

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
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GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 12, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition—Opposition House Leader, pardon me, not leader yet—soon to be.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if there's leave of the House to proceed to Bill 215, The Results-Based Budgeting Act, for the first half-hour of private members' hour and, secondly, then—to then debate 218, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker: So is there leave of the House to, if I understand correctly, to start with—proceeding directly to Bill 215 and then to Bill 218? Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Bill 215—The Results-Based Budgeting Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll then call Bill 215, The Results-Based Budgeting Act.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), that Bill 215, The Results-Based Budgeting Act; Loi sur la budgétisation axée sur les résultats, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: We know that having debated two—Bill 211 in this House a couple of weeks ago, that—which was The Increased Transparency and

Accountability Act, that the NDP did not support that, and it was pretty obvious and clear last night in committee, where we saw members of the public come forward on several different bills and indicate their disappointment in the government for not being transparent and open when it comes to the process of putting bills together in Manitoba. So we can understand why they did not support Bill 211, The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act. That was clear and made clear and obvious last night by members of the public.

But this bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 215, The Results-Based Budgeting Act, will help the government find ways to streamline government spending and help them balance the budget, which they have promised to do by 2014, without jeopardizing necessary front-line services. So this bill will actually help the NDP live up to their election promises that they made in the last election, and so I would hope that they would see fit to support this bill because, again, it will help them.

Mr. Speaker, the reason we brought this bill forward, though, is based on our consultations across Manitobans, with the various stakeholders across Manitoba, and so they indicated to us loud and clear—the—that they believe the government should be going through a spending review of existing government programs to ensure that they can find ways—if programs are not working for Manitobans, if they're not yielding the results that are necessary to help Manitobans, then what—then why is this government throwing more money at programs that are not working? And so we heard that loud and clear, and we brought this forward—this bill forward as a result of that.

Mr. Speaker, in the 2012 broken promises budget, the NDP broke their word to Manitobans and raised taxes by \$184 million and increased user fees by some \$114 million, and over the next four years, the NDP tax and user fee hikes will cost Manitoba families over \$1.1 billion. This is the largest tax increase in Manitoba since the days of the NDP Pawley government.

And what did these tax increases get for hard-working Manitobans? Instead of safer communities, Winnipeg is the violent crime capital of Canada, and Manitoba has the second highest rate of domestic

violence in the country. Instead of a better education system, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba grade 8 students have fallen to last place among all Canadian provinces in science and in reading test scores and second last in math. Instead of an impartial, effective and efficient civil service, the NDP is creating new government positions and filling them with NDP insiders without a competitive application process.

This trend of spend more, get less must stop, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba families need a different approach than the NDP's tax-and-spend non-solutions to serious issues that plague the citizens of our province.

That's why we brought forth a five-point plan to expand the economy and create jobs without raising taxes. We said Manitoba needs to join the New West Partnership to spur trade and investment opportunities for Manitoba businesses. We said an independent public review of Manitoba Hydro's NDP-directed capital investments to ensure Manitoba ratepayers aren't taking on massive amounts of debt to subsidize power exports.

We said the provincial government needs to be honest and transparent with Manitobans about the budgeting process. There shouldn't be hidden fee increases, and public disclosure documents should be easy to access, Mr. Speaker. We said Manitoba needs to have a regulatory review process to cut unnecessary red tape. With Bill 215, we say Manitobans need a complete review of public spending to make sure all programs are delivering real results for Manitobans at the lowest possible cost.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP simply need to face reality. They have a spending problem, not a revenue problem, and it puts at risk all of Manitoba's front-line services. The NDP inherited a balanced budget and sustainable spending from the last PC government under Gary Filmon. Under the NDP, they have turned a \$34-million surplus in fiscal year '98-99 into a deficit of over a billion dollars. The NDP will try and blame this deficit on natural disasters, the federal government, a global recession, or a multitude of other factors, but the fact remains they inherited a surplus and, through their mismanagement, they destroyed it.

* (10:10)

In fact, over the last 12 years Manitoba has seen record levels of revenue. Income tax revenues are up over \$1.2 billion since Budget 2000. Revenues from

other taxes, like PST, have climbed 70 per cent in the last 12 years; that's another \$1.25 billion in additional revenues and money out of the pockets of hard-working families in our province. Federal transfers have doubled to over \$3.6 billion. Fee increases have nearly tripled; that's \$400 million more than—revenue now, than in 2000.

But those revenue increases weren't enough to cover the NDP spending spree of the last decade. The NDP wanted to spend money it didn't have, so it increased our debt point—by \$2.5 billion in this fiscal year alone. That's up 10 per cent over last year. Over the last 12 years, Manitoba's debt has doubled from \$13.8 billion to \$27.6 billion; each Manitoban now owns \$20,772 as their share of the Province's debt.

Instead of spending sustainably and topping up the rainy day fund, the NDP chose to spend all of the revenue increases and some. As a result, under this NDP government, spending has increased on average by 5.1 per cent a year since 2000; almost double the rate of growth. And this money has been wasted on pet projects of no value to Manitoba. Remember the Spirited Energy campaign; the long western Bipole III route; the enhanced drivers' licence program—are but just a few, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 215 works to get Manitobans—Manitoba's government back on track by refocusing government to what it is supposed to do, which is provide quality front-line services to Manitobans and look after those most vulnerable in our province.

The out-of-control spending of the NDP is ruining Manitoba's fiscal sustainability and putting our key services, like health and education, at risk. Instead of fixing programs to better serve Manitobans, the NDP simply throw more money at a problem and hope the solution will fix itself. Mr. Speaker, that is not leadership, it is not sustainable and it is not what Manitobans want.

We—and we have developed Bill 215 based on what Manitobans have been asking for from us and I urge all members of the Legislature to support Bill 215. It's exactly what Manitoba families want, need and deserve. Thank you very much.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be clear. The member opposite talks about useless pet projects. Let's be clear. Nurses are not useless pet projects. Doctors are not useless pet projects. Health care, education, schools, our students, are not useless pet projects. Spending on

infrastructure is not a useless pet project, like the member opposite talks about.

This—we talk about serious stuff in this Chamber and I think we need to be reminded every now and then of a few things.

First of all, I think people in this Chamber, and by extension, the 1.2 million Manitobans who depend on us—I think they ought to get very nervous when a Conservative party comes forward with something called results-based budgeting; results, Mr. Speaker.

What are the—when Conservatives are in power, what are those results? Get rid of nurses? Fire nurses and dry—fire a thousand nurses and drive another 500 out of the province? That was the result of the last time Conservatives had a chance to be in charge of budgets in this province. Is that the results that we're dealing with? Is it the fact that we—that, in terms of doctors, we have 116 fewer doctors when the Conservatives were last in charge of a budget in Manitoba. Is that the result that members opposite are referring to? What other results were prevalent when Conservatives get a chance to do the budgeting?

Well, first of all, experiments with privatization. The only way that Conservatives balanced the budget back in the 1990s was to sell telephone systems, Mr. Speaker, and that's what they did. You know, they bragged just a minute ago about how they—their spending was under control, although they ran deficits in the '90s, maybe on their own version of useless pet projects, I don't know. But the only way they were able to bring their budget back into balance was to sell off something that didn't belong to them, sell off a Crown corporation that belonged to the people of Manitoba. That's the only way they did it. That was the result that they were looking for.

Mr. Speaker, another result of Conservatives budgeting is decisions that move from 85 down to 70, the number of medical school spaces available to train doctors. Now, I represent the community of Grandview. We just got some news the other day that we've—we're going to lose another doctor. She's moving to British Columbia. Her husband's taking a job there. We're going to be looking for a doctor again in Grandview, and that's a little community in my riding. If we were still—if we still had the Conservatives in charge, we'd be—we would only be training 70 doctors a year, rather than 110 that we do now. Our chances of filling that post in Grandview are much better now because of decisions that we

made, budgetary decisions that we made, commitments that we made and followed through on. The result of Conservative budgeting would be fewer doctors.

Mr. Speaker, the results that the members opposite talked about, you know, this isn't just me making something up here. We see what's happening in Ottawa. We see what happens when Conservatives are in charge of budgets. We saw what happened when they were in charge here back in the '90s. We don't have to go back that far, even. We can go back to when members opposite, almost all of who were here at the time, brought a resolution to this House hacking and slashing their way through those front-line services that Manitobans value the most. A five—all in one fell swoop—all in one fell swoop. The member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), I'm sure, can remember this and I'm sure he voted for it. I don't remember him stepping out from under the cloud of Conservatives. The member for Midland voted for a resolution all in one fell swoop that would've taken \$500 million out of the budget. That was right here; it's on record. If he wants to look it up it's in *Hansard*. He can pull the *Hansard* out from that day and he can argue with that document all he likes. He can deny it all he likes, but the facts are the facts. They put forward a resolution taking out \$500 million from the provincial budget.

Not even the federal Conservatives took that approach at that time. Mr. Speaker, at the time the federal Conservatives—and I don't know if it had anything to do with being in a minority government, or now a majority, but, what the heck, let's give them the benefit of the doubt. Back in '08 and '09, when the economic downturn was starting to kick in, when the federal government was faced with a problem and it was an economic problem, the federal Conservative government along with the provinces decided they were going to stimulate our economy. And they did it with—gosh, it was called an economic stimulus plan, and the idea of that plan was to make sure people were working, make sure our employment levels were up as we move forward into what looked to be a pretty serious global economic downturn.

