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DEBATES
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PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 25, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you'd find support to go to Bill 226 this morning.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to go directly to Bill 226, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Education About Donating Organs). Is there agreement? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 226—The Education Administration
Amendment Act (Education About
Donating Organs)**

Mr. Speaker: So I'll call second reading, Bill 226, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Education About Donating Organs).

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member from River Heights, that Bill 226, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Education About Donating Organs), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that I believe should receive unanimous support of this Legislature.

Individuals, I'm sure, would recognize the value of the contribution of a kidney, or a heart, or a lung that someone might make, and what we want to be able to do is to educate our children. Quite often, it is

our children that demonstrate the leadership going forward, and the general feeling is that if we can incorporate the importance of organ donations into our curriculum, that it would, in fact, have the desired impact of having more people wanting and feeling that it is the right thing to be doing, and there is virtually no cost to government to do so and the long-term impact is very positive.

It's very positive on a number of fronts. Not only is it—the greatest benefactor, no doubt, would be the individual recipient of an organ. Second to that would be the individual that's making the donation, whether, Mr. Speaker, it's through passing or someone that's just prepared to donate which will have an impact on their life going forward.

It also—there's a great deal of benefit to society, both in terms of socially and financially. There is a cost, an ongoing cost, for individuals, for example, that are on dialysis, and, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a win-win. Everyone wins, and it is something that can be fairly easily enacted by suggesting, by mandating that organ donations and—be a part of the curriculum, and that can be done, you know, in a number of ways, everything from the establishment of a class to incorporating it into some of the subjects that are currently being taught.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't want to speak long, but I did want to make reference to a very good friend, Hank Horner, and his wife who are with us here in the public gallery, and I think that Hank is an excellent example of someone that has the courage to be able to share with Manitobans his story, and his story is very compelling as to why it is that this particular bill should, in fact, see the passage.

I would suggest to you that even in naming this bill, one could even consider someone such as Hank Horner. As an individual, I know that this is someone that has inspired me and many in terms of a better awareness of the importance of organ donations.

Hank is an individual—six years ago was a truck driver. Then one day on a weekend, him and his wife were scheduled to go shopping, and instead of going shopping, his loving wife, Anne, had suggested that it's better to go to the hospital. So they went to the

Seven Oaks Hospital and that morning is the first time that Hank actually discovered that he, in fact, had kidney failure.

And, as a direct result of that, Mr. Speaker, his life changed and significantly changed, and when we say his life, we're talking about him and his wife, his family and friends, all changed, Mr. Speaker, when that was found out.

If you were to check with Hank, like hundreds of others they have to go to dialysis three times a week. In Hank's case, it's Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is quite a burden to have to go to these facilities as often as they do, and it can be, at times, a very depressing experience. And I'm sure that these individuals that are going to Seven Oaks and other facilities would acknowledge the hard work and the efforts and the loving attitude and caring people that are at our facilities that are trying to be there to provide that comfort.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, it does have a dramatic impact on the way in which your life has evolved. In this particular case, as it was pointed out, you know, friends or others that want to go out on a Friday night, quite often you're not able to go on a Friday night because your—the kidney transplant is something that's on the horizon and, in the interim, you have to wait and go through the dialysis process.

There is always a need to have hope, Mr. Speaker, and individuals that are looking for potential transplants are one of a very hopeful nature. And I believe that, ultimately, through education, that we're going to be providing more potential donors, and that's the answer for a lot and I would suggest hundreds, if not, over the years, thousands of individuals that will require some form of transplant or another.

* (10:10)

And if this bill can assist in ensuring that there is that greater public awareness going forward, I believe that this is a bill, then, that should be supported by all members of this Chamber.

I look forward to hearing the government's and the official opposition's response to the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to have the opportunity to put a few words on the record about Bill 226, The Education Administration Amendment Act, which involves the education about donating organs.

I'd like to congratulate the MLA from Inkster for putting together this bill that requires that senior division curricula to include education about organ donations, and I'd like to say a few words about that.

But, first, I'd just like to say a few words about the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and his friend, Hank, who is in the gallery today, who has gone through this life-changing experience that was described by the MLA for Inkster. I know that that can be a devastating experience to have—to be going through life and, all of a sudden, having a life-threatening change in your life because of something that goes wrong, quite frankly, with your health. I can't imagine what it's like to go three times a week for dialysis and to be on a list and waiting for a match for a transplant.

The—I kind of relate to it a little bit because of what my husband and I went through in 2006 when my husband was diagnosed with leukemia, which was life threatening, and we went through a 26-month treatment protocol. And, basically, his life was saved because of a clinical research trial that was run by a doctor out of Boston. And because of Neil's cancer, he has had a lot of damage done to his kidney, and, in fact, we are going through quite a lot of medical interventions right now because of Neil's situation, and it was basically an organ that was hammered by a whole bunch of chemo. And, basically, we aren't sure exactly where we're going to go with that.

But I do want to say to Hank, in the gallery today, and to his wife, I want to congratulate them for what they've been through, because I don't think we know how we would react ourselves if we went through this kind of a health situation. I think we all like to think that we're strong and we can face anything. So I just want to thank him for that, and all the best in regards to what he's facing.

