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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
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<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Morning, Mr. Speaker. Following consultation with the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), we're asking that you call Bill 200, sponsored by the member for St. Norbert, to be debated until 10:30 this morning, and then proceed at 10:30 to Bill 207, sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), until 11, at which time it's private members' resolution.

Mr. Speaker: So, is there agreement of the House, under private members' business, that we will consider Bill 200 from 10 until 10:30 this morning, and then at 10:30 we will proceed to call Bill 207 until private members' time at 11 a.m.? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safer Traffic Conditions for Cyclists)

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Under private members' business, second readings, public bills, we'll call Bill 200, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safer Traffic Conditions for Cyclists).

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), that Bill 200, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safer Traffic Conditions for Cyclists), be read for a second time and referred to a committee of the House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, the one-metre rule is something that I've been asked by many cyclists to bring forward to the House. It's a bill that is looking at prescribing a distance for cyclists and—for the cars or vehicles to pass cyclists. It's more of a visual than anything. I don't expect officers to be out in the field with one-metre sticks, but it's more of a visual for people to understand when they pass a cyclist that they have to give them a little bit of room. I mean, as we've seen today, when you're driving down the road there's quite a few potholes out there, and it doesn't take much when you move your vehicle, or a cyclist has to move to avoid them, for a collision to occur.

I have many testimonials which I will table for this House, about people who want to see this bill pass and the reasoning why. Many states have done it; actually, over half of the United States have it. One of the states actually has a four-foot rule, which is larger than the one metre, and it's a very common-sense law that actually we should be having—that we shouldn't even be having this debate, that we should be allowing cyclists the space on the road to be able to be passed safely and that they shouldn't be pinched off the road by cars and vehicles. And that's what this bill is about, it's about giving cyclists some safe room because a metre matters, Mr. Speaker. And I will table some of these documents right now.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I assume this is the question period of the discussion, that I'm allowed to ask questions of the member. Is that correct?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, pardon me. I forgot that part.

We'll now proceed to questions on Bill 200. Are there questions for the honourable member for St. Norbert?

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to question the member about Bill 200, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safer Traffic Conditions for Cyclists).

I'm wondering who the member consulted in this bill, what type of consultations were—occurred prior to—

Mr. Gaudreau: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I provided some of the documents with this package that I tabled for

the House. Bike to the Future, we have le Vieux Saint-Boniface. There are many articles about it. I have testimonials from people like Jason Carter, Patricia Peacock and Phil Campeau and Elizabeth Troutt. They're actually not my constituents; they're from all over, different areas of the province who all talk about the one-metre rule. It's something that's happened throughout the country.

Actually, other provinces have it and most of the—a majority of the states have this rule now. So that—the consultation was done through people in my—it started with somebody in my area asking for the rule and then I broadened it and talked to other people about it, and that's how it came about.

Mr. Helwer: Was any consultation done with Manitoba Public Insurance?

Mr. Gaudreau: No, I didn't take anything with Manitoba Public Insurance. I consulted the people, the cyclists on the road.

Mr. Helwer: Was any consultation done with the law enforcement community?

Mr. Gaudreau: Yes, actually, Mr. Speaker, I spoke to a few police officers about this bill, actually during some of the rallies here at the Leg with—we had Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. I was speaking with the officer about this very issue because I myself am a cyclist and they actually support having a little bit more of a visual aid for them to have somebody passing because right now it's not prescribed in law how far they have to be, so it's very hard for them to enforce somebody coming very close to them.

Mr. Helwer: So, other than a couple of individual members, did the member consult with the Winnipeg Police Service or the Brandon Police Service or the RCMP?

Mr. Gaudreau: No, Mr. Speaker, I consulted with the people of Manitoba and they've clearly—the—all of the bike groups, they are clearly asking for this. Cyclists are just asking for a little bit of room on the road. It's a common-sense law that we see across the country, and other jurisdictions have it in place and, you know, it's just something that we're looking at doing as well to protect the lives of people.

Mr. Helwer: Did the member consult with the Manitoba Trucking Association?

Mr. Gaudreau: I believe the Minister of Transportation actually had meetings with the Manitoba Trucking Association regarding the

one-metre rule. I myself, I don't have the staff that a minister would have, so I believe the Minister of Transportation did consult with the Manitoba Trucking Association.

Mr. Helwer: Did the member consult with the City of Winnipeg, the City of Brandon, Winkler-Morden, any of the cities in Manitoba or, indeed, AMM, Mr. Speaker?

* (10:10)

Mr. Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, I've consulted with dozens and dozens of Manitobans about this and looked at other jurisdictions around the country. If the member opposite would like to provide me with the staff to—available to go out and cover the province and talk to all the people, I'm sure that I'd be willing to take that up from him.

This is about saving lives, Mr. Speaker, and it's unfortunate the member opposite doesn't want to support it.

Mr. Helwer: Well, the member seems to be putting words in my mouth. I'm just asking who he's spoken to, and, apparently, he hasn't spoken to any of the groups that this is directly going to affect other than a few cyclists and a couple of police officers.

And I, as well, Mr. Speaker, have consulted widely on this bill in addition to cyclists, but the question—another question I wonder is how is—will this law, should it come into effect, be enforced?

Mr. Gaudreau: I did, in fact, consult with the most important people, the cyclists, who are the ones who could be hurt on the road. They're the ones who are actually the people who suffer when they get hit, like in some of the testimonials I provided there for the member opposite. They're the ones who suffer the injury and, you know, asking the permission of a city councillor, for example, that he's asking for Brandon or for the city of Winnipeg, that doesn't protect the cyclist.

This bill is looking at protecting the cyclist, Mr. Speaker, and if you want to look at some of the ways to enforce it, well, just like every law right now, you need to have police officers around and on the road, and on our side of the House, we actually put funding in place to have police officers on the road.

So we make sure that there's officers out there to be able to enforce any of the laws just like they are right now, but this gives people a visual to say one metre is what I need to give that cyclist to pass,

which is a safety for that cyclist, Mr. Speaker. That's what this bill is about.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, has the member done any estimates on the cost to changing infrastructure that this bill will require?

Mr. Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure how the member deems that we're going to have to change infrastructure, but since he wants to talk about infrastructure, on our side of the House, this year was a record year—\$700 million worth of infrastructure. Pembina Highway had bike paths added, bike paths added along Bishop Grandin, bike paths added along the Kenaston extension.

I mean, if they want to talk about infrastructure, we've got the plan for them. We are the ones putting the infrastructure in place, and you cannot build those bike paths or safer roads with the kind of cuts that they're talking about across the House—a half a billion dollars' worth of cuts. We would not see another bike path built until they would lose government and we would get it back, Mr. Speaker, because right now you can see it all over the province: construction on our side of the House, half a billion dollars of cuts from their side of the House.

I stand by our plan to build. You don't need to build a new road or cost of infrastructure. This is—means you move around the cyclist. If the member opposite would like to say that because the road is a little too narrow you get to hit a cyclist, I would like him to put that on the record, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Helwer: Well, again, the member putting words in my mouth that were not—never uttered, Mr. Speaker. I just wonder if the member can tell me what is the average width of a lane in Manitoba.

Mr. Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, the average width of a lane is actually about 10 feet, but it's irrelevant in this conversation because it doesn't matter how wide the road is; you don't have the right to hit a cyclist.

You never have the right to hit a cyclist. If the road is too narrow, you slow down and you wait until it's safe to pass, just like you would on a highway when you're on a two-lane road and you're trying to pass a semi, you pass when it's safe.

Great thing is, in our plan, we are building more infrastructure. We are building more bike paths. We are widening roads. We are actually the party of building. They're the party of cuts.

So, if he wants to talk about what's going to happen, then how would his party propose to save

cyclists' lives with all of the cuts they would have, where there'll be no bike paths built? Our side of the House is talking about building. Our side of the House is talking about safety. This bill is about safety. There is no situation where you should be hitting a cyclist. I don't—it doesn't matter how narrow the road is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, can the member tell us, then, with the estimates of the billions of dollars that this would cost Manitoba to change infrastructure to make sure that cyclists are safe, which taxes does he intend to increase to pay for that infrastructure change?

Mr. Gaudreau: Well, Mr. Speaker, like I said, we're the government of building. This year, we did a record \$700 million worth of infrastructure improvements. Included in that were cycling lanes and bicycling infrastructure, and we're going to continue to build that because we know that people want to have active transportation in their life. People want to be healthy. They want to be able to ride their bicycles to work, which takes away from the carbon footprint which, we know, the members opposite don't believe in climate change, but riding your bicycle to work, or riding your bicycle to events, it saves the environment.

So we're putting in place the money and the infrastructure to support cyclists and to support people. Their side of the House, obviously, is all about cutting it. And it doesn't matter how narrow the road is, you never have a right to hit a cyclist.

Mr. Helwer: Then, how much money has the member put in place to protect cyclists? He said he put money aside in the infrastructure budget. How many dollars was that?

Mr. Gaudreau: Like I said, Mr. Speaker, this year we did a record year of over \$700 million in infrastructure.

The Pembina Highway project, for example, was cost shared with the Province of Manitoba, and it was around the \$1.2 million mark for just—for that stretch of Pembina Highway that we added bicycling lanes. There's many examples across the province about that.

This bill isn't about money; this bill is about safety. Giving cyclists space on the road, giving them one metre, saving a life, that's what this bill is about. If the member opposite wants to talk infrastructure, we can talk about infrastructure because we're the party putting it in place and they're

the party voting against it every single time. Every time we put infrastructure investments on the record, they say that they want to cut it. Our side's the House of—our side of the House is the one that wants to build, and we're going to continue to build, and we add active transportation and cycling on everything and, Mr. Speaker, we've invested \$48.7 million in active transportation since 1999. Their record: zero. Ninety million dollars of infrastructure spending underneath them, \$700 million underneath us.