And I will say, to their credit, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet sat down with us as a province and other provinces, and they moved forward with an economic stimulus program. That program was very helpful in dealing with an economic downturn.

* (10:20)

Where were members of the Manitoba Conservatives on that one? Well, Mr. Speaker, they were in the House with a \$500-million hack-and-slash resolution that would have done exactly the opposite of what the federal government and the provincial government were out there actively doing, actively doing to help the situation, rather than the backwards, old-fashioned, I guess, kind of an approach—outdated approach, an approach that has been proven over and over again not to work. That's where the Manitoba Conservatives were, Mr. Speaker. So, that's a results—that's a result that I don't think Manitobans can afford.

Our approach back then, as it is now, was to take a balanced view of this; a balance between expenditures and revenues; a balance between fiscal responsibility and stimulating the economy; and an approach that, over and above all of that, protects services that Manitobans value the most. Mr. Speaker, our approach was to take on a five-year economic recovery plan. We launched into that in our first year. We met and exceeded the targets that we put in place.

In the year 2 of that plan, whether members admit it or not, a flood occurred, and there were victims of that flood. We paid to make sure that we minimized the flood in the first place. We pay—we announced and paid, and are continuing to pay, through compensation programs. And, we've been paying for infrastructure that helps to make sure that we're ready if this type of a flood occurs again.

Now, maybe flood victims are what the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) referred to earlier, as—how did she put it—useless pet projects. We don't see it that way. We just don't see it that way, Mr. Speaker. Those are Manitobans who needed help and those are Manitobans who are receiving help from this government. And, as our Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) has said over and over again, we're going to keep at that until—'til Manitobans are back to normal. We know that we have to respond to that flood. We are doing that, despite the advice of members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that we do need to continually analyze the spending that we do as a province. We understand that. And if members opposite would look or care to admit, in Budget 2012, we did announce a program portfolio management review, a review, an internal review, that set some very aggressive targets that we're working towards.

So, the Conservative Party in Manitoba, again, is a little bit late. I appreciate the advice but it is something that we're undertaking now. I'm really glad it's not Conservatives opposite that are in charge of a review, because I think people like doctors and nurses and people in departments, I think they'd be awful nervous if it was members opposite doing that review.

But our goal is very clear: We're going to continue that review. We're going to analyze our spending, but we're not going to throw the services that Manitobans need and desire the most—we're not going to throw those under the bus, like members opposite would do, Mr. Speaker.

So thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say here tonight, or is this today, that it's very important that the minister understand that it's never too late. He thinks it is too late, but it's never too late to look at transparency and accountability, and Bill 215 will bring that forward for Manitobans. They want to make sure that there is value for the tax dollars that are spent here. They want to know why there's such a poor record of this NDP government. We need to review programs and services to make sure that they meet their objectives.

And, you know, recent bills that we've seen are making Hydro and other agencies a social agency. In fact, we get, you know, in Manitoba Hydro bills, we now get promotions for NDP—federal NDP coming to speak here. Is that appropriate, really, for Hydro to be sending out promotional material? I'm sure—I wonder if the Prime Minister were to come that maybe Manitoba Hydro would put a flyer in their—you know, I'm not sure. Anyway, we'll see how that all works out. Maybe we can ask them to do that.

But, anyway, Manitoba Hydro as a social agency, that's an interesting thing you can think about there. I think that they build dams very well, they build transmission very well, they provide electricity of Manitobans, but now, we're going—asking them to be a social agency, and that's not something I think they're trained for. But, maybe we're going to develop that as well.

Manitoba really needs to—an opportunity. Manitobans need an opportunity to participate in the process, and we want to see that there's a capital review of major projects for Hydro. They want to ask, is everything transparent?

You know, this Bill 215 will refocus the government on what it is supposed to do—providing quality front-line services to Manitobans instead of creating jobs just to fill in reports, push paper. Or even recently, we're going to put up a, you are No. 10 in line for emergency services, so someone has to go up there and keep track of that, another individual that won't be providing front-line services to people. But I'm sure this government will say, well, that is a front-line service to tell you how long you're going to have to wait, how many hours you're going to have to wait, in the emergency room.

You know, when I look at our companies-type thing, and we made sure that our staff were all involved in the planning process and they knew how those companies were doing, we shared our financials with them and trained them and made sure that they were aware of what was going on. So that, you know, we would share our financials with them, and when we did that they would look at it and go, you know what? We know that, we're happy that, you're a solid company, that you're profitable. But in the end of the day, our staff told us that they would not expose their capital to that amount of risk for that low return, but they were willing to help us make it a more effective company and improve the customer experience. And that's really what it's about, is making sure that you have happy and successful customers.

You know, here we have Crown corporations supporting professional sports teams, and is that really something that they should be doing? I think Crown corporations should stick to their mandate so that, you know, this government just doesn't use them as a lost cause there as something that they can just suck the money out of.

Recently, this year, we had a 110 doctors graduate and that's very admirable. This is the first class that this government did that for. You know, they increased the number of doctors, and that's all very admirable, but, you know what? There were only 100 residencies. So you got 110 doctors; you have 100 residencies. What do you do with the—oh, we didn't know that this was going to happen this year. We forgot that this was the year that we needed more residents. Oh, well, what are we going to do with those extra 10 doctors? Did we expect they weren't going to finish the program? Are they going to go out of province? Are they going to come back? So isn't that very strange that the government just doesn't plan?

We talked about MTS here. You know, MTX, I seem to remember that we lost how many billions of dollars in Saudi Arabia, and that set MTS for—up for a failure here. They created a huge problem; they sucked all the life out of MTS. And, you know, when MTS was sold and it created that rainy day 'fund,' they spent it. They didn't have a problem spending it. And, of course, they're willing to take Jets tickets from MTS—that's okay. But I guess there would have been more if they had remained as a Crown corporation. There would have been more Jets tickets to go around.

You know, just you look at what MTS was able to do and how they're able to create—all these members across have smartphones. Wouldn't have that, wouldn't have those smartphones, if MTS was not a private corporation. A Crown corporation—try to use your smartphone in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and see how that works out for you.

But, you know, they lost another Crown corporation to plunder and to appoint friends and donors to the board, so I guess, you know, they have to create more of that.

This NDP government had the greatest opportunity of any province in Canada in the last 12 years, and they've squandered that, and what do we have to show? We've got the highest debt we've had in—we've got the highest deficit, we've got the highest taxes, and we've got high, and increasing, transfer payments. You know, the rest of Canada is supporting this—

An Honourable Member: Highest child poverty rate.

Mr. Helwer: Highest child poverty rate. Isn't that a sad thing that this government speaks to when they're so proud, they think of how well they're doing, but, you know, they can't solve child poverty, so they go back 20 years and complain about it? They had the record for the last 12 years, and that's what they have to defend.

We have flood claims we've been talking about here. If this government has 30,000 flood claims, and at the rate they're dealing with them, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be six years—six years—before they will be able to deal with all those flood claims.

Is that acceptable to Manitobans? You had the flood last year, and seven years after the flood, oh, you know what? We finally got around to dealing with your claim. Is that an acceptable process? And,

you know, is that really something that we want Manitobans to be proud of?

It's just the opportunities that have gone by and we've missed, this government has missed, time and time again. And this—

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

* (10:30)

I'm interrupting the debate here this morning with the understanding that when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Brandon West will have three minutes remaining.

As previously agreed in the House here this morning, we would have half an hour, 30 minutes, for each bill under debate here this morning, and we'll now proceed with Bill 218, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act.

The honourable member—the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business?

House Business

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

In accordance with rule 78(4) and 78(4.1), I'm tabling the list of ministers to be considered for the concurrence process for tomorrow, Wednesday, June 13th, with the understanding that the list of ministers is to be considered concurrently. This list is in effect for Wednesday, and that would be Ms. Howard, Mr. Ashton—sorry.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the list of ministers required for tomorrow has been tabled here this morning.

Bill 218—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on Bill 218.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard), that Bill 218, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill 218. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to

introduce this bill and to thank other members for providing that opportunity.

I note that discussion of this bill follows discussion of Bill 215, The Results-Based Budgeting Act. I believe in results-based budgeting, and that is one reason I've introduced Bill 218, the Legislature Assembly management amendment act.

As I shall show, the act give MLAs greater flexibility in communicating at taxpayers' expense to their constituents and at the same time has the potential to save up to \$500,000 this coming year. Those are good results, Mr. Speaker, and good results for MLAs and good results for taxpayers.

Bill 218, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, will give MLAs more flexibility and will help save money. The bill will only change one word in The Legislative Assembly Act. It will change the phrase "mail letters" to the phrase "send letters," changing the word "mail" to "send." This is in reference to how members of the Legislature can deliver their newsletters each year.

The reason for this bill dates back to September of last year, September of 2011, when Canada Post made changes in the way it will do postal drops of where it drops an unaddressed letter or newsletter into every home in a district. Before then, postal drops could be done for a portion of a postal walk. After September, Canada Post decided that they would only provide postal drops for a whole postal walk. When this change was made, it became impossible to use postal drops for 37 provincial constituencies in Manitoba because the postal walks crossed constituency boundaries and overlapped different constituencies too much. The Legislative Assembly management committee decided that they would, therefore, fund these 37 constituencies to have their newsletters delivered by individually addressed mail. This increased the delivery cost for newsletters in constituencies like mine from about \$1,200 before September to about \$6,000 afterwards.