We know that organ and tissue donation—donors—we know how important this is in our society. We know that that can save up to eight lives and enhance the lives of many more individuals. And that's why, as a government, we have taken this whole issue very, very seriously, and we take every opportunity as a government to educate Manitobans about organ donations, and encourage those who are able to donate to sign a donor card.

And the topic of organ donation is already in the outcomes of our grade 11 biology. And we have done, actually, a lot of work on this in regards to organ donation in our education system because, as

the MLA for Inkster said, I mean, this is the—these are the young people that we want to educate about this because, quite frankly, it's their organs that are in good shape. And, unlike mine, probably—I wouldn't want Hank to have mine. I think he'd be better off having someone's who's quite a bit younger than me, quite frankly. And we know that this is important, to get at young people at an early age and make them aware of the fact that if they—you know, if they take this kind of selfless act, this act of giving the gift of an organ to someone, that they are giving the gift of life, quite frankly, and this can be something that can be very, very important.

We—in regards to what we were doing, as well, around having these kinds—this outcome in our biology curriculum, we are working on a resource kit with—for the grade 11 biology teachers. And this resource kit will be available to all teachers in the education system, and it will focus on organ donation and transplantation education, and it is entitled *Life is a Gift: A Grade 11 Manitoba Biology Resource for Organ Donation and Transplantation*.

Our existing grade 11 biology curriculum and the recent increase in requirements at grade 11 and 12 around physical education and health education and the new resource *Life is a Gift* illustrates, I believe, our commitment to the health of our young people and the health of—that they can give to someone who is going through this kind of a health issue. And I believe it shows our support for this very, very important topic.

To further support organ donation education, our government annually invests in Transplant Manitoba, which is the Province's co-ordinating body for organ procurement and awareness-raising about organ donation and transplantation. And to increase education about organ donations, our government also annually takes part in Canada's National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week.

And I know that the previous Minister of Education has been very, very supportive of organ donation initiatives. In fact, he probably will talk a little bit about something that he participated in in one of the schools last year, because I know he would like to have an opportunity to speak this morning. But he's going to speak a little bit about what he participated in, and that is another way of raising awareness around this very, very important topic and this very important issue.

And I want to also congratulate the previous Minister of Education. I'm a little worried though. I

have a meeting coming up soon with the Brave the Shave people from CancerCare and I know that, for many years, the previous minister shaved his head. And I'm a little worried about that. I think he looks better with his head shaved for cancer than I would. So I'm kind of a little worried about how I'm going to proceed in regards to this initiative that the previous minister left behind in regard—*[interjection]* Yeah, no, I just don't think so. And I'm kind of—I've been wrestling with it, actually, knowing that meeting's coming up and wondering how I'm going to react if they ask me if I'm prepared to shave my head. I'm really hoping they don't.

So I'm looking forward to him putting a few words on the record in regards to some of the causes that he has been involved in as the previous minister in regards to raising awareness about very important issues like organ donation and tissue donation, as well as raising awareness about cancer.

I just wanted to say a little about the *Life is a Gift* resource kit that is going to be launched shortly. This is the fruits of a long-standing and successful collaboration between our department, Manitoba Education, and Transplant Manitoba and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre. So I think that this is an important and timely resource that serves to contextualize teaching approaches to human biology at a time when the need for transplant organs and donor awareness are on the increase. And we're hoping that with launching this very, very important resource that students and teachers will make direct connections with the information in the curriculum. And they will learn more, obviously, about organ donation and transplantation and the importance of maintaining their health and their body so that they, perhaps, at some point in their lives, might be able to pass on the gift of life to someone else, like Hank, who is with us in the gallery today.

And we're very, very proud of this resource in our education curriculum and our work that we're doing with teachers around this very, very important topic. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (10:20)

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'm pleased to put a few comments on the record on Bill 226, The Education Administration Amendment Act, and just to acknowledge the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) for bringing this forward.

I think it's really important that we do talk about organ donation and finding ways to be innovative, to increase the information out there and to increase the opportunities for people learning about organ donation. It's such an important issue, and it's, I think, something difficult for families to talk about. But it has to be something that we talk about, I think, when our kids are young and when we are all, you know, basically healthy and well.

I know as a nursing supervisor I was once in a position of having to approach a family of a dying member and ask about a organ donation, and that is a very, very difficult time to approach a family. But, you know, sometimes there just isn't any other opportunity to do that, and it's a very, very tough time for the family. But it was a tough time, I think, for nurses, and it was a particularly tough time for me to have to approach a family and in such a, you know, an emotional time and an intimate time for the family to ask them about an organ donation. But it was critical, because we were in a situation in the hospital where this person's organs would have made a big difference.

So I've come to really realize the significance and the importance of having to do more about that at an earlier stage. While many Manitobans have signed an organ card, we know that others have not. But even some that have signed an organ card don't often talk about it with their families. And I think that's another really important thing that we have to do is encourage people to make their wishes known because that, again, takes the process further and it is extremely important.

I understand that there is a person in the gallery who has been mentioned by my two colleagues before, and I'd just like to acknowledge his presence today and to acknowledge the contribution he makes by coming forward on such an important debate. I think that once we hear and see third parties that do get involved in these issues, it really takes this away from numbers and statistics and makes us realize that what we are dealing with are human beings. And it's important that we can put a face and a story to these issues and it makes them more real. It makes people sit up and pay more attention.