Mr. Speaker: Time for questions on this matter have elapsed. Is there any debate on this matter?

Mr. Helwer: While I listened intently to—I guess there were answers from the member.

And I guess that, starting out, I should say that I am an avid cyclist. I own both a road bike and a mountain bike that I use a considerable amount of time in the summer on the roadways, on the highways, and I've been doing this for many, many, many years, probably even longer than the member has been around, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm well-aware of the hazards to cyclists. I'm well-aware of the opportunities to cyclists across this beautiful province. Indeed, our leader has cycled a large portion of the Trans Canada Trail and seen the beauties of Manitoba, as I have many times throughout my life.

Indeed, when I do get the opportunity to travel to Riding Mountain National Park, I have a couple of friends there that I try to cycle with. One is in his seventies and one is in his late sixties and I just—I say, don't worry, you know, I will catch up with you, eventually, and you go down and you make sure that you're at your pace and your cadence so that you are having a good ride and eventually I'll get to the same place at the end of the ride. So, yes, it indeed is something that I do have as a large part of my life, as does my spouse and several of our children, Mr. Speaker.

Now, when I look at this particular act, I asked about the consultation and the member bragged about all the money that this government proposed to have spent, even though they underspent on infrastructure by over \$2.2 billion, and then he pleads poverty, that he doesn't have any money to go out and talk to people. He doesn't have any money to go out and consult with Manitobans.

It really doesn't take a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. You pick up the phone and you ask them. You know, I've spoken to the Manitoba

Trucking Association and—[interjection] Well, the member hasn't given me the testimonials. How can I read them? Obviously, they're not public yet.

So I spoke to the Manitoba Trucking Association. Yes, they did write a letter to the minister and they received a letter back from the minister's office. No consultation. And the letter said: You know, yeah, sorry about that. Yeah, we probably should have done that. We kind of regret not consulting. Yeah. But, water under the bridge, apparently, for this member. You don't have to talk to any Manitobans that are going to be affected by this.

*(10:20)

You know, Mr. Speaker, law enforcement, we have huge demands on our legal community and the enforcement community. No doubt this is something that they will have to enforce through The Highway Traffic Act, and it'll be a judgment call. I don't have a one-metre measuring stick attached to my car, so I'll have to judge it, as will the police officer that judges if I give the cyclist adequate distance, which I do, because the route that I often take to the Legislature from my residence is one that is populated by cyclists. And it is something that I am well aware of as I travel to the Legislature. I would like to be able to ride my bike here, but that's something that I've chosen not to do in Winnipeg. I'd rather ride it out on the highways that have some space available, if there's a paved shoulder or certainly in parks where we have the trails and that types of things. It's a judgment call by the cyclist on where they feel safest.

But, as I pass those cyclists on the way here, I do indeed give them the opportunity to have adequate space, and as the member said, it's about 10 feet or three metres that is the width of a lane. A cyclist, I'm told, tends to operate in a metre and a half. So if you have the curb, not all cyclists are able to travel in a straight line, and we have potholes on the streets and on the highways, so they have to swerve around those potholes. And, as motorists, we have to be very aware of what their actions may be.

So they travel in about a metre and a half, and then the member wants another metre here, so we're up to two and a half metres. And so a vehicle then has half a metre in the lane left before you have to go over into the other lane when traffic allows. And that's what you have to do, Mr. Speaker. Most of the people I observe with the cyclists, they already do this. And so, to put it in law, hmm, it's kind of a

questionable thing when the member's got no idea on the infrastructure costs.

We know that if this were to be in law, there would be huge infrastructure costs that are downloaded upon the municipalities, without any consultation, because lanes would eventually have to be widened, Mr. Speaker. And I can certainly see in new roadways that allowances of this nature would be something that you could put into the planning, but when I look at some of the streets that I travel down, you have the houses, you have a small side yard, you have a sidewalk that sometimes has a bit of a median grass strip there, and then you have two lanes and then you are the same on the other side.

So, in order to make sure that traffic flows well with the cyclists and the vehicles, those lanes would have to be widened. And sometimes they have been able to do that when they're rebuilding those lanes. So I guess I admire the intent of the bill. I'm not sure that this is the correct avenue to take it.

I question, also, when I look at it, the particular clause, the subsection says, clause (a), "shall pass to the left of the vehicle or bicycle at a safe distance." Okay, so then what happens when the bicycle advances into the left lane to turn left? Where do I pass that cycle? I'm supposed to pass it on the left side, here it says. So, if I pass it on the right in my current lane, and they're in the turning lane, did I just break the law, Mr. Speaker? That's how I read this. And, perhaps, it's not well planned out in the law.

So, you know, those are all questions that the member has to answer. And I guess when I look at this clause, it just doesn't work for the way traffic flows, Mr. Speaker, because cyclists don't always stay adjacent to the curb. They do have to turn left, and we have the hand signals that they use to do so. And we make sure as—when we're in vehicles, that they have the time and the availability to do that.

I'm wondering if the member is familiar—he talks about the US states—and that indeed the federal government in the US has created a transportation alternative program, or TAP program, and they have actually put in \$835 million into that state—into that four states to develop that type of an alternative program. Now, that's meant for bike and pedestrian projects and that's how it's been used. I don't know that the member is familiar with it, but those are the types of things that perhaps he could look at in terms of where the costs are going to be for this.

So he's trying to present it as an innocuous bill that is about bike safety, and it partly is, although it forces cyclists to—I'm not sure what it forces them to do there in that particular clause and how it's going to work. And then he has no plan for who's going to pay for this. Well, we know who's going to pay for it, Mr. Speaker, is—it's the taxpayers of Manitoba and the municipalities as this is downloaded on them.

And I did receive several calls. And I reached out to cyclists and listened to them. And we talked about the bill, and when I asked them, well, yes, I like the one-metre rule, I like the distance, and that's usually what I try to give cyclists, or even more, Mr. Speaker, because I want to make sure that they are safe.

But, when I asked them, you know, who would pay for this or how much more tax would you be willing to pay to make sure that you can widen the lanes, well, then the conversation changed, Mr. Speaker. And then they were, yes, I can see it from that side. That was their response. So now maybe I'm not in favour of the bill. I like the idea of the one-metre zone. There's probably another way to do it. Perhaps education is a way that we could look at, education of not only cyclists but of the vehicle drivers, an education program. The member never spoke to MPI, who does have some authority in this realm and do—they do create education programs for motorists.

So all those types of things, Mr. Speaker, I think is kind of just missed. It sort of looks like this was a whim that someone suggested to him and he took it and ran without—ran with it without actually speaking to anybody on how this might affect cyclists, really, or how it might affect motorists, how it might affect truckers, how it might affect the law enforcement community. And, you know, I can just imagine if you—if I pass a cyclist and I think I've given him or her the one metre and then the—I get pulled over by the police officer and saying, you know, you didn't have that one metre for the cyclist, well, how do we measure that? It's a line of sight. It's hopeful that you have that.

And then we have the education of the cyclists as well, Mr. Speaker, because I do see in my travels, as well, cyclists that operate in a dangerous manner and imperil themselves and the vehicles as well. So I think the education program is the direction that I would see this going as a first step. It's something that we could easily do and—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has elapsed on this matter.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good morning again, Mr. Speaker.

I want to suggest to the member who brought forward this bill that often, at times like this, there are bills that come forward that need a little bit more thought, a little bit more input. It's not that the idea is without some merit. It's not that the idea shouldn't have some discussion or shouldn't have some further debate. But we know, as legislators, that we have to ensure that the proper input is always brought forward into legislation because there are things such as unintended consequences of legislation.

My understanding right now is that under the current Manitoba Highway Traffic Act that there's a requirement for motor vehicles to remain a safe distance from cyclists. Now, I would be interested to hear from law enforcement, whether that be RCMP or municipal law enforcement, what their current definition of safe distance is. Obviously, they're applying the law. Perhaps they are applying a metre. Perhaps they're applying something more in their minds, and this might actually be reducing that distance. I don't know because I've not had the opportunity to speak to law enforcement about it.

But I do think it's important that before we pass legislation, we actually talk to the individuals who are going to be responsible for enforcing that law. I think any time we are going to be putting a new burden or a new responsibility on our law enforcement officials, the good men and women who are out there trying to keep us safe each and every day, that we ask them how would the law best work, how would it best be applied. And I know when speaking to previous attorneys general, when it comes to legislation that impacts officers, that is almost always done.

So I suspect that the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) has brought this forward with the best of intentions. I suspect that he brought it forward with all the right ideals, Mr. Speaker, but I have a issue with the process in terms of how he brought it forward.

So I would ask him to go back to law enforcement, and perhaps we could do that with others in this Chamber, and to speak with them and to ask them: How is it that the law is now currently being applied? Would this improve the situation?

Would it make it better or would it not make a difference at all?

Those are the kinds of discussion that we should be having with RCMP, we should be having with Winnipeg Police Service and other municipal forces across our province before we bring in any change that they are required to enforce.

We know that law enforcement each and every day have a number of different tasks that are put upon them. Yesterday, I heard a report about the—every day, Winnipeg police are involved in trying to look for missing people, Mr. Speaker. That is something that is an impact on their workload.