When I saw the effect of this change and realized the extra dollars this would cost taxpayers, I decided this was unacceptable. I was not allowed to use the funds for mailing out the newsletter in any other way than individually addressed and mailed letters. I asked for changes but I was told that the law was such that I had no alternative and it would take a change in the law, which is why this bill is being brought forward.

For me, I used other funds than the mailing budget to deliver the mail, because it wasn't acceptable to me to spend \$6,000 in taxpayers' dollar for something which could be done for much less.

As a result of this, I have introduced Bill 218, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, supported by the MLA for Fort Rouge. I believe that we, as legislators, should be considerate of taxpayers' dollars. The savings of delivering the newsletters is about \$4,800 per MLA per newsletter, Mr. Speaker, which adds up, with three newsletters a year for 37 constituencies, to up to \$500,000 in 'percentual' savings a year for taxpayers.

I will return now, Mr. Speaker, briefly, to getting results. I ask all MLAs to consider supporting this legislation by allowing it to come to a vote and voting for it. I ask all MLAs to support Bill 218, because I have—as I have said, it is good for MLAs and it's good for Manitoba taxpayers. Thank you.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): And I want to thank the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for bringing forward this bill.

I want to talk a little bit about the background to this bill. We do believe it's an issue that requires discussion and agreement among all the members of the House because it affects all of us and that's why we supported it coming to debate today, because we do want to have some of that discussion. But there are some outstanding questions about how it would work that I think we would need to resolve before we completely move forward with the idea.

I want to speak a little bit to the difficulties that we're having now in terms of doing our mailings for our franks. Every MLA, of course, is entitled to three mailings a year to all of the constituency. In the past, we've had no problem using Canada Post to do that because they had—they would agree to split postal codes. So, for example, in a constituency like mine, urban constituency, there is very little of the constituency falls within one postal code; much of it is split between other postal codes. In the past, Canada Post would deliver mail and would split those postal codes so I could be reasonably certain that the mail that I was sending to my constituents was actually going to my constituents.

And I know the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) often received it, and I had many critiques of the quality of the mailing, which has improved my mailing considerably. I despair that

I've lost the member for Steinbach as a constituent now—oh no, you're still with me, that's right. He lives in the best neighbourhood in Canada, in Osborne Village, and he is a village resident in every way. One might consider him a village person. I look forward to seeing his moustache fill in so that he could—he can play that role.

Back to the mail—so, the difficulty we were having with the mailing was meaning that many MLAs, mostly those of us who represent urban constituencies, were having real difficulty getting our mail to where it was supposed to go. And then Canada Post made a decision that they no longer were going to allow us to split postal codes, and I think it's important to note that these are decisions made by the corporation of Canada Post. I don't think any of us would question the ability or capacity of the postal carriers to do their job, but, really, the policy changed so that they would no longer split postal codes which meant that, certainly, in constituencies like mine, and I know the member for River Heights has referenced about 37 constituencies that this affects, that, really, it's pretty well useless for me to use that method to get out unaddressed mail because it covers a very small fraction of the area.

So we were faced with a decision about how we were going to make sure that members could continue to communicate with their constituents. So we made a decision as a group, as all MLAs in this House, that we would allow, until we could sort this out, the use of addressed mail.

We also did ask for a letter to be sent on our behalf to the federal minister to see if we could convince them to change the policy. I think it's worth noting that this is not the policy that Canada Post follows for members of Parliament. They are allowed to send their mail, to split postal codes. Canada Post will deliver an MP's mailing, in my understanding, even to a mailbox that says no flyers on it. But there's a different policy for MLAs, which I don't think is fair, and we continue to have that discussion with Canada Post. But in the meantime, we do have this issue whereby every MLA is entitled to mail three times a year to their constituent.

* (10:40)

Now, in solving this problem, one of the things—I think the member for River Heights doesn't want, I don't want, I don't think any member in this House wants, this to any way impact on members' ability to—if they choose, to use Canada Post to mail. In

some constituencies like mine and other urban ones, probably we could find alternate delivery methods. But in some constituencies, certainly rural and remote constituencies, it may not be that easy to use a different method, and people may continue to want to rely on Canada Post and that may mean that we're going to have to continue to use address mail.

So I think this—I think there is a solution here that can serve the needs of every member of this House, but I think we're going to need to have some more discussion about how we arrive there.

We also, I think, could have an issue if we don't have any addressed mail in constituencies where we've got many, many apartment blocks where it's very difficult to get in to deliver the mail. You can't get access to the mailboxes generally unless you are a Canada Post employee. So I think we're going to need to maintain that flexibility for people to be able to get their mail out, and I think we need to have some more discussions about that.

There also had been raised with me several questions about how we will make sure that alternate delivery can work. Some members may wish to use a volunteer group in their constituency to deliver their franks and may want to make a donation in respect of that. Currently, we're not allowed to make donations to voluntary, non-profit organizations. So I think we would want to make certain that we could, for example—you know, I've heard that some members may want to hire the local Boy Scout troop to go around and deliver their mail. We want to make sure that we can accommodate that within the rules that also currently forbid any donations to those organizations.

We've also had other members raise with me the issue of whether or not they would be able to use some of their travel allowance to have people drive around, especially in rural areas or remote areas, to travel around to make sure that the mail is—that their—that franks are getting out. So I think we also have to clarify that.

I think, you know, we do have the mechanisms to make these clarifications, certainly through LAMC. We also have currently the pay and benefits commissioner, Michael Werier, and I know he can't make this change because it's a legislative change, but he will make other changes to the allowances. I know one of the issues that all caucuses have been talking about is communications generally. I don't

know what he's going to recommend yet, but it may have an impact on this.

So I think this is a worthy discussion. I commend the member for bringing it forward because I think there is a real problem in how we get the mail out, and I think there is an opportunity to—for some savings in this respect. But I also think, as we solve that problem, we want to make sure that we don't solve it, Mr. Speaker, in a way that impacts disproportionately on members depending on geography, and we want to make sure that we all understand what the rules are with alternative delivery before we go into it. We have had experiences, I know, each of us in this House before, where a misunderstanding of the rules has led to some difficult decisions that then we then have to live with. And we, certainly, if we can understand the rules better up front, then we'll avoid that.

So we're generally supportive at looking at this change. We have a few questions that I think we need to have answered before we move forward. I think, you know, as I said, we want to make sure that it's done equitably. I'm confident that we have the processes in place to make sure of those things.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I, too, want to speak to Bill 218, brought forward by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). And, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, I guess, that I know that the member has very limited opportunity to bring a bill before this House, that he chooses this to be his only opportunity. This is the bill he wants to debate here. I think there was many other worthy, noteworthy things that he could have brought forward, but this is the one he chose.

There is a forum for the discussion on mailings, constituency mailings for MLAs, Mr. Speaker, and that's through the legislative management commission, of which the three—the member for River Heights, the member Fort Rouge and myself as a member for Morris are a part of, and we have had this discussion. I know it's been outlined by both members that—what exactly has instigated this whole debate. And I do note that it is a worthy debate because, yes, there are some problems there that need to be addressed. And we have had the discussions at the LAMC and are working towards finding a solution. And I hope that a solution can be found that will be fair and equitable to all MLAs. And I think the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) did touch on it, that there are limited

opportunities or limited methods, I should say, of how our mailings get distributed in rural areas as to pose—as opposed to in urban areas.

In rural Manitoba, it's very difficult to deliver your mail or your fliers or your letters by any other way by other than Canada Post. I mean there's just not the opportunity to even go door to door and distribute in mailboxes, because people don't have mailboxes, even in concentrated, populated areas or small towns. There's generally a super mailbox at the end of the street. So—and the key is only in the possession of Canada Post, so there isn't even that opportunity to deliver the mail that way.

Yes, there's a cost associated with this right now, and I do agree that we need to find some savings. I think that is a laudable goal, Mr. Speaker. But having said that, I mean, we just debated a bill that looked at savings across the board and looking at where we could find savings across the board, and that wasn't supported. But I notice that in the urban centres there are maybe other ways and means of delivering our mail, our letters. I'll say the letters, rather than the mail. But I do know, having been in the newspaper industry and having many people submit fliers to me to put into the newspaper, to have them delivered that way, I know what happens to those pieces of those letters; they usually end up in the garbage. So I think we'd have to consider that as a reasonable outcome of that method of delivery. And that would be another waste of our time and our effort and our money in trying to communicate with our constituents.

If we looked at trying to use non-profit organizations or groups or try to employ people to do this for us, I think there are implications there. I've heard of instances where these—if we had to try and recruit people to do some work for us, that they'd have to be hired actually as staff, and that is a cost. And it's quite a bit of red tape involved in that as well, Mr. Speaker. So there are issues that have to be looked at in its entirety. And I think just to be so that we are clear, it should be a fairness issue, a level playing field between the urban and the rural MLAs. So that every MLA that has the same opportunity to communicate, with their franking pieces, has the same allowance, I guess, or how we can work that out, how we can work that it out that it's fair and balanced.

There is a venue, the format for that, Mr. Speaker, and that is at the LAMC meetings, and we have been discussing this. So I think that that is

the appropriate place to continue the discussion. Although I don't see it as unworthy of debate, but I just wonder if it wouldn't have been more appropriate to have it at LAMC, rather than debate it on the floor of the House.