I was very pleased to hear the minister comment that there are some changes to the grade 11 biology curriculum and that her government is working on a resource kit for teachers called Life is a Gift, and that it is a program that is going to be launched shortly. I

think that is probably one of the better things that we can be doing. I know for decades there have been a lot of initiatives put forward to try to increase organ donations, and while it improves a little bit, it doesn't improve enough to be able to adequately address the challenge out there. And, certainly, if this bill was passed, I think it's going to take us forward in leaps and bounds with future generations and we will see more organ donations in Manitoba.

Considering the number of people waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant, I think that's critically important, and according to Transplant Manitoba's Web site, in 2008, 215 Canadians died waiting for an organ transplant. And I'm glad to see that we can have a debate here to take this a little bit further and try to address the challenges of people dying waiting for organ transplants.

Now, when we look at other initiatives that have educated our youth, we've seen that by educating that particular generation, those young people then take it a step further and educate the adults in their lives. And one example is a whole generation of young drivers in the '90s learned that drinking and driving would absolutely not be tolerated. And I look at that generation now that are of the age where they are drinking, but I am so impressed that what they are doing is being much more responsible. And I think that is what we could see with organ donations.

By reaching our young people a lot earlier, we will see a whole generation here that will affect other generations, because today's young drivers are better informed about the risks and penalties and, hopefully, much less likely to engage in this kind of behaviour.

We had this discussion at my house the other day where we had a group of young men and women in their 20s, and having sons of that age, we sometimes get up in the morning and we don't where their cars are. Well, one of the things that I feel very, very lucky about is they were responsible enough not to drink and drive. Sometimes they don't always remember where they left their cars, but at least they never put themselves or anybody else in danger by drinking and driving.

And I think that that whole generation and all of the media that went around it and the incredible focus for a very long time has taught them the importance about arranging for a designated driver or a ride if they're going to be drinking.

Similarly, today, we see many young people that are the recyclers and the composters in our households because of what they're learning in school. So these young people are going to grow up and continue their practices in their adult lives, and they're going to affect others around them.

So by raising the awareness and educating students about the importance of organ donation, I think the idea here will create another whole generation of young Manitobans who are much better informed than generations before them, and, so, as adults, they're going to be able to make better decisions for themselves. They're also going to be able to talk to their families about their wishes and encourage other family members to do the same.

So often it's just a matter of drawing people's attention to this important issue. Some people who would be more than willing to donate their organs just likely haven't given it any thought, and that's where raising awareness becomes very important.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So I am standing here in support of Bill 226, The Education Administration Amendment Act. I think that it is something that could have and bear some very good fruit, and I think it's important that we do look at the opportunities we have in the schools for teaching children.

And, with those few comments, I would just like to indicate support, in general, for this legislation but also the intent of it and the, you know, the possible really good things that could come from it. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): It's certainly a pleasure to rise in the House to speak about this bill today, and, first of all, I'd like to assuage the concerns raised by my colleague the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) and I will, indeed, commit to my fourth Brave the Shave event on her behalf, and that is something that I've been very committed to do. I started it in memory of my aunt, and, unfortunately, each year I've done it in memory of somebody else close to me as a result of the scourge that is cancer.

With this particular issue of organ donation, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was privileged last year to be at John Taylor Collegiate and to celebrate the good work of a teacher, Ms. Tara Shepherd, who spent a lot of her time and energy and unique teaching talents in the course of developing the curriculum *Life is a Gift*, and it was a competition

that generated the name *Life is a Gift*, and a grade 11 student, Garrett Armstrong, came up with that title.

Life truly is a gift, and the work that they have done to develop this curriculum to raise awareness about organ and tissue donation is fantastic work. In fact, it was April of last year where as Minister of Education, I had the opportunity to demonstrate this curriculum, one of the curriculum resources which showed how to do a heart transplant on a computer, and, at first, I was a bit concerned because there was a bit of a glitch in the—a technical glitch, and I've been known to be a part of technical glitches of computers on occasion and, in the process, we weren't able to successfully demonstrate the heart transplant which, of course, gave lots of—infinite possibilities for the media that was there talking about the heartless politician.

But we did persevere and we did get through and we were able to successfully demonstrate for students the heart transplant on that computer program, and it's a tremendous resource, and, again, I have to congratulate the teachers that have been involved in doing that.

* (10:30)

And now we can say, as a result of that effort, that Manitoba is the only province that has developed a specifically curriculum-aligned support document for teachers in relation to organ donation and transplantation, and it's something that we should be very proud of.

All other jurisdictions rely on external agencies and organizations who develop the curriculum and the resources, but we had a unique partnership here in Manitoba that allowed us to do so in such a way where we engaged the partners in the process, we engaged teachers who had expertise in the process and we introduced a resource, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is to be held up as a national example of how partnerships work and how it can be done.