We know that there are workloads in terms of domestic violence. There are many different things we ask our police to do each and every day. This could certainly be something in terms of traffic enforcement that they could look at—

* (10:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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

As previously agreed, we'll now proceed to Bill 207, The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Education.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: But, before that, I'll recognize the honourable Government House Leader on House business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on Tuesday, March 15th, will be the one put forward by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). The title of the resolution is Steady Progress on Health Care, Education and Jobs.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that in keeping with rule 31(8), that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Tuesday, March the 15th, will be the one brought forward by the honourable member for Concordia, and the title of the resolution is Steady Progress on Health Care, Education and Jobs. That's for information of the House.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 207—The Participation of Manitoba in the
New West Partnership Act**

Mr. Speaker: Now, the Bill 207 that I've called, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Education, who has nine minutes remaining.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Good morning to you and all members of the House. I'm delighted to get back up and speak to the Bill 207, The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act.

I can say, as I've said on several occasions, that this is a nice bit of recycling that the opposition is undertaking with this bill; since I was privileged enough to join this Chamber, I think this is maybe the third time that we've dealt with this particular bill on the part of the new—on the part of the opposition.

And I note over the course of those three years, Mr. Speaker, it hasn't changed. It hasn't been amended. It's been brought to the House; it hasn't been accepted. And so the member didn't go back and do the kind of homework that you would expect, make the kind of revisions that you would expect in order for it to be something that all sides of the House could enter into, something in which we could all join together as something that we would all want to be a part of.

And it says to me, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition really isn't interested in evolving or adapting or changing. In fact, in many ways, it's the same old Tories with the same old stories, never deviating from their ideological position on any matter, whether it's on job creation, whether it's on health care, whether it's on education, certainly not when it comes to child care, certainly not when it comes to environmental protection.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the opposition always strikes me as being stuck in a time warp from another era and haven't yet evolved to the 21st century and sometimes I think not even to the 20th century. And so in that respect, I'm disappointed that the member should continue to put up the same bill that hasn't changed, hasn't evolved, hasn't been adapted, haven't listened to the concerns put forward by this side of the House with respect to problems with the bill.

And that goes also to the heart of the kind of autocratic way in which the member from Ford

Whyte, the Leader of the Opposition, operates. It's always his way or the highway. There can be no negotiation. There can be evolution, no adaptation of a bill in order that it can be something where all members of the House can feel comfortable in voting for because it puts Manitoba in a go-forward position.

In fact, I have to say that because the bill has never changed, it means that Manitoba—they would prefer that Manitoba stays in a stuck position or a go-backwards position. As we've said many times, Mr. Speaker, we're moving Manitoba forward; we're making steady progress because on our side of the House, every Manitoban counts.

Now, last week during the question and answer period over this particular bill, myself, my friend from Wolseley, certainly my friend from Fort Richmond posed a number of questions to the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) who put forward this bill. And I invite anyone to go review Hansard and go look at the—on the one hand, questions designed to get to the bottom of it, as the member from Morden-Winkler puts it, to unpack the bill. But there was a—if you check Hansard, you'll see by looking at the answers from the member for Tuxedo, in fact, no answers to any of the questions that were put forward by this side of the House. And I have to say that was quite disappointing. I, myself—and you can go back in Hansard and see—asked her to name five things in which the New West Partnership has accomplished. She's not able to name one thing, Mr. Speaker, wasn't able to articulate one benefit, one advantage, one thing that had happened between Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia that would lead one to believe that this is a good idea.

And so I asked her, you know, a very simple lobbed-ball question, just, like, how many press releases has this New West Partnership put out in the course of its—I think it was signed in 2010, came into effect a little bit 'lafter' that.

So, in the roughly five years, how many press releases had they put out? Now, the point of that was to say, well, just how active has the New West Partnership been? And if you go to their website, you'll find that, in fact, two press releases have been issued in five years, neither of which, I would suggest to the House, provided any substantive encouragement for the government of Manitoba to join into this particular trade bloc, because, in fact, it seems to be merely a shell, not something that's active, not something that's robust, but a shell.

And I'm not going to go to the people of Manitoba, I'm certainly not going to go to my constituents in Fort Garry-Riverview and said, you know, there's no evidence to suggest that the New West Partnership has produced one result that would benefit the people of Manitoba; there's no evidence to support that, but, you know, the member of Tuxedo keeps putting it on the agenda so we decided to say, okay, well, that's enough of that pain, we'll just vote for the thing. I'm never going to do that on the doorsteps of my constituents.

We're evidence-based on this side. We want to know exactly what it has accomplished. We want to see the data produced by the New West Partnership to show that it produces the kind of results alluded to by the member from Tuxedo and other members on the other side of the House who've spoken to this bill. And, Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear from their website there is not one shred of evidence that tells us that this is something that we should do in the best interests of the people of Manitoba.

Now, the other thing, Mr. Speaker, is we take a much different tack. On this side of the House, we believe in trading to the west, we believe in trading to the east, we believe in trading to the north, and we believe in trading to the south. And what that suggests is that we're interested in negotiating trade agreements that serve the well-being of Manitoba but also that produces results for our trading partner.

And, Mr. Speaker, the best example of that is the 100-megawatt deal that we've signed with the government of Saskatchewan to sell hydroelectric power to the province of Saskatchewan. We didn't need the New West Partnership to do that. We didn't need the New West Partnership to achieve that end.

Saskatchewan needs our power in order to decommission many of their coal plants, and they're also needed because they don't have the energy security that we have in Manitoba, because on this side of the House, we invest in Manitoba Hydro. And we do that because there's clean, reliable, green energy on the one hand. It produces jobs; there's 1,200 people working at the 'keeyesak' dam as we speak.

Mr. Speaker, it produces community benefits, partnerships with indigenous communities; that promotes community development in places that have often been disadvantaged in the past, certainly would be disadvantaged if the other side of the House got in control of Manitoba Hydro and told them to turn off the lights on Manitobans and leave

not only Winnipeggers out in the cold, but leave all of Manitoba out in the cold. We're never going to stand for that kind of thing.

And so there's one example, one crystal clear example, of us being able to trade with our partners and our friends in Saskatchewan on a mutually beneficial deal that helps Manitoba's economy, helps create jobs in Manitoba's economy and at the same time provides Saskatchewan with renewable, clean energy in order for us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the critical issue of our time, which is climate change.

Now, sometime in the last couple of weeks, the opposition has had some kind of revelation about climate change. They were the ultimate climate change deniers. These are the friends of Stephen Harper who had denied climate change; he didn't think it was a problem, wasn't going to do anything about it, ditched the Kyoto agreement entirely and, in fact, let Canada down and let the world down when it came to being an international partner in addressing climate change.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to go lead my constituents in Fort Garry-Riverview down a path to participate in a partnership that has no—has had no results, that has 'pruced' no evidence of results. I'd prefer to be in a party that trades north, east, south and west, builds Manitoba, builds Canada, because on this side of the House, we're not only province builders, we're nation builders as well.

Thank you so much.

* (10:40)

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it gives me honour to talk on this Bill 207 that was introduced by my colleague from Tuxedo, the partnership of Manitoba in the New West Partnership act.

On this side of the House, we firmly believe that Manitoba's participation in trade and economic agreements such as the New West Partnership are integral to the advancement of our economy. Central port and trade will suffer if Manitoba is not part of this such agreement with our neighbouring provinces. As I'm, actually, neighbouring my constituency to the Province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, when the member from Fort Garry-Riverview has said there's no shred of evidence, well, he hasn't come out to my neck of the woods to get that evidence.

There are many businesses, including Penner Construction, who is one of my biggest employers in my constituency, in my area, and Leech's Printing. They both all do businesses in Saskatchewan. One of my business in my constituency, Penner's Construction, employs a lot of people that I know, personally, in my community. They do a lot of business.

I was talking to Zach Penner, who is actually taking over—starting to take over the business—of the next generation of—actually, the third generation, and his biggest concern is that a lot of his construction tender contracts are with Saskatchewan, especially when it comes to schools and hospitals. One of the communities that they're working is—it's not—was one my closest community that I grew up in—next to, is Langenburg, Saskatchewan.

Langenburg is building a school there because their expansion—because of the growth of economic growth in Saskatchewan. The mine—the potash mine is expanding, and with the growth of the population of Langenburg, they need a new school. And, so, Penner Construction got the contract in Saskatchewan, and the biggest concern that they have is that, in the future, they may not get contracts. And 50 per cent of their business is done on the other side of the border. And they also do hospitals, they do—they go all over Saskatchewan and Manitoba and, like they said—Zach Penner said: Half the business is done in Saskatchewan.

So, when you have the member of Fort Garry-Riverview saying that there's no shred of evidence, he just has to come out west. Get out of the Perimeter and come out west to talk to our—many of our businesses in western Manitoba.

Right now, I just found out, that our grocery store is closing down in Virden, our second grocery store. We won't have competition in our town anymore for our groceries. It's because of this government with—you know, with not looking at the—what's happening next to them, is—you're delusional. What's happening in our—in my neck of the woods.

And this—shame on this government for not going out there and talking to businesses that really need the support of this—right policies and the right partnerships when it comes to going into working with our neighbours. Right now, our neighbours are way ahead of us, and that—it really concerns me.

When I was an Autopac agent, I saw so many people coming to this province and the concerns of

setting up a business in there, Virden—the red tape that they had to set up in. The frustration, the PST on their own vehicles if they put them in from their own name into their corporate name, they had to pay PST again. But not in Saskatchewan.

So then we found so many people decide we're just going to incorporate in Saskatchewan, and that's what they did. And so right now, I know—I can probably list about 10 businesses that now have incorporated in Saskatchewan. The corporation money that we could have gotten as revenues.