We also do have the pay and benefits commissioner right now, who is looking at a number of issues in regard to MLAs. And one of the things that he will be examining is how we communicate with our constituents. And, certainly, as the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) said, he cannot change the legislation. Only we can do that in this House, and I recognize that. But he can bring forward recommendations, and we haven't seen that report yet. So there may be several things in that report which give us food for thought and would be, perhaps, some kind of solution that we could look at and see how we could implement that. If—and how we can just be again fair and equitable to all the members, and I think that is the goal. I think the goal of everyone is to make sure we do this in a fair and equitable manner.

Perhaps, as the member from Fort Rouge did say, there's some differences in the way the federal MPs distribute their letters and we do here in the province. So maybe there's still opportunity there, Mr. Speaker. I know that you, yourself, wrote to the federal government, looking for some solutions, and that was—that didn't result in a solution. But perhaps there's still opportunity to look further at that if it's being done in one jurisdiction, maybe we can look further at that. It seems like it's a possibility.

*(10:50)

So again, I just—I think that to sum up, I think that we do need to look at the issue. We have the appropriate—a formatted venue for looking at that issue, which is our LAMC committee, or our commission.

We will need to examine and make sure that it's fair and equitable for all of the MLAs, and we certainly should hear what the pay and benefits commissioner will recommend in this regard. And I think once we get all of the information together, we could look at that and see what would be the appropriate solution going forward.

To suggest, though, that—the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) said that this would result in cost savings to taxpayers; I think it could result in cost savings to taxpayers. And we certainly would

see that as worthy, but that is not proven, because we do not know what other methods would be chosen and what other methods of delivery might cost. If we were having to hire people and put them on as staff people, that might result in significant costs, Mr. Speaker, and we don't know what those costs will be. There are a number of MLAs that might have to employ this, so it's one thing to say that you're saving money; it's another to actually do the homework here, do the mathematics once you have the information, and just actually see what the savings are, if there are savings.

What red tape is going to be created by doing something different that we do not foresee right now? There may be unforeseen consequences to something like this that we haven't seen yet, so I think we need to have a further discussion and look very closely at how we can make this fair and equitable for all the MLAs.

There's an appropriate place to do that, Mr. Speaker, and so, when we have all the information before us, I think we can take it to—back to LAMC and examine it and I think that we will be able to find some solutions here. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker, and I want to begin by thanking the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for bringing forward this bill, the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Howard) for seconding it so that it could be discussed here.

More traditionally, we would have these discussions, as the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) references, at the LAMC process, and those things, as you know, Mr. Speaker, as being the Chair of that process, are often very collegial. And we discuss how things can impact individual members in a non-partisan way and that's normally the appropriate forum for these sorts of discussions.

But there's nothing wrong with what the member for River Heights has done. I think he's done it with all the right intentions and with all the right motivations and, in fact, I would applaud his motivations; he feels there could be a cost savings achieved here. It's in dispute whether or not it would be or to what amount that would be, but I think that any time we can bring forward an idea that could save taxpayers' dollars and that makes sense in terms of our own rules and more broadly in the context of

government, it's a worthy thing to debate here in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that this highlights is, if, you know, the public were closely watching this debate, is the fact that we have three opportunities to mail to them. I suspect that the public would think, Mr. Speaker, that it's much more, that they would think that provincial MLAs are constantly sending out what we call franking pieces, what they would refer to as brochures. In fact, we only have three opportunities. I think that's a modest amount. It allows us to report on what's happened in, generally, the spring and the fall legislative session. That's an important thing for constituents to know; what's been debated here in the Legislature, here in the House.

So we have those opportunities and maybe, then, one other, to discuss something of broader interest. So, if nothing else, the debate might bring forward, to the extent people are closely watching it, the notion that we are quite frugal, I think, as Manitobans and as MLAs in terms of what we're allowed to do with our mailings. And it's only three when it comes to general mailings, Mr. Speaker, and it's good that at least that is brought forward to the floor of the Legislature.

The other thing it highlights is, in fact, our rules are quite tight, I would say, in terms of our expenses. We now have our expenses online; one of the first provinces in the country, I think, to do that—not the only, but one of the few where MLAs or the public can go and look at what MLAs have spent online, and so that certainly holds us to account in that regard, but also that our rules are quite intertwined, Mr. Speaker, and when you try to change one rule, often you run into the front of another rule.

And the member for Morris referenced and I think I'd spoken to her a couple of days ago about this. There was an instance a little while back. I was looking to hire somebody for a couple of days only in my office to deal with some mailing that I was doing, and I was informed by members' allowance that I would have to hire them as staff, that I couldn't hire them on a contract basis, that that had changed as a result of the commissioner's report going back a year or a year and a half. That was a surprise to me, but I'd essentially have to put them on as a casual employee and to go through all the hiring process just to have them there for a couple of days. And so that was a surprise to me. It may be a surprise to you,

Mr. Speaker. I had done that previously, prior to the most recent commissioner's report.

But I understand now the rules have changed and that certainly might impact this particular change that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) is suggesting. Would we have to hire, you know, 20 people who were in boy-involved with the Boys and Girls Club as casual staff to do this? And, of course, that's a tremendous amount of paperwork and so often there's a domino effect; one change affects another change. Doesn't mean it's not a good idea; it just means that we have to ensure that if we're going to do something, that it can actually be put into effect, that it can actually achieve the purpose that the member for River Heights and others might actually be looking for.

And the fact is our rules are quite intertwined and they are quite restrictive in some ways as you know, that might sometimes be a frustration for members and in others, people can see the reasons for those restrictions.

So we need to be careful when we make these changes. It would be not a traditional way to make the changes on the floor of the Legislature. The bill was introduced by the member for River Heights only a couple of days ago, and I understand the time restrictions that he was under. And I understand the restrictions that he's under in terms of being an individual member and needing a seconder in this House, Mr. Speaker, but the fact remains that we only have a couple of days to examine and to look at a bill that ultimately will have a broader impact and that will cause other dominoes to fall, and so that is a challenge.

I know that we'll have further discussions at LAMC. I think that the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard)—and I want to correct the record. She's not actually my MLA, but on a part-time basis, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be in Osborne Village and not—but my home is always Steinbach. I don't want to leave any sort of wrong facts on the record.

But we'll have other opportunities when it comes to LAMC to have further discussions, and I think it would be wise for us, perhaps, to also then take in the counsel of those who are involved with the member's allowance. Maybe see what the commissioner reports, I know he's due for a different report coming probably by—within a few weeks, and whether or not he touches on this particular issue is still unknown.

So it's not as though the—what the member for River Heights is proposing is a bad idea. It's not even that it's been not thought out, and I wouldn't want to leave that as the impression to him either. But I do know from experience now over the last eight years that any time you make any change to the rules that govern MLAs, whether that's through expenses or otherwise, it causes a lot of ripple effects within that pool, Mr. Speaker, and often those are unintended ripple effects. So it's really to his benefit and to our benefit and to all of our benefits to ensure that we do our—a little bit more homework on this to ensure that the (a) the cost savings that he is proposing are actually achieved; (b) that we can actually do what it is that he's proposing, and if not, we can look at the rules and see how it is that maybe those rules can be changed; (c) maybe there are other alternatives. I don't know if we've closed the door on changes at the federal level, but we should certainly be looking at that.

So there are a number of other steps, I think, that need to be taken before this bill gets passed, but I wouldn't rule out that it might come back another day or come back in a different form, Mr. Speaker, once we've had the opportunity to truly look at all the implications and all the ripple effects—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Interrupting the debate here this morning with the understanding when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Steinbach will have two minutes remaining.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And before we proceed with the private member's resolution, I want to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this morning 70 students from École Noël-Ritchot, and this group is under the direction of Ms. Marie Josee Paquin. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau).

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this morning.

RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Speaker: The time being 11 a.m., it's time for private members' resolutions, and this morning, we're—we will be considering the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum).

But first, we'll go to the Government House Leader.

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday, if necessary, will be one put forward by the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer). The title of the resolution is Local Foods.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the private—pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday, if necessary, will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Wolseley, and the title of the resolution is Local Foods.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, we'll proceed with the resolution.

Res. 12—Active Transportation (AT)

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I want to move, seconded by the member from Brandon East, that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has made significant progress in developing an active transportation network over the last decade; and

WHEREAS all Manitobans benefit from the development and use of an active transportation system; and

WHEREAS Manitoba commuters can reduce their environmental impact by taking advantage of an extended AT network; and

WHEREAS AT encourages the importance of fitness and the health benefits of active living; and

WHEREAS bike paths, hiking trails, and canoe routes promote eco-friendly tourism; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has recently received recommendations from Manitoba's Active Transportation Advisory Group in the report entitled *Greater Strides: Taking Action on Active Transportation*; and

WHEREAS *Greater Strides* calls on the provincial government to develop a provincial AT policy.

THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED THAT the Manitoba Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to establish a provincial AT policy

thereby building a stronger, healthier, and sustainable province for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to consider the resolution as printed? [*Agreed*]

WHEREAS Manitoba has made significant progress in developing an Active Transportation (AT) network over the last decade; and

WHEREAS all Manitobans benefit from the development and use of an Active Transportation system; and

WHEREAS Manitoba commuters can reduce their environmental impact by taking advantage of an extended AT network; and

WHEREAS AT encourages the importance of fitness and the health benefits of active living; and

WHEREAS bike paths, hiking trails and canoe routes promote eco-friendly tourism; and

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government has recently received recommendations from Manitoba's Active Transportation Advisory Group in the report entitled *Greater Strides: Taking Action on Active Transportation*; and*

*WHEREAS *Greater Strides* calls on the Provincial Government to develop a provincial AT policy.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Manitoba Legislative Assembly urge the Provincial Government to establish a provincial AT policy thereby building a stronger, healthier and sustainable province for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell):

WHEREAS—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Mr. Allum: I'm honoured to move this resolution on active transportation, and I hope that all members of the House will find a way to support it.

Mr. Speaker, active transportation is important to my constituents in Fort Garry-Riverview. Though not all of the Bike to the Future membership may live in Fort Garry-Riverview, a great many do. They talk to me often. They are active promoters of active transportation, and so it's important me—for me to

represent their views on this subject. It's also important to me as a person, as a parent, as a member of my community, and as a citizen of this great city and of this great province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm sometimes mistaken for a cyclist, because I do ride my bike a fair amount—*[interjection]* Occasionally without a helmet, but I'm learning to change my behaviour, and I would invite all members to change their behaviour to ride more safely. But I have to admit I'm no Ryder Hesjedal, who recently won the Italian tour, a Canadian first, a fantastic achievement. I'm no Steven Bauer; I'm no Curt Harnett, all great Canadian cyclists who I have absolutely nothing in common with. I'm safe to say you'll never see me in spandex or equipped with all the best equipment, and I think we're all quite happy about that.

No, Mr. Speaker, I'm just another Manitoban who rides his bike, but I have to say I've been doing that all my life. When I was a kid, I rode to school every day. I had a beautiful Schwinn, and the high handlebars, I had a banana seat, fire-engine red; it was one hot bike, let me tell you, for a five-year-old. But I rode to school every day in my small hometown. I rode to my baseball practices, and I rode to my baseball games. I rode to get milk from the store for my mom who would send me perilously down Cross Street in Dundas. And in those days, you had those big plastic jugs, and if you caught it just right, you got it in between the handlebar and your knee, and you certainly could go for a wipeout, which is why we need bike helmets for people under 18 especially.

I always enjoyed riding fast, and I loved the liberation that came from being on my bike. Later in life, because I really had no money, I rode to university and I rode to my summer jobs. When I moved to Winnipeg, I rode to city hall every day and rode home even faster. And as a parent I rode with my kids all over the place. Those of us who've taught our kids to ride a bike know that it's one of the great moments of being a parent. You watch them go riding around and they—sure enough, they'll crash sooner or later, ride into a pole or maybe go sideways. But, then, once you see your kid take those first few pedals and they start flying a little bit at a time, and they make some headway, and you're running behind them, you know it's a fantastic moment as a parent. But, more than that, you've liberated that child and allowed them to take their own first pedals toward a free and independent life.

So I say, why all this biking for me over a lifetime? Well, the answer is actually quite simple. Riding my bike was cheap, it was convenient, it was often faster than riding in a car and, generally, a lot more fun. And it was only later in life that riding my bike was—I realized that riding my bike was actually good for me and for the society I lived in. I realized it improved my physical fitness which I needed some improvement on. I realized that it was an eminently affordable and energy-efficient alternative to driving a car. I learned that it reduced my personal and my community footprint. I learned that it built neighbourhoods. I learned that it connected communities. I learned that it reduced infrastructure and maintenance cost. And I learned that it removed road rage and parking ticket rage and therefore improved my mental health as well.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the conclusion I came to, the epiphany I had, was that what I once thought of, a simple, cheap and convenient way of getting around, is, in fact, a socially, environmentally, economically and personally responsible lifestyle that not only improved my quality of life, but the quality of life in my neighbourhood, in my city, and in my province.

And so that, Mr. Speaker, is really the purpose of this resolution before the House this morning. It asks all of us to work together to maintain the momentum around active transportation and build on the foundation that has been constructed over the past decade.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the many jobs I had in the CAO Secretariat for the City of Winnipeg was as acting environmental co-ordinator around 2003 and 2004. And, at that point, to be honest, active transportation was first finding its sea legs. And, in fact, the City folks, we didn't quite know how to deal with this new initiative, this new lobbying group that was out there, asking us to do something to improve biking, walking, rollerblading, to improve active transportation, to improve human-powered transportation which, after all, is the definition of active transportation.

So I know that in 2003-2004, when I was acting environmental co-ordinator for the City that, in fact, we hadn't made a whole lot of progress on active transportation, active transportation infrastructure, active transportation safety, active transportation promotion for its health and social and economic and environmental benefits. So I can say, categorically, that we have come a very long way in the last

decade, and we should be extraordinary—extraordinarily proud of the progress that we have made. This government alone since 2007, Mr. Speaker, has provided \$15 million and has dedicated it to active transportation infrastructure in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's in motion grant program supports community-led initiatives to increase the number of people choosing active forms of transportation, including the successful Active and Safe Routes to School program.

Mr. Speaker, my friend, the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), has introduced the low-cost bike helmet program and I am in a position where I can afford it, but I know there are many who can't. And this is an incredibly important program to improve the health and the safety and to encourage young people to get on their bikes, to get on their Rollerblades, to start walking; that you just don't need to hop in a car to get where you want to go.

*(11:10)

Mr. Speaker, we made sure that the Manitoba—expansion of the Manitoba floodway included a \$9-million investment to ensure that active transportation became a real part of what the floodway was all about.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, what we also understood is that active transportation was also always in, kind of, different places throughout the provincial administration. And so in 2011, we established the Manitoba Active Transportation Advisory Group. And these were key people in the active transportation community, and they worked with the departments and they came up with a number of extraordinarily important recommendations in the report called Greater Strides: Taking Action on Active Transportation.

And so, Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that they asked us to do in Greater Strides, and one of the things that we want to do as a government and what this resolution asks us to do, is to consolidate active transportation within one department of the government, which I can say is the Department of Local Government, headed by my friend the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux). And I'm absolutely thrilled to know that we're going to have this level of co-ordination in active transportation. That's item No. 1.

And then item No. 2, Mr. Speaker, is that the—Greater Strides calls on the government to put in

place an active transportation policy to set the framework, to set the agenda going forward into the next—into the 21st century so that we can build the kind of infrastructure we need to ensure that active transportation—which is healthier, which is economically efficient, which includes—is environmentally efficient, and is better for your health and personal safety—so that we can co-ordinate it, build an infrastructure to encourage people to take advantage of a lifetime of active transportation and healthy living.

Now, I know members on this side of the House, on the other side of the House are going to be happy to support this resolution. I understand, and I saw in their own campaign literature, that they were onside with Greater Strides—that they were onside. It may come as a surprise to some members of the opposition, but you were onside with active transportation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see no reason today for all of us not to work together to pass this resolution to improve the well-being and the environmental health of the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I want to thank the member from Fort Garry-Riverview for bringing this resolution forward for us to debate today.

In fact, how times change. In fact, I, in my childhood, growing up, I wasn't fortunate enough to have a bike until I was about 10, 11 years old. I use to ride my horse to school. I know some of you find that hard to believe, but, actually, I rode my horse to school. And in fact, I remember one day, I took my horse to the school and I used to trade it; I use to trade rides on my pony to ride the bicycle. So I know how important it was to me to be able to get off that horse and get on a bicycle and ride down the path of great wilderness. And I traded that off for a motorcycle, so I think it was a great move.

But I know the member from Riverview is a cyclist. I had the opportunity to view him just a couple of weeks ago on Assiniboia avenue and he was motoring; he was just a going down the street. And unfortunately, he didn't have his helmet on, but he has committed to making those changes, and I'm glad that he did, because as he was approaching Kennedy, there was another vehicle coming that—both of them failed to stop at the stop sign. So I know that we're going to be more careful making sure, in fact, that part of our active role in cycling, we're going to make safety a priority.

In fact, on that same street—I walk to work most days when the weather is permitting, and one thing I can tell you, that they've done a great job in converting Assiniboia avenue to a cycle path. But what the cyclists, a lot of them haven't got figured out, is they use the sidewalk yet. So we need some training as well and to make sure that they, in fact, leave the sidewalk for pedestrians and use that beautiful path that was created for them.

But now I want to get on with the active transportation, which makes all sense to Manitobans. They are clear and significant advantages promoting active transportation. In fact, it saves wear and tear on transportation infrastructure, and is much less expensive than driving a car. Of course, more than anything, active transportation provides a wide range of health benefits such as reducing one's diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and just to name a few.

However, it's disappointing that the government has ignored the benefits of active transportation for so long. A provincial active transportation policy along with recommendations brought forward by Manitoba Active Transportation Advisory Group are long overdue.

In fact, back in 2011, a group of Winnipeg west businesses and organizations urged the provincial government to make active transportation a fundamental component of CentrePort Canada's design. However, to the dismay of these businesses, the plan included nothing to accommodate the active transportation needs. In fact, Janice Lukes of Winnipeg Trails Association has spoken out against this government failure to prioritize active transportation in this province. She said, and I quote: It's frustrating to work for years to build these trail systems and hope the government sees the big picture. When they don't understand, it's disheartening. End of quote.

The government, supposedly, in CentrePort's development to define an active transportation plan, said it was too early. Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know planning is never too early. We always have to make sure that in fact we look to the future. We look down the road at what those opportunities may look like.