And, of course, having a teacher engaged in the process was critical because you could take the curriculum outcomes and align them appropriately with the objectives of the curriculum support. And there's much more that could be said but I'm being signalled, Madam Deputy Speaker, that with these few words I would like to congratulate the work that's been done to this end on organ donation and transplantation in our school curriculum.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), that debate be adjourned.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Burrows and seconded by the honourable member for Kildonan, that—the honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak), that the debate now be adjourned. Agreed? *[Agreed]*

House Business

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass this House, there'd be leave to be able to go to bill—directly to Bill 227.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to go to Bill 227? *[Agreed]*

Bill 227—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Unpaid Leave Related to Donating an Organ)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member from River Heights, that Bill 227, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Unpaid Leave Related to Donating an Organ), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'll—I—my comments will be brief in regards to Bill 227. The essence of the bill is to enable a potential donor to relieve him or herself of any thought that by giving a donation of an organ that they will not have to fear about losing their job. In essence, what it does is it provides that assurance to a would-be donor that he or she will be able to get leave without pay and not have to worry about at the end of the day, not having a job.

So this isn't the only type—if you were to take a look at the labour standards act, you will find that this type of consideration is also given to things such as maternity leave, parental leave, compassionate care leave, family leave, bereavement leave and unpaid leave for reservists. So this just adds one more thing, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I believe that it would go a long way in terms of sending a very strong, positive message.

I suspect that most, if not virtually all, employers would recognize the importance of organ donors;

that if they had an employee that was wanting to be able to donate an organ, that one would like to believe that that employer would do the responsible thing and allow the employee the opportunity to do this good deed and not have to worry about their job.

Having said that, Madam Deputy Speaker, this, in essence, puts into law and mandates that an employer must allow for the unpaid leave, and in good part, there's a number of considerations that individuals have to go through in order to feel comfortable in knowing that they can give the donation of one of their organs, and this is one of those things that are often thought about. So we want to put that thought to rest. At the same time, also, again, heighten the public awareness as a demonstration of governments, and particular here in the province, that we see this as a positive thing. It's a worthwhile thing. If someone wants to, out of the kindness of their heart, to donate a kidney, that, in fact, government is fully supportive of it for a wide variety of reasons, and that donor does not have to fear whatsoever in terms of being able to go back to the place of employment that they were at prior to going into hospital.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe and I recommend this bill to all members believing, again, that all members of this Legislature would, in fact, be supportive of such legislation. Thank you.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) for the opportunity today to spend some time talking about what is a very important issue to all of us, and that, of course, is the issue of encouraging and building awareness of organ donation.

I also want to thank the members of the public who are with us today to listen to a debate that I know affects their lives very directly.

I want to start off by just speaking a bit to the House about how, in the past, employment leaves have been decided upon and what that process has been. In Manitoba, we have—all provinces have some ability to consult with employer and employee reps when they take a look at employment codes and other laws and regulations that have to do with the workplace. I think Manitoba is a bit unique in that we have a very well established group called the Labour Management Review Committee that's made up of representatives of labour and representatives of business, employers and employees, chaired by the very capable Michael Werier. And this is a

committee that we look to for advice and to build consensus on issues like leaves. And that process is incredibly important because it has allowed us to make some very significant changes to both the Employment Standards Code and the Workplace, Safety and Health regulations in an atmosphere of consensus, where we have both employers and employees who are at the table who bring issues together and work out any differences of opinions that they may have.

And, using that process, we've been able to extend the number of leaves provided for under the code. In '99, when we came to office, there were only two employment leaves provided for: a 17-week maternity leave and 17 weeks of parental leave. And, of course, early in the decade, the federal government extended parental leave and maternity leave, and we were able to bring in legislation that also extended that leave. We also took the steps, when unpaid compassionate care leave was brought in through the EI system, to mirror that. As well, we've expanded leaves for unpaid family responsibility or sick days, unpaid bereavement leaves and expanded the definition of a family member to qualify for the different sorts of leaves. We've also reduced the qualifying period for maternity and parental leave from 12 months to seven months.

The other issue that came to the attention of the Labour Management Review Committee when it came to leaves was the difficulty that some employees were having in making sure that they had received job protection. I think there was an experience that, when you lengthened the time away from the job, sometimes there was detachment from the workplace that came about as a result, and sometimes employers weren't as aware of their responsibilities. And at that time, in order to remedy a situation where an employer didn't abide by the code and didn't grant job protection, it was a lengthy prosecution process. The only other means available to people was a Human Rights Commission complaint, and so, working with the Labour Management Review Committee, they came up with unanimous recommendations to strengthen those enforcement provisions for leave protections.

So in 2004 we were able to change legislation to put those mechanisms in place to investigate and resolve leave issues, so that now, if somebody found that they were on a leave and they were let go of their job, the onus is on the employer to prove that the termination was not due to the fact that they were

on the leave. It also allowed Employment Standards to receive and investigate these complaints, and allowed for an appeal process to the Manitoba Labour Board. And I just reflect on some of those changes, because I think it shows the value to having that level of consultation and discussion with the Labour Management Review Committee.

*(10:40)

And, certainly, if we were to proceed with the leaves such as this, I would also recommend and desire that that committee have an opportunity to discuss and come to consensus on that decision. I believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think all of us believe, in this House, that there would be very few employers who would fire someone who is leaving their job to donate part of their organ. And if there are cases where that has happened, and members in the gallery know of cases like that and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I would be very interested in receiving that information so we could ask our Employment Standards division to take a look at those situations and recommend if there are some remedies that would be appropriate.