And, when this member from across the way says that there's no shred of evidence, come to Virden, Manitoba. Go to Roblin, Manitoba. They're hollowing out our ward towns. And one is—example is PST. When the PST is 8 per cent here and 5 per cent in Saskatchewan—I've been to Roblin, that was where I went to high school, and I would talk to many of the businesses in there. That is very concerning to them. They're upset with this provincial government right now because many of the people now, go to Saskatchewan to get their groceries, to get their supplies, and to do a lot of their business. And they even think to go there for their healthcare because, right now, our healthcare is in the shambles because of this government.

And, when you have Melita, who is—biggest concern they have is that town is going to shut down. If they lose their hospital, if they lose more of their local businesses because it is cheaper to go across the border to do—to buy items, they're going to go there. And, if they have to go for their health care, we have many of people who have, actually, in Elkhorn, who go to Moosomin for health care. When, once they go over that border, they're going to spend that money in Saskatchewan.

And I think, if we had a partnership like the New West Partnership, there would be more dialogue of what everybody's facing in this province, and this province—it's embarrassment to my constituents right now that, you know, they're shutting down businesses.

I like to see the members go out to Roblin, to Russell, to Melita, to Virden to see the empty retail spaces that we have in our neck of the woods. This is a disgrace by this government in not having the partnership. When I was in business, the—what I've learned by growing my business is building up relationships and partnerships with the businesses in my community; that's how I grew my business. It's about the relationships.

This government has no relationships with any of the partners. Here's the opportunity to be a relationship with Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC. A lot of economic growth. We see the—even the shift in voting is going out—you know, before, at one time, the election, the Canadian election, was determined once it got to Ontario, but now with the population shift going out west, opportunity for more business opportunities for us in Manitoba to have that partnership to actually have that opportunity to grow our businesses.

And like I said, people like Penner construction; they're really concerned. They're really concerned, and you know what, the biggest concern I have now is that they're going to set up a corporate office in Saskatchewan in Moosomin or Maryfield, and if that's the case, all of a sudden, they'll ship all their employees, and then the next thing you know, we lose out in the corporate taxes, and corporate taxes to my community, and especially when we got hit really hard by this oil industry.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the thing is, we need to be competitive with Saskatchewan to keep bringing those companies here. And, when we form government in April 19th, we're going to be more in tune of what was happening in our business community. This—members of—across, they don't have no business experience at all. They've never ran a business; they've never employed people in this economy; and now they make its decisions. It's almost like a dictatorship of what they think that's best for business owners and for—the biggest possibility of employment opportunities is small business, and you guys have failed small business in this community. They're sick of the red tape that this government has created. Why, even when live local governments, they're tired of this government because again, there is so much red tape that they can't even get their work done because of this government, and Mr. Speaker, I'm here to have a voice for my—for the west.

I grew up and was born in Russell, was raised—I went to school in Roblin and had a business in Virden. I've—I listen to the people, the concerns that this government has created, and not having this partnership, it really concerns my constituents and my neighbours. And I'm just hoping that if—whatever I can do—I know in 2011, when we lost the last election, I was going to be more engaged. Whoever thought that I'd be here and doing this, and the thing is we want a change. We want change in western Manitoba. We want a change in all of Manitoba, and

we want a change in the north, too, because I think we will do a much better job of listening to our businesses and make that opportunity for this province to grow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): You know, I do know members opposite want change in northern Manitoba because they want to shut down Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker. It's kind of interesting, you know, the member opposite, and I think if you want a contrast in how we approach things in the way the members opposite do, you know, I like the member from Arthur-Virden talk about when they win the election. You know, I've learned one thing, I've been through nine elections, and generally speaking people that talk that way, I think they underestimate that the voters decide in this province.

A little bit of humility helps too, when you're going to the voters. But I think what is particularly galling from—Mr. Speaker, is that the member opposite completely neglected a couple of key things about what this government has done to improve our relations with Saskatchewan in a real way to make a difference in his region. We were the first government to have a joint Cabinet meeting with Saskatchewan.

In fact, we did it not only once; we did it twice, and what came out of that was a recognition that we needed to be working more closely together, and I know of particular importance was in the issue of transportation. And I want to give you an example of what we were dealing with. There are—there's a system in terms of roads, anybody that knows infrastructure will know what RTAC is, which is your—basically, your top level in terms of loading. We had a situation where there was a different RTAC calculation in terms of the number of tons you can take on a road in Saskatchewan versus Manitoba.

* (10:50)

So our department, our provincial staff, led the way in working out a harmonized approach in terms of RTAC between the two provinces. And it didn't happen for a hundred-plus years, Mr. Speaker, and it didn't need the New West Partnership. In fact, the New West Partnership hasn't been doing that. We did it because we dealt with it directly.

I'll give you another example of where we've made a difference. We had two different regimes in terms of spring load restrictions. Now, this is of

particular concern to the oil industry. I met with the oil industry. I met with our minister responsible for energy, minister of energy and mines. They identified this as one of the major problems they were dealing with in the oil patch. It was the fact that they had to be concerned about very different approaches in terms of spring load restrictions.

So what do we do? We worked out—and this doesn't just apply in southwest Manitoba—all across the province, we have adapted a harmonized system, and a system that members will know through legislation now gives us the ability to have seamless connection between the two provinces in terms of spring load restrictions. They didn't require the New West Partnership. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, the New West Partnership doesn't deal with issues of that nature.

So we did it. We've proven the degree to which we can work co-operative. And we've done it in terms of infrastructure as well. We continue to work with Saskatchewan. For example, I look in the—an issue that's very important in The Pas, connecting into much of the catchment area for The Pas and the Bay Line, Mr. Speaker. We've made significant improvements in terms of the roads.

So we are working with Saskatchewan and, dare I say, working with Ontario as well, because we are very much in the middle of the country, middle of the continent, Mr. Speaker. So, let's understand that—let's understand, as well, that there are concerns about the New West Partnership. And I want to put on the record that the consulting engineers have significant concerns about the New West Partnership. I actually have met with them, and it was interesting. I talked to one of the people quite active with the engineering association. They tried, I think, for over a year, year and a half, to meet with the Leader of the Opposition. He didn't want to meet with them. Why would he not want to meet with them? Because it didn't fit into his mantra in terms of the New West Partnership.

There are some very real concerns about consulting engineering companies in this province about the New West Partnership. That is, by the way, not just in this province, but the national association has also expressed grave concerns about the New West Partnership.

And I want to stress, one of the reasons they've expressed this concern is one of the reasons you have to be careful about a lot of these so-called trade

deals, because I can tell you we are committed to removing barriers across Canada. It doesn't make sense in a country like Canada to have a Balkanized system for, whether it's transportation or anything in terms of trade, in terms of goods and services. But what's going on, Mr. Speaker, is, the idea that you carve out a part of the country—and is, I think, a sign that the members opposite don't get it.

The bottom line here is we would, I think, make it a great disservice if we were to shut the door to Ontario, because Ontario, quite frankly, is equally as important—Ontario, further east as further—the west is, Mr. Speaker. We trade equally back and forth. We trade internationally, of course, as well. I put on the record that we have a higher percentage of our trade that goes outside of North America than any other jurisdiction. So, we are a trading province.

But, you know, just as you see this debate over overall trade deals and what can be pushed as a trade deal, a lot of cases it's not the trade that we're dealing with; it's the underlying issues. One of the concerns that has to be considered in any case is the dispute-resolution mechanism. We've seen trade deals, some of the broader trade deals, where you're now seeing governments being sued over doing nothing more than, for example, protecting the environment.

And that's not the point, Mr. Speaker. The point of trade is to encourage trade. It's not to have a race to the bottom in terms of environmental standards or, dare I say, labour standards. And I think there's been some very significant concerns expressed about, for example, the TPP.

You know, when you compare what our wages are in Canada, and probably our wage is not enough in terms of minimum wages, but with a minimum wage of \$11 an hour, similar, you know, other areas, we're somewhat higher than most provinces. And you compare with countries that are, you know, they have a wage of 75 cents an hour; you don't get a level playing field, and I think that's very important.

Now, I also want to talk about the vision of this government in terms of the economy and trade development. I find amazing, the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk), we got to talk about small business because, you know, what's the small-business tax rate in Manitoba? Zero. They have a small-business tax in Saskatchewan, so if he's so concerned about this, Mr. Speaker, we have the only province in the country with zero per cent

small-business taxation. That's because our party is a party that does care about small business and we don't just back it up with rhetoric, with action.

And I want to talk in terms of economic development because, you know, if you were listening to members opposite, I always get a, you know, a real sort of kick out of it, especially where members opposite or from communities where there's significant economic development taking place. I'm proud of the work we've done, for example, in actually bringing the oil and gas industry to this province in a very significant way. It didn't just happen. We worked with Tundra Oil and Gas. We work with the industry, with our royalty structures and our investment structures to make it happen.

Mr. Speaker, in my—well, the member opposite just thinks that things just happen magically. There was not a significant oil and gas industry until the last number of years. We're now working in terms of potash, and I can tell you we are moving independently. Saskatchewan, perhaps, doesn't have the same interests that we do in terms of potash. I'm proud of the work we've done. I'm proud of the work we've done in terms of mining in my area, Lalor Lake, the second best zinc deposit in the world. We worked with Hudbay and made that happen. In my own community of Thompson, where there are 500 workers today in the smelter and refinery, where we work with the federal government and with Vale and the community extend the life of the smelter and refinery. It's now extended for at least another three years.

I want to talk about the way we're developing Manitoba Hydro. I did mention in my opening comments the member opposite said yes, he wants change in northern Manitoba. They want to shut down hydro development, and I'll tell you what hydro development means in my community. This is what it means: I asked the question, because some people said, well, how many people are actually working on the Keeyask Dam from northern-Aboriginal communities? The majority are from northern and Aboriginal communities. Well, there were 800 workers there back in the fall. There were 139 of them from Tataskweyak Cree Nation, one community. I talked to the chief, Chief Duke Beardy, and you know what he said? He noticed the difference when it came to welfare because many people who had had to go onto welfare because there were no job opportunities now have an opportunity to work, and it's benefiting

Tataskweyak; it's benefiting my community where I live in Thompson.

