lookout for.

And so I would agree with my colleague from Logan when she points out that the rather partisan statements from the member for Emerson

(Mr. Graydon), who has brought this forward, are not really in place here. There are medical professionals who've been working very hard for a large number of years to try and provide a higher understanding and better treatment of Lyme disease, and it's certainly not the case that there was nothing in place prior to our discussion here today.

Fact, I remember—I believe it was on the radio show *White Coat, Black Art*—it does appear on the CBC, I'm not sure if that's the regular radio station for the member for Emerson, but it's a very good show—going behind the scenes in the medical system and not pulling any punches in what it finds sometimes. And if memory serves, they actually used a case of Lyme disease and the growing awareness that it now has in medical communities as an example of how the medical system originally did not accept the evidence that Lyme disease even existed.

You know, my friend was told by no small number of people that it's all in her head and it was misdiagnosed in lots of different ways. And now the medical system has evolved to a much different understanding, based on the experiences of patients working with their medical professionals to come up with a better diagnosis. So I think that captures the situation that we're in today.

I do have some concerns about how far this government's clinic will actually go and how far the prevention work, in particular, will go, as presented by the member. I think there is a complete disconnect between what this well-intentioned resolution is talking about and what the government is actually doing in the real world. This resolution is basically asking different government systems to do more and more work to take on this task without providing any additional resources. In fact, quite often, the existing resources that were in place have been cut, year after year after year.

So, obvious example here would be the health-care system. This government ran on a promise that there would be no cuts to front-line services of any type, that there would be no layoffs of front-line staff. In my own constituency of Wolseley, we used to have the best emergency room in the province, based on the patient satisfaction scores and the staff satisfaction scores, and now the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre doesn't even exist anymore because this government closed it.

They are now going to set up a Lyme disease clinic, which will not actually exist in a physical

location, it's just going to exist virtually within health care, which is fine in principle, but it does not scream to me that there is a serious commitment from this government to actually provide the resources to accomplish what the resolution is setting out. It does lend itself to the theory that the government and the member may have brought this forward as a talking point, but that there is, in fact, very little substance behind what they have proposed.

In the question and answer section that we had prior to the debate portion here this morning, the member for Emerson did reference the importance and the need to have Workplace Safety and Health involved in this particular fight against Lyme disease. No one's denying the validity of the fight against Lyme disease, but he should also recognize that he has voted for successive budgets from this government which have cut staff and dollars from Workplace Safety and Health.

So, once again, we have a complete disconnect between what the government is saying they want to have happen, between what they're saying they're supporting of and what they are actually doing. They're making it harder for these different government systems to do the things that they were doing, never mind having the capacity to take on an additional task—albeit a very valid one—to actually make things happen.

And, I mean, let's look at the education system. You know, the document here, the resolution before us notes that the highest risk period for Lyme disease in Manitoba is from May to July. Well, how many of our kids are heading off on school trips, never mind the summer vacation? We've got children in the audience here today; they may be heading off for an overnight camp. I know members of my family have done that, gone away for a few days. It's always a highlight, the grade 6 overnight camp at grade 6 graduation a few weeks later. That's the highlight of their entire time at the school is being away. Well, they're off in the bush. They're out camping. They are enjoying the wonderful outdoors that we have here in Manitoba.

Will there be any resources provided by this government to support an education system which is also under attack by the Pallister government when it comes to finances?

And we just had, what, a thousand teachers on our front steps of the building telling that kids should come as a higher priority than cuts? How does the

member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) propose to help keep those children safe when they head off on school trips if there are no actual resources made available to help the good people in the gallery here today continue to do the work that all of us acknowledge needs to happen?

You can't have it both ways, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You can't come forward and say we're going to do this, this and this, and expect it to magically happen in some sort of crystal ball world.

There are real professionals who need to be compensated and employed so they can dedicate their life's energy and their passions to making a difference in the area that we are discussing here today.

The government is not doing that and the—I think the suggestion, as well, that the honourable member from River Heights made of a possible vaccine compatible—or, collaboration with the federal lab would also be a very good partnership for this to continue. Again, it's going to require real work from

this government and real resources that, in the past, they have not agreed to.

Thank you very much. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview. Order. The hour being 12 p.m.—no, no, sorry.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I'm pleased to get up and speak to the resolution here this morning. And I want to first thank the member for bringing it forward. I think it was an—important that we get together and that we have a good debate about something that has clearly become an issue in our time. And, like other colleagues here, I want to welcome the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hour being 12 p.m., the honourable member has approximately 10 minutes left of his debate—9 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 p.m., the House is now recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 29, 2018

CONTENTS

| ORDERS OF THE DAY | | Resolutions | |
|---|------|---|------|
| PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS | | Res. 18–Recognizing Lyme Disease Awareness and Prevention | |
| Concurrence and Third Readings–Public Bills | | Graydon | 2639 |
| Bill 221–The Rail Safety Awareness Week Act | | Questions | |
| Lagassé | 2631 | T. Marcelino | 2641 |
| Swan | 2631 | Graydon | 2641 |
| Yakimoski | 2633 | Guillemard | 2641 |
| Lindsey | 2634 | Nesbitt | 2642 |
| T. Marcelino | 2636 | Gerrard | 2642 |
| Concurrence and Third Readings–Private Bills | | Lagimodiere | 2642 |
| Bill 300–The University of Manitoba Students' Union Amendment Act | | Smook | 2643 |
| Guillemard | 2636 | Debate | |
| Teitsma | 2637 | T. Marcelino | 2643 |
| Swan | 2637 | Guillemard | 2644 |
| | | F. Marcelino | 2645 |
| | | Gerrard | 2646 |
| | | Altemeyer | 2647 |
| | | Allum | 2649 |

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