In fact, when we talk about Greater Strides, Manitoba's active transportation policy group only prove this government has shown no leadership in the active transportation file. In fact, the advisory group recommended they need is—for stronger clear lines of leadership in the development of active

transportation resources in Manitoba, among other recommendations included in the provincial policy as well as establishment of provincial and regional directors of active transportation.

In fact, the government says they've made significant progress in regards to developing a active transportation network over the last decade, but the reality is that we know we lag behind other jurisdictions. In fact, my—one of my local mayors, Ross Thompson from Stonewall, he's a cyclist and he goes to Birds Hill park and he's travelled the United States. In fact, he's been on a number of cycle holidays whereby he takes his bicycle and goes and finds these routes. In fact, I know of another one in Montana that—in Yellowstone park whereby they've made a number of routes whereby cyclists can go and enjoy the wilderness and, in fact, be able to take part in some of those cycle adventures, and I know as part of my role—and certainly no comparison from a motorcycle to a bicycle, but it is—it's just amazing what you feel—how you feel whenever you're out with Mother Nature and be able to feel the fresh air and enjoy cycling with others.

In fact, I know that just last week when we had committee on Bill 32, I believe it was, is that what we heard from the government—from the committee was the fact that a number of these things weren't being addressed and they need to. In fact, Bike to the Future asked several questions in regards, such as, what is the government doing to create more bike paths to keep cyclists, motor vehicles, separate from each other, and that was debated quite often in a number of other presentations. And I know that whenever we look at road safety, we have to make sure that we share the road in a way that's going to be compatible not only for the motor vehicles but also for cyclists.

In fact, Manitoba Cycling Association is also critical of this government's active transportation [inaudible] While the government alleges that Bill 32 would reduce restrictions on cyclists, the MCA contends that this legislation will do the exact opposite and will place greater restrictions on cyclists and reduce safety on those roads. So they're very concerned, Mr. Speaker, in regards to that. In fact, the government has stated that municipal governments are often best positioned to assess routes and areas where integrated bicycles with motor vehicles is appropriate. However, the cycle association was not consulted prior to the draft of Bill 32, which speaks volumes.

In fact, I know that whenever we bring up bills in this House, and I've said it time and time again, and members on this side, we've always asked the fact about consultation. We need to make sure that we, in fact, do the consultation. We need to do our due diligence to, in fact, make sure that we do our due diligence.

* (11:20)

Unfortunately, whenever we bring a bill forward and we find out through committee that this consultation didn't take place, so what happens as a result of that? We have confusion; we have people out there that, in fact, have not been informed.

So it's our job—it's our job as legislatures to make sure that we do the best of our ability to consult with each of those, and they have some great ideas—they have some great ideas. There's not a monopoly on good ideas, whether it's one of the 57 in here or the Joe Public out there that takes this responsibility very seriously. And those groups, such as the cyclist—and, in fact, I know a number of those same presenters talked about what cycling does for Manitoba in the tourist industry that brings numbers—huge numbers of people to Manitoba.

I talked about our mayor from my local area that toured various parts of United States and Canada. In fact, he goes to Birds Hill Park at least twice—at least twice—a year to cycle, and what he does, he finds out very clearly that there's a lot of other people that think along the same lines and, in fact, they feel that they want to be part of this.

In fact, I know Copenhagen is another example which is home to the busiest cycle street in the western world; 38,000 cyclists use the street each and every day. More impressive is that 37 per cent of all commuters in Copenhagen choose cycling as their primary mode of transportation.

So what we're talking about here, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about active transportation, is not only walking and cycling, but it's a way to stay fit; it's a way to stay connected within your community; it's a way that we can relate with each other in a way that's going to be healthy, that's going to be sustainable.

And, Mr. Speaker, just in conclusion, I would like to say that whenever we're talking about leadership and active transportation, progress in this area is long overdue. In fact, on a proactive approach, what we must do to recap all this is to make sure active transportation there, is there for the next generation and those generations to come.

So with that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): I'm pleased today to rise in support of the resolution brought forward from—by my colleague from Fort Garry-Riverview.

Active transportation is becoming more and more important, and from my own experience in the northeast corner of Winnipeg, it's an expectation of the citizens in my area.

As I get out into the community, I hear more and more frequently from folks that they would like to see an emphasis placed on providing safe and attractive trails and paths for them to cycle and to walk, and judging from the comments, desire for active transportation policy is certainly surging.

There are parts of Winnipeg and Manitoba that have an abundance of wonderful trails, and I am certainly blessed to be living in a part of the city that has an amazing trail in the Northeast Pioneers Greenway. It's become, over the years, a remarkable community connector. Over the last five years, it has just expanded amazingly, and the people that have been involved in its creation have certainly taken advantage of bringing the communities together.

And I have to say that having this trail in the northeast corner certainly takes me back to my youth, and as my colleague was talking about his experience as a young cyclist, I can certainly share my own experiences. And growing up in North Kildonan, I would have to say that cycling was probably the No. 1 activity that many of us youth took part in. We'd hop on our bikes and we'd have a myriad of paths and monkey trails to cycle through the abundant bush and wooded areas that still existed in the northeast corner of Winnipeg in the '60s. We would race through thickets and up and down all sorts of hills and valleys, and I have to say, I still have a few scars from those days.

However, times change and all those years later, we've had immense residential development in the northeast corner. Green spaces have diminished and certainly the trails that we enjoyed back then have all but disappeared. Probably, over the last number of years, the Bunn's Creek Trail is one of the few that has remained.

I can still recall when I returned to North Kildonan after spending a few years in Steinbach in my first years of teaching, I had a brand new, sparkling Sekine 10-speed bicycle that I was anxious to try out. But I can tell you that cycling in North Kildonan was definitely not the same. I, on the other

hand, found myself purchasing a helmet for the first time, because—and I also found myself very consciously figuring out my bike route.

For many years, cycling for me was—had become more purposeful rather than recreational. I just wanted to get from point A to point B—excuse me—safely. However, over the years I've seen a growing awareness of the benefits of being active, and maybe it's us baby boomers who have decided that we'd like to enjoy good health as we get closer to retirement, but it's also our youth who are encouraging us to be more environmentally conscious.

And so what I'm going to do is talk about and applaud members of the River East Neighbourhood Network Trails Committee who certainly saw this trend and had a vision to see the return of a safe and attractive roadway for folks who wanted to travel from one end of the northeast corner to the other. And so I have to applaud Sigrun Bailey and Louise Balaban who are the trails' co-chairs. Their drive and persistence has paid off big time for us in the northeast corner. And it was a thrill, I can say, in 2007 shortly after I'd been elected, to cut the ribbon for the greenway with community members and with the stakeholders at the trail head at Chalmers and Gateway, and that was only the beginning. What it has become over these five years is an active transportation corridor through Winnipeg from The Forks right through to the north Perimeter, and soon we'll be able to continue over the Perimeter and head to Birds Hill.

Another person I would like to acknowledge is Walter Mirosh, another member of the trails committee. His role has been also significant, but it's been in the area of naturalization. His keen eye and knowledge of native prairie vegetation has resulted in returning sections of the greenway back to its original state. In fact, Walter discovered a portion that was true, untouched patch of prairie. It had never been tilled, nothing had every been disturbed. And I can say it was very, very heartening not too long ago to drive down De Vries and actually hear frogs croaking away in the little ponds around the greenway, and I certainly haven't heard that since my youth.

The trails committee has been working really, really hard, and some of the things that they have done is they've installed interpretative signage and trail heads. They've planted trees in partnership with area residents and schools. They've installed shade canopies and benches, and I know for a fact that the

seniors in the community really appreciate that. There's a new life-lease apartment that is right at the very end of Gateway and the trail goes right past the building, and I know the seniors appreciate the opportunity of walking very safely down that trail and being able to sit and rest at the benches that have been installed.

One of the things as a result of Walter's initiative are the number of no-mow zones that protect the tall grass prairie and, certainly, this spring we've seen the blossoming of many, many new flowers that—wildflowers—that have not been seen in the area for decades. One of the safety considerations that they also worked hard on was to install lighting from Herbert Avenue to Chalmers, and in 2009 the trails committee received the Mayor's Volunteer Award for Safety.

So it has really, truly been a community asset. I'm not sure whether the rail builders in 1878 would have imagined that the Marconi Spur line would, 134 years later, still move people from one end of the city to the other, although now it's by bike, Rollerblade, or by foot. And the benefits of the Northeast Pioneers Greenway are extensive, and their pamphlet refers to them as connecting communities and that it certainly has done.

Yesterday I had the opportunity of presenting a member's statement that one of the things that the greenway has done has brought together two faith groups in North Kildonan, the gurdwara, the Guru Nanak Darbar, as well as the River East Mennonite Brethren Church, and they've seen the greenway as an opportunity for them to build a relationship between these two faith communities.

The other thing that the greenway has done is its really expanded opportunities for outdoor classrooms for the schools in North Kildonan and a number of rehabilitation projects that have been sponsored by the Northeast Pioneers Greenway have taken place over the years. In 2009, in conjunction with Sun Valley School—and I took part in that planting project that they had, and what they did is they did a Bunns Creek stabilization planting and planted a variety of natural plants from Manitoba. In 2011, with Donwood School, they've done a—they did a prairie flower restoration. And this past year, also, Molson red leaf project, they worked with a number of schools in the Centennial Park area, just at the Kimberly intersection.