And this is the story of how we've developed a partnership—it didn't just happen, the Keeyask partnership. That's a real partnership. Four First Nations, equity ownership in Manitoba Hydro, and we did it with Wuskwatim with NCN. So, you want to talk about partnership, it's in that area. It's the kind of work that the minister of Energy and Mines is doing in terms of the mining industry with royalties.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, we have the new Manitoba partnership. It's a partnership that recognizes every part of the region. First Nations, that's the real partnership, not the New West Partnership; it's the new Manitoba partnership.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I'd like to echo a lot of the comments that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) made. Manitoba's doing really well. We have the second lowest unemployment rate in the country, best economic growth. I mean, all you have to do is drive down Wellington Crescent and look at the seven car—seven-garage car that the Leader of the Opposition does, his 14 sprinklers sprinkling his lawn, his 9,000 square-foot mansion. Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition has done very well underneath the NDP. He's had a great run, because you look at his millions and millions of dollar home that he has—9,000 square feet, I mean, obviously, things are going really well in Manitoba for the Leader of the Opposition.

I think he's actually afraid that we're going to—if the government changes, he's actually going to do worse, because how could he do any better? The millions of dollars that he has, his beautiful million-dollar home, \$38,000 a year in property tax. I mean, things must be doing really good in Manitoba for the Leader of the Opposition. And you know what? We're looking after everybody, not just the Leader of the Opposition doing well; we're looking after the people who work on the dams in the North, Mr. Speaker. They are working in Manitoba. People are working.

You know how many Alberta licence plates I saw on Saturday when I was out canvassing? People coming back to Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

You know what else I saw? I actually saw Saskatchewan licence plates here, lots of them, because people are coming here because our economy is ticking away and doing really well and their economies are—

* (11:00)

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

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business. First off, I'd like to thank the members of the House for their co-operation this morning as this is not a normal time for committee announcements.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there is leave for the Standing Committee on Rules of the House to meet concurrently with the House during the afternoon on Wednesday, March 9th, 2016?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House for the Standing Committee on Rules of the House to meet concurrently with the House during the afternoon tomorrow, Wednesday, March 9th, 2016?

Is there leave of the House? *[Agreed]*

The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you. Again, I'd like to thank the members of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, and yourself. I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Rules of the House will meet on Wednesday, March 9th, 2016, at 3 p.m., to consider amendments to rules, orders, forms of proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Rules of the House will meet tomorrow, Wednesday, March the 9th, 2016 at 3 p.m., to consider amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceeding of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. That's for information of the House.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 5—Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Rights

Mr. Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. It is now time for private members' resolution, and the resolution under consideration this morning is entitled Advancing Gender Equality and Women's

Rights, sponsored by the honourable member for The Pas.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I move, and seconded by the member from Minto,

WHEREAS March 8, 2016 marks International Women's Day, a celebration of the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women as well as a time to refocus on the work still needed to advance women's rights and well-being; and

WHEREAS one hundred years ago, Manitoba became the first Canadian province to grant some women the right to vote and hold elected office; and

WHEREAS with leadership from community partners, government, and Manitoba men and women, much work has been done since to pursue gender equality; and

WHEREAS there is still more work to be done, and many issues that disproportionately affect women, such as poverty, access to child care and sexual and domestic violence are yet to be fully resolved; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is working to make steady progress to address these issues by including first-in-Canada legislation to give victims of domestic violence and the right to time off work without fear of job loss; introducing supports like education, training and affordable, quality child care to open more doors for women to get into good jobs and initiating smart, strategic investments in health-care services; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has also supported the call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls; and

WHEREAS the official opposition's agenda of risky cuts and privatization, including two-tier health care and privatized child care would hurt women in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the extreme conservative stance of the Official Opposition Leader on that important issues like marriage equality and a woman's right to choose, as well as the attitude that has—he has shown towards women would take Manitoba back from the progress that has been made.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend all those who have been allies in the evolution of women's rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue to work with Manitobans to continue our progress into the next hundred years.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin), seconded by the honourable member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that,

WHEREAS on March 8th, 2016 marks International Women's Day—dispense? Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

The resolution is in order.

Ms. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, today, March 8, 2016, marks International Women's Day. This is a time to celebrate the achievements of women. This morning, I had the honour to attend a breakfast this morning for the International Women's Day celebration of the 100 years of women's vote in Manitoba.

On my way to the breakfast this morning, I had the chance to learn on—listen on CBC Radio, and they were asking Manitobans, why am I so proud to be a woman in 2016? So at our breakfast table this morning, I had the opportunity to discuss this, and, of course, one of our responses was, well, we're especially proud because of where we are today, but we were also reminded at the table that we must remember the struggles and the challenges and the courage that that took the women that got us here today.

I also had the honour to sit in the presence with the remarks by Kelly-Ann Stevenson, president of the Council of Women of Winnipeg; Jenny Gerbasi, Winnipeg city councillor; and there was a keynote address by Barb Byers, secretary-treasurer for the Canadian Labour Congress.

Two thousand sixteen is a particularly special year for Manitoba women. One hundred years ago, two years before the rest of Canada, Manitoba women became the first to win the provincial right to vote and hold elected office.

So with that I'd like to reflect briefly on the story of how this came to be. In Manitoba, it was the Political Equality League that led the push for women's democratic rights. This group of dedicated women, Manitobans, lobbied the government for change.

Their most creative protest came from—in the form of a mock parliament. And the subject of debate: whether men should have the vote. Exactly two years after the mock parliament, this impressive group of Manitobans achieved what they set out to do. Manitoba women became the first in Canada to achieve their right to vote.

It was an important step towards equality, but the journey wasn't over. Many people continued to be denied the right to vote on the basis of race, disability, employment or religion until years, or even decades, later.

First Nations people were denied the right to vote in Manitoba provincial elections until 1952, and until 1960 they could not vote in federal elections without giving up treaty rights and registered status.

People with physical disabilities had no guaranteed access to polling stations until 1992. Some people with intellectual disabilities remained disqualified from voting federally until 1992 and provincially until 1998.

Nonetheless, the 1916 victory helped pave the way for a century of further progress. In 2016, Canadian women have had strong voices throughout our society. And today, on International Women's Day, it's also a time to refocus on the work still needed to advance equality and women's rights.

We need to end everyday sexism and the gendered assumptions that women—that discourage women from entering the trades and STEM fields, that is, science, technology, engineering and math. We need to keep investing in child care to give all families the option to return to school or work. And among many other things, we need to confront domestic and gender-based violence.

So let's draw on our heritage as leaders in women's suffrage to take the next steps to forward equality, and for women and for all.

Our NDP team has made a clear vision on how to work with our communities to take the next steps on gender equality and women's rights. Just yesterday the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) announced her vision to help make sure women get equal pay for equal work.

Our NDP team will continue to make Manitoba a fairer, more progressive province by strengthening the mandate of the Manitoba Status of Women to include an increased focus on pay equity. We will further empower the Status of Women office to work

with business, labour and community groups and take the public to take concrete steps to close the gender pay gap in Manitoba, because Manitobans should get equal pay for equal work, regardless of their gender.

Women earn 82 cents for every dollar men earn in the private sector in Manitoba. And this morning we learned that Aboriginal women earn 46 cents for every dollar men earn in the private sector. Manitoba is the first province to pass pay equity legislation in 1986, but it only covers the public sector only.

In 'adding' to strengthening the Status of Women office, we will promote gender equality in other ways. We'll invest \$1 million in new funding for grassroots organizations that provide gender-based supports. We will ensure gender equity on government boards to make decision making more representative and we will work with the Manitoba business community to ensure it is a priority on corporate boards.

And we'll also ensure that provincial budgets are created with a specific focus on the impact they will have for women, noting that investing in health care, education and affordable childcare helps support greater gender equity.

These commitments are complemented by the UN Save Cities Initiative and Manitoba's Multi-year Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy.

To reiterate the remarks of the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady), the NDP is proud to be a feminist party. We're the only party with a strong feminist tradition of taking action on equality in the workplace and against gender-based violence.

* (11:10)

In addition to the measures of the Minister of Health announced on Monday to address the gender pay gap, we're doing a lot of other things to tackle issues that disproportionately affect women today. We are bringing in first-in-Canada legislation to provide paid leave to Manitobans who are victims of domestic violence. We are also making legislative changes to strengthen protection orders. As a survivor of domestic abuse, this is very important to me.

Our vision for Manitoba is one where everyone can feel safer in their homes and their communities. We will bolster supports for victims of crimes like domestic violence. We are also investing in education, training and affordable, quality child care

for families. Child care is the foundation to open doors to employment, education and advancement for women. This will also support Manitobans, particularly women, who want to go back to school, return to work or find a good job. Mr. Speaker, I would not be here today with you fine folks if it wasn't for child care that gave me the opportunity to advance in the workforce.

And, also, we are ushering a new era of women's health care in a state-of-art women's hospital. We will support this expansion of the woman's health clinic and its important programming and reproductive health. We're recently opened a new breast milk donation centre, and we introduced legislation to help families care for their loved ones, including making sure that they get the time off work they need with expanded compassionate care leave. We'll invest in new supports for trades and training across the province. We'll make it our goal to double the number of women apprentices in the skilled trades.

We are helping people whose intimate pictures are distributed without their permission, including helping victims restore their privacy and giving victims the right to sue.