I also say on the issue of organ donation, all of us, I think, many of us in this House, will have had some personal experience with the issue of those diseases that lead to the need for organ transplantation. And I want to talk about my own experience and a childhood friend of mine who I went to school with in junior high. And it was a young woman by the name of Kathy Adkins, who I remember to this day, and she had liver disease. And I don't remember ever being that aware of the fact that that was her condition, until she was in the hospital in London, Ontario, awaiting transplant. It wasn't something that she talked about. I think, like most kids who have chronic illnesses or disabilities, we try our best to live normal lives, and the last thing we want is that kind of attention that comes from being different.

And so I remember when she was hospitalized in London and her family went there. And it was, you know, was a great burden on that family to be away from their support system and financial burden. And so, in the way that kids do, we came together at my school and held hot dog days and other fundraisers to help provide some funds to that family.

And I know that is a story that happens in communities all across the province when a family has to travel for medical care; there's many

fundraising events that take place, in addition to the coverage that is granted through the government.

I want to talk for a moment about a program with the Kidney Foundation, that our government is partnered with, in order to provide some of the funds to people who make the decision to have a living—make a living organ donation. It's called a living organ donor reimbursement program and we contribute and the Kidney Foundation matches our contribution. And this program helps reduce the financial burden for an individual who decides to donate a kidney or a partial liver to a Manitoban. So they provide reimbursements to help cover the cost of travel, accommodation, meals, a loss of income and child care. And we've recently committed to ongoing funding of this with the provision of \$50,000 a year to the Kidney Foundation by way of grant funding. And I think that is an example of an innovative program that can help encourage living organ donation but also removes some of the barriers. I think that decision that people make to donate part of their organ is a personal decision but, also, an extremely valuable gift that's given. And certainly, programs like the program with the Kidney Foundation help to remove some of the barriers to that kind of gift.

I also want to just suggest to the House that there may be some merit in considering whether it would be possible to convince the federal government to make this kind of leave an employment insurance protected leave. I think what we have found in the past, with issues like maternity leave and parental leave, is that when the federal government decides that they're employment insurance eligible, it allows for people to maintain some level of income. And often, for people who are contemplating taking a lengthy leave, job protection is, of course, important, but the more important consideration for most people is income protection and being able to have some level of income. So, if it was possible to have the federal government come on board and extend employment insurance coverage to people who are taking leaves in order to donate part of an organ, then those folks would also be able to maintain some of their income and I think that would remove another barrier.

So I want to thank, again, the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) for giving us this opportunity to talk about what is an important and personal issue to many of us, and we'll continue to look for ways to support people who make this worthwhile decision.

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to put a few comments on the record on Bill 227, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, and indicate that the intent of the bill is to further facilitate organ donation by amending the Employment Standards Code to allow for an unpaid leave of absence for an employee who undergoes surgery to donate an organ. And, certainly, we support the spirit in which this bill was introduced.

And I suspect that there are many employers out there already who recognize the value of organ donation and would probably already support an unpaid leave of absence to allow people to donate an organ. I'd be very surprised if that wasn't true. However, I think prior to legislation like this going through, I think it would be important to have full consultation with employers before implementing any legislation that will affect the operations of their business. But I'm sure that many employers would value the type of situation where one of their staff people was coming forward either to donate an organ, or organs, or tissue to another family member or a friend. And I'd be very surprised if employers did not support that, and I would think that most probably would.

When we look at the Organ Donation and Transplant Association of Canada Web site from '08, it's interesting to note that there were 4,330 people on the waiting list for an organ transplant in Canada, and 250 of those died while waiting for an organ transplant; 303 people withdrew from the waiting list, and we do know that people do withdraw from the waiting list when they become too sick to receive a transplant or if they opt out of surgery or if their health improves for some reason; 2,083 transplants took place and 1,541 of those transplants were made possible because of deceased donors.

I think these statistics highlight the importance of organ donation in Canada and the number of lives that can be saved by people who choose to become multiorgan donors after they die. It also shows the importance of living donors, those who donate a kidney, for example. In Manitoba last year there were 46 kidney transplants, and in the first three months of this year alone there were already 19 kidney transplants, and that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is definitely encouraging.

So I'd like to say that we certainly support the spirit in which this bill was introduced and would

like to see more consultation with it. But, generally, I think this is something that is worth paying more attention to and not just letting it drop and seeing what can be done with this on a go-forward basis.

So I'd like to thank the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) for bringing this forward and for drawing attention to this very important issue, and I'd like to also acknowledge and thank the families of those Manitobans who have given the gift of life through multiorgan donation.

I've had a number of conversations with a nursing colleague of mine, and I'm not sure if she's still in the position but we graduated together, and she's been the nursing director of the transplant program here in Manitoba, and we have had a number of discussions about organ transplants in the province, and we've talked about ways of increasing more transplants in this province to meet the needs of people who are waiting.