* (11:30)

So I have to say again, thank you, to my colleague for bringing forward this resolution. It certainly is an opportunity, since we have an abundance of trails throughout the city. And I think that this resolution is a wonderful way of making sure we continue on that path and, no pun intended, of making sure that there's an opportunity to bind all of it together and create a unified active transportation program, not only in Winnipeg, but throughout the province. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise to speak to the resolution brought forward by the member from Fort Garry-Riverview, and I listened to some of the backgrounds that we're given here. It sounds like the member from Fort Garry-Riverview had a pretty fancy bike and it sounds like the member from Rossmere had a fairly new bike.

My first bike was \$5 and it was about four times passed down, but I also had a pony. I may have come from the richer world. I had both the bike and the pony, and my pony, very much, was in favour of active transportation. He often bucked me off miles from home and I had to walk home. And I grew up out in the country and on a farm and, you know, the bicycle I got when I was five years old was a—an adult bike. It was next to impossible for a kid my size to get on to the seat of it. You had to find some implement or some piece of machinery that you could climb up on the wheel of and then jump onto the seat of the bicycle and get yourself going. But we became very adept at doing that. And in the country, we always envied the kids that lived in town. They had paved streets to bike on, and there were paved streets at that time that, unlike today, in our failing infrastructure, they were smooth.

And out in the country, I lived in an area that was fairly sandy and many of the roads had gravel. But some of them were back roads with sand, and you'd be biking along quite happily on a fairly hard patch and you'd hit a patch of that sand and you were going for a roll in that sand.

You know, some of the things that—and I talk like an old-timer sometimes, but when you talk about active transportation, Mr. Speaker, when I was growing up, kids actually walked to school. That's almost unheard of now. Like, we have buses running everywhere to haul kids to school, but the ones that aren't on bus routes, their parents are usually driving them. And walking is certainly part of active transportation and I sometimes wonder about where we're going with keeping people actively involved

and, especially, children. I think many of us, we love our children, but we have a tendency to pamper them just a little bit too much.

When we were growing up, mother wanted the kids out of the house. We left after breakfast and we only showed up back in the house when we were summoned for meals. And we made our own fun and we were active; we were climbing trees; we were walking miles; we were—very few of us did have bicycles, actually. So mostly we were walking and, you know, as I said, we were self-entertained, and I think there's become a mindset that somebody has to entertain us now rather than us making our own fun.

I'm from the Neepawa area, as most of you know, and there's a number of initiatives that'll be taken out in that area that the community and myself are very proud of. The Trans Canada Trail actually comes within about a mile of my farm, as it winds through the municipality, and it's certainly an asset to the area and the community.

But a number of years ago, a retired school teacher and a United Church minister, whose names happened to be Fulford and Trail, set up the Fulford-Trail, which was a—it's a hiking system, but it's also a cross-country skiing set-up, and very much used. It's—and it was an initiative they took on themselves. They put this—these trails in on some Crown land and it's been a really big asset to the area.

Another—I live in the RM, the rural municipality, of Langford, and about, oh, six, or seven, eight years ago, Langford started some trails in a wildlife management area. And mainly led by the—one of the municipal councillors at the time, it wasn't myself, but one of the councillors that I worked closely with, Kathy Jasienczyk, and another lady named Muriel Gamey, and they set up an extensive number of trails in a wildlife management area with different links and different lengths and different loops and it's been quite an asset.

The one other area that is really noticeable in Neepawa is the new personal care home we have in the community is close to a mile from the downtown section of the town. And with a personal donation of over a hundred thousand dollars, the Town was able to put a walking path into—from the town itself, from where the sidewalks end, out to that facility and pave that walking path. And it's there for bikes and pedestrians and it's certainly an asset to the area.

You know, when you talk about the active transportation, the recommendations here are good,

the resolution, outside of the first whereas, where it says that the—Manitoba has made significant progress. I think they've been very slow on the progress. All of the whereases from there on down are very good ones, but it's taken 12 years for them to even come up with the idea of having an active transportation policy. And I applaud that there's going to be an active transportation policy, but it's taken an awful long time to get there. We have been in favour, for a number of years, of establishing an active transportation policy and establishing a provincial director. I'm kind of surprised that it's taking the NDP this long to get to that point.

I see my time grows short, and I know there are many others that wish to speak to this bill, Mr. Speaker. So thank you very much.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I want to speak in support of the resolution.

First of all, I do want to commend the member for bringing this legislation—or this resolution through. I do want to stress, by the way, that, as is outlined in the resolution, our government has really, over the last decade or say—decade or so, moved dramatically towards active transportation in this province. We've done it in terms of infrastructure. We're now doing it in terms of the legislation that has been brought through at this session. And I think, if you look at it, this is very much a result of a shift in attitudes.

A few years ago, if you talked about active transportation, I think most people would see it as a bit of an oxymoron; transportation was seen as something that moved you, and there was no activity involved. We've moved very significantly now towards understanding that transportation isn't really just about moving people or goods; it is about getting from one place to another; in a lot of ways, it's about rediscovering some of our roots, but also looking what's happening across the country and across the world.

I want to stress, by the way, that if you start with what I would say is the case with, certainly, bicycling, I've often said that we probably have more awareness about bicycling today, but I think we probably have fewer people actually bicycling today than 20 and 30 years ago.

* (11:40)

And I think it's largely because when we constructed our cities and our towns and our villages over the last several decades, we've increasingly focused in on the needs of cars—automated transportation. We have not reflected the fact that many people would choose—and, yes, here in Manitoba would choose active transportation, whether it's walking or a bike. And if you compare, say, Manitoba to some of the jurisdictions that have had an aggressive active transportation approach, Mr. Speaker, you'll see some of the differences why we in Manitoba and our government in particular is 'prioritizing' this.

I'm struck by Québec where there's a very significant tourism that rises out, actually, of bicycle routes. I think that's something that we need to look at here. We are, certainly, with our upgrading of our highways, upgrading the ability of people to bicycle, particularly using the paved shoulders, Mr. Speaker. So that is an area, but there's more that we can do there. There are many jurisdictions that have recognized the degree to which there is an international tourism market for people that wish to travel by bike.

I think the other thing that's very noticeable is the degree to which other jurisdictions have an aggressive approach in terms of bicycles, in terms of community. And I do think—by the way, it's a myth in Manitoba that you can't bicycle 12 months of the year. Even in Thompson, I know—a friend of mine, he bikes to work every day of the year. And if you consider that's, you know, -35 at times, you know, his approach is, you know, people don't think twice about going skiing in very cold weather, or snowmobiling, so why would they think twice about bicycling. And it really is about changing our attitudes.

And what I do want to stress, as well, too, is what we're also increasingly saying on the commuting side, is recognizing the need for bicycle-related infrastructure. And I'm very proud of some of the work we've done in the city of Winnipeg in particular, and in Brandon, our two biggest cities that have recognized that. We have some significant investment through infrastructure funds. And we also have some very significant work that's been done by Neighbourhoods Alive!, for example, in Brandon, and really profiling the fact that in many cases part of the next step for commuting is to actually have shared bike and car lanes where people do understand that you slow the traffic down, and it does provide for a safer environment.

I do want to stress, by the way, too, that I also think that some of the other legislation we're bringing in will also be of assistance. In this session I'm very pleased we're bringing in the ability for municipalities to reduce speed in school zones. And I often look, by the way, that—the barometer, really, of active transportation is how many kids are actually biking to school or walking to school? Still a significant number, but I can tell you, certainly, in my community in Thompson, having graduated from high school at R.D. Parker Collegiate a number of years ago, I can tell you, when I graduated you would have maybe two or three cars in the parking lot that were student cars. One of the big issues now, actually with the construction of the new UCN campus which is going in the parking lot, which is the parking lot at the rec centre and, of course, it's an \$82-million investment and we're very proud of, is—one of the big issues early on is where are the students going to be able to park their cars?

So you've seen the shift. You've seen—when I was, you know, in high school, we didn't talk about active transportation, and I'm not going to give you the story about walking up hill in minus 30, barefoot, but I did walk to school. And you see, part of it, by the way, is I think a lot of cases we have more awareness of actual, on the ground active transportation.

I do think, as well, on the bicycling side, I see a fair number of people who may use bikes recreationally. But a lot of people I talk to are still waiting for the point in time where we get the infrastructure and we get the proper legislation and the safety in terms of traffic where they feel confident to bike, Mr. Speaker, and they'll—they would be actively biking to work very significantly.

So I do think that we've come a long way, but what we really have to do is integrate active transportation into everything we do on the transportation side.

So what I want to say, as the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation I really support this resolution. I also want to know—by the way, we've appointed a minister directly responsible for active transportation, but a number of us work on the file, whether it's MIT, Healthy Living or the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux).

So, Mr. Speaker, the bottom line here is I think we're making significant progress; it's outlined in this resolution. But by supporting the resolution I think it'd make a real statement from this Legislature that

active transportation's time has come in Manitoba. In fact, it's very much a significant part of the future of transportation in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I'm actually really pleased to have an opportunity to stand and speak to this resolution on active transportation, and indicate that it is something that I have been quite involved with personally for some time, not as a cyclist but certainly as the MLA in a community that looks very actively at this issue. And we've got some great champions, and we've had some really good meetings locally about the whole issue of active transportation.