We've been a strong and long-time advocate for a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, including the participation of victims' families, a process that I had the honour to be involved a couple of weeks here, with the second round table held here in Winnipeg, chaired by our Premier (Mr. Selinger) of Manitoba.

We will match donations to the United Way that support family resource centres and women centres, with up to \$1.5 million a year over five years.

We are also allowing Manitobans to change the gender on their birth certificate without surgery. And action speaks louder than words. Our diverse team of NDP MLAs will continue to fight for women's rights here in Manitoba.

In particular, in First Nations communities, I've always been—women have always been the foundation of our families and communities. We are the life-givers and the caretakers of life, a role that I truly cherish in my community. And also, too, with my small contribution with women, I've also had the honour to serve as a Big Sister with an organization that was called out when a suicide of a young woman in the North End happened, a 15-year-old, and a caring woman came together, called out our woman

sisters, and developed Empowering Our Little Sisters program. And I had the honour to be—to serve as a role model, as a Big Sister, to particularly young women in the North End.

I've also had the honour to serve on the women's committee with the Opaskwayak Cree Nation and, with that, I've also had the honour to serve as the representative workforce co-ordinator, which I've always—my message was, with employment equity programs, women were the first ones that were addressed under this employment equity program and, with UCN, more than half of the workforce is women. So, therefore, the employment equity program was quite successful in that organization, and the same we wish to do with the Aboriginal population.

As a woman and as a Cree woman living in the North, I feel represented and included in the NDP's vision. By extension, I believe this vision includes all women in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, it's an honour for me today to speak about gender equality and women's rights in this Legislature. It is something that I have stood in here and talked about for many, many, many years.

Today being International Women's Day, it's a good time to reflect on what actually is really happening in Manitoba. It is a global day for celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also does mark a call to action for accelerating gender parity.

Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day has been observed since the early 1900s, which was a time of great expansion and turbulence in the industrialized world that saw booming population growth. The story of women's struggles for equality started back then. We are all very well aware of Nellie McClung and the other suffragists in Manitoba who took on some great challenges to fight for women's equality. So today certainly gives us a time to celebrate, reflect, advocate and take action.

We're very proud of our progress and what we have done to help advance women's rights, women's health care in Manitoba and a number of women's programs. We are proud right now to run over 30 per cent female candidates in the upcoming provincial election. We know that it is important to have women's voices at a table politically so that you can have the robust debate, the healthy debate that

comes when you have more diversity around a Cabinet table.

And we are ecstatic that our leader has taken it upon himself to ensure that we have the number of women candidates we do have right now running for our party in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we can give our leader a lot of credit for that because it is his insistence over the last couple of years to make sure that we are moving in that direction.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We have a number of Aboriginal candidates as well, Mr. Speaker. I believe between First Nations and Metis we have five candidates. We have candidates from other ethnic minorities. So we're very proud of the hard work that has been done in the last few years for the Progressive Conservative Party to come together and build a team like this, and what a team it is. We have got some incredible candidates.

We also have a strong history of supporting women. Two of the three women Speakers in Manitoba came from the Progressive Conservative Party including the first woman Speaker in Manitoba, and that was Thelma Forbes in 1963. I'm sure that broke a lot of ground when we saw Thelma Forbes assume that Chair in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I also need to address some of the, what I would say from the NDP's part of the resolution, from the comments that they were including in the resolution. I think I would like to take some issue with some of the comments that they have just put on the record because, sadly, their track record does tend to be more rhetoric than spin.

Mr. Speaker, under the NDP government Manitoba has one of the worst records when it comes to violent crimes against women. And at nearly double national average, the absolute worst rate of sexual assaults compared to other provinces. This is after 17 years of an NDP government and, yet, we are carrying such a horrible label as that.

According to the Winnipeg Police Service's annual statistical report, there were over 680 sexual assaults committed in the city in 2014. There were 1,427 reported sexual assaults in Manitoba in 2014. There were 1,379 reported sexual assaults in 2013, and Winnipeg was tied for the second highest rate amongst major cities. Mr. Speaker, that does not speak well to a good record of a government when these statistics show that we are the worst in Canada.

Women make up the highest percentage of food bank users in Manitoba. We have the highest self-reported rates of violent crimes against women compared to all provinces. Obviously, if any policies or programs that the NDP think they're doing so great at were actually working, we would not see these types of failures.

In 2014, an RCMP report says Aboriginal women have been much more prone to violent death than non-indigenous. The RCMP also found that Aboriginal women account for 4.3 per cent of the overall Canadian female population, yet account for 16 per cent of female homicides and 11.3 per cent of the cases of missing women.

Then we could look at the huge number of children that are missing under this government, particularly the children that are in care. And a lot has been put on the record about that. That is an absolute failure by this government.

*(11:20)

There was, a number of years ago I tried to bring forward some legislation on replicating from Ontario the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee that they structured there. This government, despite me trying to bring that forward, they didn't want to do it, because they didn't want me to get credit for something like that and be seen to be a champion for women, and women that were being murdered in this province. So they refused to do it. Instead, what they did was they put together a committee, and this committee was to try to understand the factors that lead to tragic and needless deaths when intimate relationships take a fatal turn. They announced that in 2010. Here we are in 2016, and the pitiful record of what they have been doing with their committee is shameful. Mr. Speaker, their annual reports from just the last three years are one page each. If I was to look at what Ontario is doing, their reports are, like, 40 pages or more.

Mr. Speaker, this government is not taking this issue seriously. They are, obviously—they have, obviously, mismanagement—mismanaged it. They look disorganized in what they're doing, and they really do not look like they have put forward an honest effort to try to deal with that.

We have had a number of homicides of women in the last number of years, and yet we get pitiful, one-page reports that aren't going to change anything in Manitoba in terms of the deaths of women in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't say much for their, you know, commitment to women. In fact, that really is a disgrace. You know, when we hear about deaths like Camille Runke and Selena Keeper and, then, we see a one-page review comes out that tells us absolutely nothing about how we can improve things in this province, I think, is pretty disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of number of wonderful Progressive Conservative Party initiatives that have been brought forward over the years, and I do want to say that it was our party that brought in zero-tolerance on domestic violence. We also brought forward the comprehensive breast health program, the Mature Women's Program, low-cost rental housing, income assistance, student loan program. We brought medicare into Manitoba. We brought in workers' compensation. We brought in the mobile breast screening service, Stop FAS program, midwifery legislation, which this government has bungled. We brought in the women's and infant nutrition; Children and Youth Secretariat; Baby First, Early Start; ABA programming; and the Provincial Nominee Program. Those are Tory legacies in this province, and they are wonderful programs that are still making a difference.

Mr. Speaker, I personally had the opportunity to bring forward private members' bills on date-rape prevention legislation, sexual assault awareness month, mandated accreditation of mammography machines, and my bill created the Nellie McClung Foundation where we now have that monument, that beautiful monument on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, those are all coming from Progressive Conservatives, because we do not just talk about what we do; we actually get in there and do things and make a difference. In fact, I have to acknowledge, too, that our leader has fought very hard for matrimonial rights for Aboriginal women, and, because of him, federal legislation was passed on that.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to take a few moments to talk about the NDP's double standard right now. When it comes to two candidates that are out there, one from the federal—or, one from, pardon me, the Liberal Party and one from the NDP party, where the NDP have taken a double standard on comments that were made by both. Comments like that are repulsive, repugnant, rude—and ignorant comments like that from men in this age is totally unacceptable and intolerable from anybody.

They are going to—they want to be role models. That is unacceptable. And this government should not be standing in support—and this Minister of Health should not be standing in support of those kinds of comments being put forward by comments.

So they just show that what they are doing is they say one thing and do quite another.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I'm proud to stand up today and speak on this resolution.

I want to congratulate the MLA for The Pas for this strong and timely resolution on International Women's Day, which I do sincerely hope this Legislature will pass today. As lawyers say, I will govern myself accordingly in my comments. I could spend all of my time correcting the record, from what the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) has just said, but I don't think that would be helpful. And I think we should be positive.

You know, we learn something every day in this job. If we don't, we should probably find a new one. And I learned very much in the presence of the MLA for The Pas, and they say that still waters run deep and I'm discovering that about the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) and I have much—much—to learn from her.

Now, we celebrate advances, but we know there is still much more to do. And, of course, we can list advances over the past hundred years and it sounds very impressive, all the steps that have been taken, of course, to give some women the right to vote 100 years ago, which of course didn't extend to indigenous women until well into the '50s, didn't apply to women whose families had come from Asian countries until after the Second World War. There were steps that were taken even to declare women to be persons, to allow women to take whatever job they wish to take, to have maternity leave, to have birth control and reproductive choice, even to have fair divorce laws and property rights.

And each one of those did not just magically come about. They were fought for and they were resisted and frankly, they were resisted by who? They were resisted by men who held the power, who held the control. And the history in Manitoba and elsewhere has not been a sudden gaining of rights; it's been a steady fight for those rights all the way along by strong women and their allies.

You know, Bruce Cockburn, who's one of my favourite Canadian singers, he sang a question in one of his hit songs, and he asks: So how come history

takes such a long, long time when you're waiting for a miracle? And it's not easy to pursue the path of equality and human rights. Sometimes it even seems to be standing still, but still the work goes on.

You know, this year, as always, I do I love to read in the schools in the West End, every elementary school I get to. We have some fun, but I also use my time with the students to talk a little bit about the struggle for human rights and to point out that, maybe, things weren't always so good in the good old days.

And this year I read a book called *Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged*. I don't know if everyone knows the story of Viola Desmond. She was a—an African-Canadian woman who lived in Nova Scotia known as Canada's Rosa Parks. And Viola Desmond was told to move from the seat she had paid for in a movie theatre. When she refused to move, she was dragged out of the theatre; she was put in jail and she was fined. And Viola Desmond and her community fought and eventually they changed those laws.