And I can't imagine what it's like to wait every day, to expect a phone call or, you know, to be sitting worried, wondering how long your life is going to last, especially if you've got family, and you're praying and waiting for that phone call every day. It must be very difficult during your waking hours to be sitting so focussed on the phone knowing that without that call you are not going to have a long life nor are you going to have a good quality life. So I imagine it's extremely difficult.

I have been dealing with a Winnipegger recently whose husband is in need of a heart transplant, and they have had some serious challenges in the province in terms of dealing with, you know, the wait in order to have a heart transplant, and it's very emotional. It is a rollercoaster for the family and I'm sure it is for all families who are going through this.

*(10:50)

So I do want to acknowledge the families that are living with this day in and day out. I'd also like to thank the health-care professionals and advocates who dedicate their time and energy to raising awareness about this issue and working with these families on a day-to-day basis and sometimes a year-to-year basis and helping them live through these challenges.

And, you know, talking about these issues with our family is never easy, but it's important, and I would urge all of us to certainly give some thought to organ donation and then make sure that our wishes are known to our loved ones.

And with those few comments, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would just like to thank you for the opportunity to put these comments on the record.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to add my support to this legislation, Bill 227.

Madam Deputy Speaker, every year Manitobans die on waiting lists waiting for organs, and we know that those waiting lists are far too long. Hank Horner, who is here, has been waiting for six years for a kidney transplant, and that's not unusual. It is an example of the current situation, and it's a reason that we're trying to address the situation by trying to promote the donation of organs and trying to make it easier for Manitobans to donate organs.

Simply put, this bill will protect the jobs of those who want to take a leave to donate an organ to someone in need. And I think that this is the least that we can do to make sure that people who are so generous enough to make the donation of a kidney or another organ to a fellow human being—that clearly we should be in a position where we can show compassion and support to the person who is making that donation.

And, in fact, for a—making a donation of a kidney, although there are certain procedures involved in terms of tests that have to be done beforehand, there is a surgery. Most of the time, the amount of loss of work is certainly not excessive, but it would certainly provide, particularly, protection under the circumstance where an individual, for whatever reason, has to take more time off work than the normal. And even for the normal amount, there is some days off work. And it is important that we as a society are compassionate enough to make sure that people can feel secure in their job to be able to make that donation.

The effort that we are making this morning with both Bill 226 and Bill 227 is to increase the awareness of the need for organ donation and to increase the understanding of what it means and to increase the protection of those who are donating an organ.

The fact is that in the case, for example, of kidney transplantation, that an extraordinary percentage of these transplants, something like 98 percent, are successful with modern medicine. And it's also worthy of note that those who are ready to donate a kidney—of course, we normally have two

kidneys and so for most people, one kidney is, in fact, enough to make sure that you have the kidney function there and available to you when you need it, for the purposes of making sure that the kidney is operating and operating well. And I note that there have been some recent studies, which will reassure those who come forward as kidney donors, because these recent studies show that those who donate a kidney do not suffer—when you look, overall, at all those, that their life span is not shortened, that they don't have particular problems as a result of donating a kidney. And this certainly is a reassurance to those who are interested in coming forward and donating a kidney.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would hope that all Manitobans and all MLAs today would support this legislation and, maybe, with good will, we can look forward to having this legislation passed and in effect. Even if we don't have support today, at least we have done some good work in raising the awareness of the need for organ donation in Manitoba—the need to help those who need an organ for whatever reason. And you need to make sure that all of us check to make sure that we have signed our donor cards, that we have those with our driver's licence in our wallet, and that, if—we hope there's nobody who gets involved in accidents, but, if it does so happen, that those organs can be made available to those in need.

So let us remember that, and I would hope that all members would support this legislation.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): It's a wonderful opportunity to put a few things on the record. I see that many other people in this House, in this Chamber, have been touched by organ donation, and my family is no different.

So my first encounter with organ donation was the loss of one of my best friends growing up. Kirsten Andersen and I were little troublemakers on Freemont Bay, running around on our tricycles as preschoolers. And later on, when Kirsten went off and moved to Bedson, we still biked back and forth, and looked after each other. But, unfortunately, when we were teenagers at 16, I came home from a concert one night to find out that she had died while out at the cottage in a car accident.

And it was very hard to get over that moment, but then to find out that her organs—her folks had been generous enough to donate her organs. And it was a very tough moment, because you were trying to figure out what was happening to one of your best

friends. And you realized in retrospect, just, again, what a wonderful gift it was, knowing that her beautiful blue eyes were looking out on the world, giving someone else vision, that organs of hers that hadn't been damaged were able to keep other young people alive.

So that was my first experience with organ donation. It was a very quick growing up process in many respects. And then, from that point on, again, though being at an age where I just got my driver's licence, was able to then—I've been very diligent to make sure that I have always signed my donor card, and to explain to my children the importance of that should something ever happen to me.

Unfortunately, my next experience with organ donation wasn't as fortunate. My uncle, Antoni Reczek, passed away while waiting for a heart transplant. He sat there on that list—this was around the same time that Cal Murphy had his heart transplant, and we were all aware of that in the media. But at the same time that that was sort of going on—their ordeal was going on in the public eye, my family sat at home waiting for a match for my uncle. And, unfortunately, that match never came. And so my uncle has missed out on a great deal in our lives, especially watching his grandchildren grow up and his great-nieces and nephews. I have a young son that never had the chance to meet him but knows a great deal about him because of all the stories that have been told. So Uncle Tony still has a place in all of our hearts, even though he died waiting for a new one.