I first want to take a moment and actually make some comments about a group in Charleswood that has been very involved in transportation, not so much on roadways but certainly with the Harte Trail. We've got a jewel of a trail in Charleswood, and when I first became an MLA, there wasn't a whole lot happening with it. And there were—there was one woman in the community named Jan Hasiuk that really wanted to ensure that that this jewel in our backyard would be enhanced and cared for and nurtured and so I met with her. I facilitated some meetings with some city councillors, and the whole Harte Trail volunteer group was born from that. And we have had some great leadership in Charleswood around the development of the Harte Trail.

I have to give particular credit to Hilary Hanson, Don Seymour, Lois Caron, and there have many, many others that have been very supportive of the trail. And they work so hard as volunteers, to make sure that this jewel in our backyard is taken care of.

The trail itself has been recovered many times. The trail has been widened. There are birdhouses. There is the Van Roon garden that has been placed there. There's a bench there that has been dedicated to our former councillor, Bill Clement, who was actually a big champion of trails, and he deserves a lot of credit because at the City level, he actually was one that was working hard to ensure that Winnipeg got on board and started to move further ahead in terms of trail development and active transportation.

So there's been some interesting things happening with that in Charleswood, and because of my support for that, I'm very appreciative that the Friends of the Harte Trail, as they're called, have

made me an honorary director of that group because of my support for the Harte Trail, and I'm very supportive of this group. I love them. They are an amazing group of people, and they're doing it all because they love that trail and they love to be active and they're looking after our community, and they deserve a lot of credit for personally stepping up and doing what they're doing.

Now, I also want to indicate that there was a meeting, and people have mentioned it in some of the comments, with a group of west Winnipeg businesses and organizations that got together in 2011 to urge the provincial government to make active transportation a fundamental component of CentrePort Canada's design. I was part of that group. There were a number of us that met at the board room of the Red River Ex, and a lot of us in west Winnipeg were actually hoping to see some active planning by the government related to active transportation as CentrePort was evolving. We were actually—we had a full board room and it was made up of many, many different partners. There were partners there from Friends of the Harte Trail, Manitoba Recreational Trails Association, Red River Ex, Assiniboia Downs, Adrenaline Adventures, a number of different groups from west Winnipeg, and we did actually have somebody from government come to speak to us there and to talk about what was happening.

We were actually a little bit dismayed that there was no plan included in what was happening around CentrePort to accommodate active transportation needs, and as other colleagues of mine have said, that the time to put those plans in place, if you're truly committed to active transportation, is at the beginning. You don't try to scramble and find a way, especially with the huge development of CentrePort itself. You don't scramble afterwards to try to put a plan for active transportation in place. You either believe in it and do something up front, or you're playing catch up and you're making a mess because you're not part of the original plans.

* (11:50)

All of us in west Winnipeg have to say that we're quite concerned about safety of cyclists and people that are walking around that area or trying to cross the Perimeter Highway to get to the Red River Ex. There is a real safety issue. There's a safety issue even around how the roads are designed there, and we already know that 20,000 cars a day pass on that west Perimeter. We know that when CentrePort is

fully functioning, that we are going to see something like 80,000 vehicles a day moving up and down that west Perimeter. So now is the time. We already know people are running across the road or cycling in that area, and it isn't a particularly safe area the way it's designed right now.

So we all got together to try to find out what the government was doing about active transportation in regards to all of this, and, sadly, there wasn't a lot done. So we did write a letter to government at the time, and I have to say that CentrePort was actually involved in that meeting as well. And through the discussions around that table, we did send a letter to the government asking, really, for the government to step up and have in place a plan for active transportation related to the whole CentrePort area and west Winnipeg. And I don't know if that is making a difference or not in what is happening. We certainly hope that it will.

And, well, also want to indicate that Janice Lukes was part of that meeting, and Janice is involved with the Winnipeg Trails Association and she's a very, very strong advocate and has advocated for a number of years for improved active transportation in Winnipeg. And she's actually spoken out against this government's failure to prioritize active transportation in the problem. As she said, and I quote: "It's frustrating. You work for years to build these trail systems and hope the government sees the big picture, and when they don't it's disheartening."

And I've met with Janice a number of times. She's also been to a number of trails events on the Harte Trail. International Trails Day is something we celebrate every year and, certainly, we hope that this government would pay more attention, especially, to the experts like Janice Lukes. I don't know why there is some heckling from the other side when I'm mentioning Janice. That's a little bit troubling to me, but I hope that they recognize her hard work and what she has done in moving this—keeping it on the agenda, moving the issue of active transportation forward on the agenda.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do note that in our last election, that the Progressive Conservatives were very committed and actually did put forward, I think, a pretty good plan and commitments towards encouraging active transportation, planning and enhancing it, and we are committed to seeing it through and I hope the government—besides putting the resolution through after 12 and a half years of

doing very little about it, I hope now that they may be taking more of an interest and moving the issue forward. Thank you.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record and thank the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) for his resolution and for bringing this issue and highlighting this particular issue here in the House.

Just to continue with the theme that we had going in the beginning of the debate here this morning. I'm trying to remember my first bike and, you know, I'm not sure that it's as memorable as, maybe, some other bikes I heard about it and I—particularly the member for Fort Garry-Riverview, painted us a beautiful picture in our minds of his bike. I can't remember, I—my first bike. I would imagine, though, and this is maybe an example of an evolving or a change in—well, in technology and in bikes, but I think mine was a—my first bike was a mountain bike. So that goes to show my generation and what we grew up with. It wasn't a Schwinn with a banana seat and—*[interjection]* It is true there were no mountains, but we found as many hills and mud puddles to get into as possible. But I take the point from the members in their memories and their appreciation for that active living.

And as the members before me have said, it really wasn't—we didn't maybe think of it in the same terms. We didn't think of it as active transportation and it—maybe it was more relegated to younger people. I think what we've seen, you know, particularly in the last just few years, is really an evolution of our attitudes and a real appreciation for active transportation as a component of a healthy city and a healthy lifestyle. I think it was the member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) who mentioned that we wouldn't consider a new project, a new—a significant capital project in the city without at least exploring the idea of active transportation and how that can fit into the overall picture.

And just to follow up on something that—on some of the things that were said by the member for Rossmere, in particular, because we share a fantastic active transportation corridor called the Northeast Pioneers Greenway, and what it does is—and what I wanted to highlight here is the connection that it creates between our communities, between my constituency, Concordia, and hers to the north in Rossmere, south to the constituency of Elmwood,

north to the constituency of River East. It also connects now with the Chief Peguis Trail expansion and the active transportation network there. You know, folks can walk or ride their bikes all the way east to Harbourview, the park—Kilcona Park—or all the way to Transcona to the constituency of the—Mr. Speaker. To the west, people can go to Kildonan Park.

And so what it's done is created this network, this connection between communities and it's not just the connection between the physical communities, but it's the building of relationships. And when you drive by, I think, and, you know, every member in this House who has experience with an active transportation network will appreciate the number of people that use it and the community that it builds and, you know, everybody's in a good mood and a lot more hellos and how are you doing, and what a beautiful evening, you know, between people and neighbours when they're walking on the trail.

So, I, just with those few comments, just wanted to express my appreciation for the active transportation, and to this government's evolving attitude in understanding how active transportation can be a part of a healthy city and our commitment to that going forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Well, thank you very much, and I know that there are many more individuals that wish to speak on this piece of legislation—this—actually, resolution, Mr. Speaker.

And I, too, want to put a few comments on the record, as you cannot have a discussion about active transportation without talking about the pathway that goes between Gateway and Raleigh. Councillor Jeff Browaty, Councillors Thomas Steen and Councillor Russ Wyatt have worked very hard on that and it is a outstanding pathway. I never, never drive down there, even late in the evenings without seeing many, many people either jogging or bicycling. You often see people walking their dogs, people taking their children for a walk and it is a great addition to the city of Winnipeg. In fact, it is one of those beacons that should be looked at by other areas of the city in what you can do with a green space. It's a magnificent place for communities to be and to meet and just have a lot of room. It allows for a lot of people to use it, rollerbladers and so on and so forth. It really is a great vision that they had.

And Councillor Browaty was at committee yesterday and talked about how they even put the walkway across chief settler's trail, and that was done through the P3 which—seemingly this NDP government has difficulty with P3 projects—and I'm very pleased that the councillors saw fit that they would actually continue with the trail. It's a very important trail. It's supposed to, one day, connect up with the bridge at Birds Hill Park which, unfortunately, goes to the wrong side of the floodway. It takes pedestrians to the east side, yet the pathway's going to be on the west side, which means individuals have to walk through the floodway. And if there's any flooding, any water of any substance, it will basically stop right there, which is most unfortunate that a bridge of that cost goes to the wrong side and the pathway is actually cut in half. It doesn't—it does not have the kind of access that it should have, Mr. Speaker, and, you know, I've driven by there often and that—it's not—not a lot of individuals that use that bridge, simply because it is so cut off.

It's, again, one of these bridges to nowhere. The bridge should have gone to the west side where the pathway will eventually connect up with.

* (12:00)

To have individuals go through the floodway—I don't know if anybody in this House has actually walked down in there or walked through it—I have, seeing as it's part of my constituency, and it is quite daunting and for some individuals, who might fear for their physical safety, it is not necessarily the most comfortable, the most secure place to go down. And, that—you know, having pedestrians go down there is not the best idea, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) will have seven minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 12, 2012

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