And I've got to tell you, those students are very shocked to find out that the story I read to them, it's not fiction; this really happened in our country and it only happened about 70 years ago.

So, when I do ask students, have they ever been told how good the good old days were, they nod, and then we do a little demonstration. And what I've had is I've had all the students, whether it's an assembly of all the intermediate students or whether it's a class, we all stand up and then I ask them three questions. I say, first of all, if you're a woman or you're a girl, you're going to sit down, because a hundred years ago, you didn't have the right to vote; you didn't have the right to run for public office; you didn't have the right to do all the things that we now consider to be a full part of citizenship.

So, down sit 51 or 52 or 53 per cent of the students, then I ask a second question. I ask how many of them have families who are the original Manitobans and the original Canadians, and I ask them to sit down, because we know that a hundred years ago, in fact even 60 years ago, Aboriginal people did not enjoy citizenship as we now see it today.

And the third question I ask in the West End is, I ask all those whose families came from Asian countries, from China, from Korea, from Thailand, from the Philippines, to sit down, because until after

the Second World War when the Citizenship Act came into effect, those Canadians also did not enjoy citizenship.

And then we look around the room and it's usually me, maybe my assistant, maybe the teacher if it's a man and maybe one or two other boys standing and I ask the class, would they want us to be the only ones who get to choose leaders and to make the decision and, I'll tell you, the kids in the West End really get it. And sometimes they understand it more than adults; I can say that much.

Today I was pleased to attend the International Women's Day breakfast with the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) as well as many of my other colleagues. It's put on by labour. Usually it's held at the Union Centre, but to recognize this historic year, it was held across the street in the hotel Fort Garry and it celebrated the 100th anniversary of some women getting the vote. There was a great speech, as my colleague just said, by Barb Byers who's the secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Labour Congress, a woman who both in stature and voice reminds me very much of Becky Barrett, a former minister of Labour here in Manitoba and a strong woman as well.

* (11:30)

I met Barb two weeks ago when she came to our Legislature to speak in favour of Bill 8, our ground-breaking legislation to provide paid leave for victims of domestic violence. And she spoke about some of those past battles but also about the current battlegrounds, and she spoke about child care, the need for not-for-profit, affordable, accessible daycare. She spoke about domestic violence and the need for provinces in the federal government to keep moving to protect victims of domestic violence, to help them get out of their situations, but to prevent it from happening in the first place. And also she spoke about the battleground being pensions to raise the bar for all so that every Canadian has the ability to enjoy an acceptable standard of living in their retirement.

And her comments today match so well the path that we find ourselves on here in the province of Manitoba. Child care isn't just for families that need child care because of the age of their children. Child care isn't just for you, and I know my family has relied upon it, as have many of my colleagues. It's for all of us. It's for your neighbours. It's for your coworkers. It's for the person who cleans your teeth or bags your groceries or gives your kids a checkup or does your will so that they can come to work, be

part of our economy, and be productive, and that's why our government is committed to universally accessible public child care. It supports families; it strengthens our economy and gives our children a strong start.

When we have strong child care, and when we have places available, it takes down a barrier. It supports parents who want to go back to school or who want to go out into the workforce, and, yes, there is no question there is more demand for those daycare spaces than there are spaces at present time.

We're eliminating the wait-list by adding 1,200 new spaces. We are making steady progress not only on providing those spaces but on making sure that our child-care providers are paid fairly. For the first time ever, they now have a pension plan so that they will have the ability to enjoy their retirement when the time comes, and we're making sure it's accessible in as many places as possible.

As much as possible, sometimes a challenge because Manitoba's population is growing, we're moving most school-age spaces into schools to keep child care close to home, allow for more infant and preschool spaces in centres and also to make it easier for parents so they can take their kids to school at the start of the day, pick them up at the end of the day, and their little ones become accustomed to being part of the school.

And I can tell you, in schools like John M. King at Ellice and Agnes, that is a very, very important part to getting children acclimatized and used to going to school. They have a parent centre there because it is a community school funded by our government. There are parents who once upon a time would never have thought to set foot inside that school; they are now not only coming to the parent centre, they are now volunteering to be there—to work with their children's teachers. Some of them are actually realizing they can go and they can become an educational assistant or even become a teacher, and that's what wise investments in our communities do. And that's so important as we seek equity among the sexes here in Manitoba.

I know we've talked a little bit about domestic violence and what we can all do to make sure that whether we are men or women that we aren't bystanders, that we step in, we act and we use our own influence with whoever it may be to try and take on those and to stop domestic violence from occurring.

And I'm very proud that Manitoba is the first province in Canada that now has paid leave for victims of domestic violence, and I know there's going to be a conference very soon in New York where individuals from Manitoba are going to be able to step up on an international stage and talk about the leadership shown by our government here in Manitoba.

I'm also very pleased that we've passed legislation now that is going to improve protection orders, improve the process to get them, and increase the effectiveness of those orders so that when it is necessary for the state to become involved that that intervention can be as positive as possible. So, you know, Mr. Speaker, it was J. S. Woodsworth that said that what we desire for ourselves, we wish for all, and when it comes to gender equality, we're right on.

Thank you.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): It's an honour today to speak to a resolution with regard to gender equality and women's rights in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to say that members on this side of the House have very strong representation from the women within our caucus. I am so proud to say that I serve with the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), the longest serving woman in Canada, who was a leader in so many areas within women's rights and an innate quality within this building, within this Chamber, to start and then had those laws and ideas transfer into everyday lives across this province.

I know that the member for River East served as the minister responsible for the status of women. When we had a women's directorate, we actually had a department that we were able to take to estimates, to the budgetary process and defend. We had a department of women, strong women within the directorate who brought forward policies that were so important to the Manitoba women and families across this province. And what did this NDP government do? They dismantled that department. They dismantled the directorate.

They moved it under different departments depending on who the minister was at that time. I believe it went under the Minister of Labour at one point, it was under the minister of another department; it depended on where their strongest

voice of a woman was at that point. To me that doesn't speak volumes to this government and how they actually put a voice to women's issues. The member across the way is frowning; well, obviously she should go back and look at exactly what has transpired over the last 17 years, Mr. Speaker.

The women's directorate and the women that were involved in that department worked very hard at ensuring that the women's voice was heard. We had individuals like Gerrie Hammond who served on this side of the House, who went across the province and met with women to ensure that women's shelters and women at risk were put in a position of strength, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that they could move forward and ensure that their families, their lives could move forward and not be trapped in a very difficult position.

So I am very proud as a member on this side of the House to have served with members like the member for River East, the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had the privilege of seeing the member for Charleswood speak at a conference in Sri Lanka and the look on the faces of women from across the commonwealth and the vision that the member for Charleswood shared made my heart stop.

I cannot believe how important her words were for so many women from across the commonwealth. And the people that came up to her afterwards and embraced her, and shared their support and thanked her for sharing that vision because I believe Canada has a lot to share with regard to the importance of what women have been able to accomplish.

This is the hundredth anniversary of the women's right to vote, that's just one piece of the puzzle, Mr. Deputy Speaker. People like Nellie McClung were clear leaders, but we as women who sit in this Legislature have a very important role to play in ensuring that that continues.

And I believe in the 13, 14 years that I have served in this Legislature, I can proudly say that we have made a difference on this side of the House. Our legislation has made a difference. A lot of legislation was passed from this side of the House supported by the government side. I can also say that a significant amount of our ideas were taken by the NDP and not given credit to by the government because they could not recognize the importance of pulling together as a team, because 57 of us in this building are a team and I believe that it was shameful

to see some of the times when we worked so hard as a team and asked for government support and it was denied.

The member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), one of the strongest number MLAs within our caucus, I am so proud of what she has accomplished as a leader within our caucus.

She is—she works very hard to ensure that we as a caucus understand that every MLA has to work for their recognition and their support; it should not matter about what gender you are, you have to be the best that you can be and you earn the respect that you get, Mr. Speaker. So I believe we have a strong balance within our caucus.

* (11:40)

I believe that we work as a team and I believe that when we bring legislation forward, our women's caucus have diverse ideas and diverse beliefs. And I believe that when we bring legislation forward it is strong legislation, because I believe that it is supported by our caucus as a whole.

We go out; we meet with our members; we meet with Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, and I can proudly say that as a rural MLA, I have a lot in common and a lot of respect for my urban MLAs—women MLAs, because we have the opportunity to share ideas and share values.

I would like to just speak for a moment on social media and the fiasco that has recently been developing over the last few weeks. I cannot believe that there is an interest by this NDP government to pick and choose what is offensive and what is not offensive with regard to the quotes that are definitely homophobic; they are definitely focusing on animal cruelty and absolutely horrendous 'misogyny' comments being made by candidates within this election.

The NDP cannot pick sides and choose what they believe. They're not self-righteous. Or, they believe they are—they believe they are—and it just shows that this government has missed the boat. They have missed the boat, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that there is no place in this world for those types of comments and to just ignore what is being said, because their—that is their candidate, but have no issue with addressing somebody else, another party's candidate, speaks volumes to this government's inability to walk the walk.

So, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the NDP's record, it's shameful that we see that Manitoba has one of the worst records when it comes to violence against women, and nearly double the national average, the absolute worst rate of sexual assaults compared to other provinces. Women make up the highest percentage of food-bank users in Manitoba. Now that's a record, and that's a record that this NDP has to wear.

And I believe by bringing in a resolution that they have today has given us an opportunity to be a voice for these women who are part of these percentages that this NDP government have failed Manitoba women.