The final—my most recent experience with organ donation, where, again, I see the value of—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Kirkfield Park will have seven minutes remaining.

The time is now 11 a.m. and time for private member's resolution.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 11—Aboriginal Healing Foundation

Madam Deputy Speaker: The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Aboriginal Healing Foundation, brought forward by the honourable member for The Pas.

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member from Flin Flon,

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

WHEREAS the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was created with a mandate from the federal government to fund healing projects for residential school survivors, including reconciliation and support for Aboriginal people and their communities in building and reinforcing sustainable healing processes that address the effects of physical, sexual, mental, cultural and spiritual abuses; and

WHEREAS for more than 100 years, 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were placed in over 130 residential schools during which time they were forbidden to speak their native language or practise their culture; and

WHEREAS many students were also physically, sexually, psychologically abused, creating intergenerational impacts; and

WHEREAS there are 20 projects in Manitoba funded by the foundation in 2010, ranging from residential counselling centres to family retreats, youth wilderness camps, community workshops and native language training courses; and

WHEREAS funding for this critical program was cut by the federal government on March 31st, 2010; and

WHEREAS this funding cut greatly undermines the federal government's official apology for the residential school system and its legacy; and

WHEREAS the Aboriginal leaders, communities and individuals across the country recognize the importance of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's work and are rallying together to pressure the federal government to commit to continuing this program; and

WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission headquartered in Winnipeg is just starting its work with public hearings in June of 2010; and

WHEREAS commission Chair Murray Sinclair stated in March 19th, that "we felt the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's funding should be continued at least for the term of our commission" and that a loss of programming will cause some survivors to hold back at the commission hearings.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba strongly urge the—that funding be reinstated for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the Speaker—and that the Speaker send a copy of this resolution to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, is there agreement to take the resolution as read—or as printed, I mean, not as read.

Some Honourable Members: Printed.

Mr. Speaker: As printed, okay.

WHEREAS the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was created with a mandate from the Federal Government to fund healing projects for residential school survivors, including reconciliation and support for Aboriginal people and their communities in building and reinforcing sustainable healing processes that address the effects of physical, sexual, mental, cultural and spiritual abuses; and

WHEREAS for more than one hundred years, 150,000 First Nations, Metis and Inuit children were placed in over 130 residential schools during which time they were forbidden to speak their native language or practice their culture; and

WHEREAS many students were also physically, sexually and psychologically abused, creating intergenerational impacts; and

WHEREAS there are 20 projects in Manitoba funded by the Foundation in 2010, ranging from residential counselling centres to family retreats, youth wilderness camps, community workshops and native language training courses; and

WHEREAS funding for this critical program was cut by the Federal Government on March 31st, 2010; and

WHEREAS this funding cut greatly undermines the Federal Government's official apology for the residential school system and its legacy; and

WHEREAS Aboriginal leaders, communities and individuals across the country recognize the importance of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's work and are rallying together to pressure the Federal Government to commit to continuing this program; and

WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission headquartered in Winnipeg is just starting its work with public hearings in June of 2010; and

WHEREAS Commission Chair Murray Sinclair stated on March 19th, that we felt the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's funding should be continued at least for the term of our Commission and that a loss of programming will cause some survivors to hold back at the Commission hearings.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba strongly urge that funding be reinstated for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and that the Speaker send a copy of this resolution to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), seconded by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen),

WHEREAS the Aboriginal Healing—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Whitehead: Mr. Speaker, this resolution recognizes the importance—the important contribution made by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in helping Aboriginal people and their communities through the healing process. The resolution calls on the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to support the provincial government in strongly urging the federal government to reinstate recently ended funding and to further support the government in sending a copy of this resolution to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs.

This government believes that the Aboriginal Healing Foundation is an integral part of a healing process for Manitoba's Indian residential school survivors and that programming must continue in order for Aboriginal people and their communities to address long-term effects of physical, sexual, mental, cultural and spiritual abuses that resulted from residential schools.

Mr. Speaker, I had the good fortune, I guess, to be part of a gathering in Opaskwayak Cree Nation this weekend to address the issues of residential school survivors, issues that they're still dealing with today, not only as survivors of the system themselves, but their children and their grandchildren who are also affected by this unfortunate incident in our history in Canada.

Many of our communities have been—gone through some turmoil to the point of, you know,

widespread community violence, family violence, people who have not really healed from the experience. There were many types of hardships encountered by the individuals, entire families, in fact, that went to residential schools. I remember my dad clearly stating that while he was at the Elkhorn residential school with his siblings, they were never allowed to speak to each other, not in Cree, not in English, not to acknowledge each other. And if they were, there was punishment. And so they—decided not to speak at all to each other during their time. My dad was there from seven years old till he was 16 or 17. It was a long time to experience that kind of abuse. They were forbidden to speak their native language or even practise whatever culture they knew before they left the communities.