So I believe that this NDP government can put out a resolution, but they cannot hide from the facts and they cannot hide from the fact that they have failed Manitoba women, have failed Manitoba children, have failed Manitoba families by having over 11,000 children in care. That's a record they're proud of?

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this next election, I'm looking forward to a strong and progressive Conservative government and I am so proud that we have a leader who understands and respects all Manitobans and believes that every Manitoban deserves a hand up and not a handout, believes that every women should have the opportunity to excel, and he will provide those opportunities through a strong Conservative government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Melanie Wight (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): When you get a chance to speak on International Women's Day, it always—the first thing my mind goes back to is my mom and the world that she lived in and how, hopefully, now, it's very, very different.

But, when I was growing up in a rural community in southwestern Manitoba, I, actually, in my family, had no idea that there was a difference between men and women. I feel, in my family, my mom was equal.

And there was no—I think there was less, you know, so much less information coming in. We didn't have, you know, the Internet and we didn't have all of those things.

And I can remember the story my mom telling me of how, when she got married, it was time when obey was in the ceremony and how she had removed that and—from the ceremony—and had said to dad, you know, like, that's not what our relationship's going to be about, it's not going to be about me obeying you or your obeying me or—it's going to be about respect and love and that's certainly where dad was coming from too.

So it wasn't until I really went away from home that I started to really wake up to the world in which in we lived. And I remember hearing, first of all I guess, some stats on how many women had experienced some form of sexual violence, and I can't remember what year that was that I learned, but it was just this huge number, you know, like a quarter of women had experienced this and I remember thinking at the time: well, you know, I don't think I have and then as I thought back over my life I realized the many times when, in fact, that had happened and I will get to that, I think, a little later.

We have come a long way but when I first was working in corporate real estate I was the administrative assistant, and I remember when they fired the property manager for the commercial real estate—it was a man—and I got the job, they promoted me. And then I learned—and I was so excited, I was very excited and I remember my boss asking me but do you want to take your typewriter in there with you? And I said no, no, I don't, I want an assistant just like I was to be with me, and then I learned I was getting paid \$5,000 a year—back then that was a lot—less than the man they had fired. Well, I thought, well, that isn't right, that's not fair, and so I had to fight to get up even to the level of the guy that obviously was incompetent.

And I can remember going into so many, you know, medians and boardrooms where I was the only woman in the room. Particularly in commercial real estate, it wasn't a field where there was a lot of women yet. I remember my two guys who reported to me in the office tower that I was managing at that time—one of the buildings I was managing, and at first it was, you know, it was a quite a big thing for them to have a woman and it took them a while to warm up to that, but they did and they would have contractors—I would inspect all the contractors work within the office building as we developed the space and things, and you know, you could see the men going why is she even here, right, like, why is this woman coming to do this, why is she looking at our blueprints. And I always signed my name as I do

now, M. Wight, and so they didn't know I was a woman often because they might have gotten things just through the mail.

And my two guys, I remember my maintenance man who was a man of German descent who had, you know, moved over here during his lifetime, and I can remember him starting to, you know, stand up and say to these contractors you know you better be nice to her, she is the one signing your cheque, you know that, right? No, she does have a right to look at the work; it is her job to do that.

I'm sad that, still, in this province in boardrooms, corporate boardrooms, there is something like six per cent of women in those boardrooms. And it was like that back when I was in them and it's still like that today, and I'm saddened that we haven't made more progress, certainly in that area.

When I look at the things that we're doing for, with regard to domestic violence, I think one of the most important things is the breaking the silence. We know, we talked about stats, the members opposite were talking about stats, and they're horrible. But one of the things you have to be as government is courageous enough to want to have more people report, not less women report. And so all of those things where we're working to break the silence I would want every woman to support them because they're incredibly important.

I certainly, as many women I'm sure have been, was in a marriage that was abusive at one time. And I can remember escaping as I was being raped and getting out the door and jumping into my car and locking those doors as I drove away and he ran after me with a bat. And, probably, I would say this is the first time in 23 years I've ever said that publicly. So I can't—I'm sad when I hear people try to make it bad that more people are reporting.

* (11:50)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I can remember being at a party in Thunder Bay where my husband had—the party went bad and I wanted to get out, and I went to my car and discovered that he had done something to make the car not work. He'd pulled off a gasket, and I was in a town—I'd never been in that town before, and I can remember running away and getting out of the house and going to the 7-Eleven and phoning the police, who were really, really lovely, and explaining this thing about the car, and they said, well, you're in luck. You know, we have a police officer who fixes

vehicles on tonight and he's going to come and get you. You stay at that 7-Eleven. He'll be able to fix your car so that you can escape. And I said okay, and I remember getting to the car. I was talking to the police officer and I was whispering and he said, it's okay; you don't have to whisper in here. It's safe, right? And he came and he fixed my car and I was able to drive away and come back to Winnipeg, but he said to me as I was leaving: Don't turn around and come back. I said, no, I'm definitely not going to turn around and come back. You can be sure of that.

I can remember phoning the police to come and help me at home and them not believing me, and me saying fine; I'll just leave, and coming back to my home and finding everything broken and all the windows in the house broken and all the things thrown out because they wouldn't help me, but I got away. I wasn't foolish enough to stay there. I left while they were there.

So I'm pretty much behind the breaking the silence. I don't want anybody to speak about that as if it's bad that more women are reporting. Of course, we want less assaults, but the first step has to be women being able to even come forward and feel safe to do that and to know that that's something that they can do to get help.

And so we know there's a huge number of women, Mr. Speaker, that never do that, that never report the violence. I was lucky. I was only in that situation for about six months because I was older at the time that it happened. I had more supports. I hadn't had a lifetime where I believed I was nothing and deserved that to overcome, and so, I—you know, I was able to get out of that quickly, and I think of women that have, you know, lived their whole life experiencing that and believing that somehow they deserve it, because so often in our society we blame the victim, which is why so many women don't want to speak. They know what it is to speak up and what they'll face when they do, and that needs to change.

And we need our men. I was, interestingly, at the Goodwill speaking to a man who was trying to start something at the Goodwill and he had gotten—people were mad because he was a white man starting this safe place, and I said to him: You know, my gosh, this isn't a women's issue; it's not us beating ourselves up or assaulting us. It is—we need men to step forward, like he is doing, and—or this is never going to change. It's not women that have to step forward. It is all of the men who also have to take

that role and step forward and not be afraid of doing that and working to bring change to a culture that, instead of valuing and respecting women, are—it's sad when the person most likely to kill you is your husband, and that is true for women. That is your greatest danger as a woman when it comes to who that person is that's going to be hurting you, and that's a sad thing.

So, I got totally off track here, Mr. Speaker, but breaking the silence and everything that we can do on that, I believe we have to do more.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I thank all of those that have had an opportunity to put a few thoughts on the record today, and I feel really badly, Mr. Speaker, that we don't, on this very, very special day that recognizes women, have a resolution on the table in this Legislature that would allow all of us to stand up in unison and support all of the work that's been done by women over the last 100 years. And, you know, I celebrate all 51 women that have been elected to this Legislature.

And there have been many, many accomplishments that have happened for women over the years, starting with Nellie McClung and those women who worked so very hard to have women identified as persons and to have women have the right to vote.

And, Mr. Speaker, I celebrate and I applaud that, and I would love to be standing in my place today and supporting a resolution—not a resolution like this that does disservice to women, but a resolution, in fact, that we could all stand up, united in support.

And, Mr. Speaker, there have been accomplishments by every government of every political stripe in this province of Manitoba over the last hundred years. And I celebrate all of those accomplishments, and each one has been a step in the right direction and has given a stronger voice to women as we've moved along.

So, Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly that some of the work that was done under a Conservative government—a Conservative administration—I talk very often about Gerrie Hammond, who was my mentor, and my supporter, the woman I looked up to when I was first elected to this Legislature, and she went out and travelled throughout the province, mandated by our Premier, Gary Filmon, at the time. And this was almost 30 years ago. This wasn't at a time when women had a huge voice.

We didn't have a lot of supports in place across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, she brought recommendations back to our government after going out and listening to women. And I had the opportunity to talk to the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) after I had mentioned Gerrie Hammond another time in the Legislature, and the member for Fort Rouge came over to me and said: You know, I remember when Gerrie Hammond went out and travelled across the province. I was actually at one of her meetings, and there were some good things that happened.

And that's the kind of thing we should be celebrating. And we should be proud of the fact that we've built on all of the things that Gerrie Hammond pioneered and brought as a result of going across the province and listening to Manitoba women. And, Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to stand as a woman.

You know, when I was first elected, I think I was the 15th woman—some 30 years ago—to be elected to this Legislature. And look at the number of women that have come since. And look at the number of women that have put their names on the ballot for this election campaign on both sides of the House. We should be proud of that, we should be celebrating that, we should be recognizing the contributions that women of all political stripes have made over the years. And the contributions that women to follow will make.

I'm proud of the opportunity that I have had to represent the constituents of River East as a woman

and you know 30 years ago in River East, there was a question or a concern about whether people in River East would support a woman.

And, you know, they did, and, Mr. Speaker, I have never looked back. And I think that those are the kinds of questions that we asked 30 years ago but we don't ask today because we have made progress.

We have seen strong women on both sides of the House that have made significant contributions, and I think we should be standing in our place every day and applauding the major changes that have happened and occurred, and some of the rules that we have in the House today are a direct result of making this place more user-friendly for women with families. And I applaud that. And I recognize everyone, Mr. Speaker, that has had the opportunity to make those contributions.

And I want to thank the men in this Legislature. Every one. I don't think there's a man in this Legislature that does not support women and the opportunities that women and the discussion—the input that women have had into the political process. I think every man in this House supports and respects the women—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) will have four minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

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