Many of them were physically abused during their time in the residential schools. I remember one of my friends, a former council member of Opaskwayak Cree Nation, who told me that while at the residential school, she lost her sister through physical abuse, that she was beaten literally to death for speaking her language and for not living up to those rules that they were forced to live with. So there was many, many different types of abuses. Many, of course, sexual abuses—was rampant in some schools, more and—more so than others in Manitoba here.

I have a friend, a few friends, in fact, that committed suicide in their younger years as a result of residential school abuses, that they—abuses that they received during their time there. These are incidences they had experienced, events in their lives that they were not able to process, and they were not able to deal with. There was nobody there to help them deal with those kind of issues when they returned home. Many of those friends today are still impacted by those many different types of abuses.

It is unfortunate that our people are still living this way, still impacted by those terrible events in their lives. There's a lot of anger; there's a lot of frustration; there's a lot of distrust with authorities. They just don't trust authority at all in some cases. Mr. Speaker, I think, you know, at this stage in our history we should be able to live freely, free from fear, free from prejudice, free from any sort of control over our lives. But, sadly, a lot of our people are still living in that kind of fear.

The gathering this weekend in Opaskwayak Cree Nation was to help the residential school survivors

move on another step to a more functional lifestyle with themselves, with their families, with their friends, with their co-workers, with the community in general.

* (11:10)

Many of the stories, of course, that were told over the weekend were about the past, but there was—they were also about the present and the future aspirations, that some day we will be free from this abnormality in our lifestyles and in our community, that our communities will in time become functional like they used to be before the residential schools system came in.

The legacy of the residential school system in Aboriginal communities is far-reaching. I am a third generation and so, you know, I have experienced events in my life also that made me, you know, dysfunctional at a younger age. If it were not for the elders in the community that helped me deal with issues like this, I would not be where I am today, being, you know, a help to the community, a help to the nation.

Many Aboriginal people are still struggling with poverty, with addictions, with violence and the breakdown of families. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established to help Aboriginal peoples heal from this legacy. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which was created in 1998, is a not-for-profit, Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal-managed, national funding agency which encourages and supports community-based healing efforts to address the intergenerational legacy of physical and sexual abuse in Canada's residential school system.

That was the whole intent: to help communities heal, the entire families heal. It is our belief that if one person can heal from this unfortunate event, dark history of our lives—if one person can heal, the whole family has the potential to heal as well. And if the whole family can heal and if we can heal families, different families in the communities, the whole community can heal from this dark history of our times.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important that we've come this far in this process or healing. We've come this far and yet, you know, we're just about there—we're just about there—and then they pull the plug on the funding. It's hard, it's difficult for communities who have been, you know, hurt by this whole process.

Mr. Speaker, 80 percent of our citizens in Opaskwayak Cree Nation went to residential

schools—80 percent. That is going to take a long time to heal those people and move on to a healthier, more functional lifestyle to the point where we used to be. We were healthy. We were healthy in spirit. We were healthy in body. We were healthy in mind. We were healthy in relationships. The families that we had before the residential school systems came in were very functional. They were united. They were strong.

And now, I am asking all members to help us to encourage the government of Canada, the Minister of Indian Affairs, to continue to fund.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I thank the member from The Pas for bringing forward this resolution, and certainly we would support the spirit of the resolution in any event. We take some issue, I think, with some of the wording that's in the resolution itself, but—and I'll get to that in terms of the debate within this Chamber.

The history and legacy of residential schools in Manitoba, like other provinces, is a very tragic and a sad one, Mr. Speaker. And there were at least 15 residential schools, as I understand it, in Manitoba that were dispersed in communities such as Brandon, Churchill, The Pas, Dauphin and Winnipeg.

And on speaking with several members of Sagkeeng First Nation, which is within my constituency of Lac du Bonnet, over the years, I can say that there was also a residential school in Sagkeeng on—within—on the north side of the Winnipeg River. And speaking to several survivors of that school, they related several stories, many stories, about what tragically happened within that school, and I don't think it's any different than what happened in any other residential school throughout the province and, indeed, throughout the country.

Over 150,000 Aboriginal children were forced away from their families into residential schools, and it's really difficult, Mr. Speaker, to imagine what was going on in those schools and to imagine the sadness of young children, the isolation of young children away from their families, and fear that they may have experienced because of the fact that they were separated for months at a time from their family, from their community, from their supports, from those they knew growing up, and no children should ever be forced, or should have ever been forced through a situation like that from what these children suffered.

Of course, as we all know, documented, well-documented proof that there was suffering by these children within the residential school in terms of physical abuse. There was sexual abuse going on, physical, emotional abuse, as well, and some of them tragically, Mr. Speaker, never made it home to come back to their families. They passed away within those schools for various reasons, abuse being, of course, being one of those reasons.

What was happening, Mr. Speaker, at the time, was that, of course, it was—the schools were established to, in fact, assimilate many people within the Aboriginal community, within the non-Aboriginal community, and what had happened was that cultures were being affected, and I think the Prime Minister, when he made an apology on June–July 11, 2008, and that's an historic apology. Other prime ministers before him—there was overwhelming evidence to other prime ministers before him that there was abuse going on at residential schools and there was some difficulties at residential schools, but Prime Minister Harper took the initiative in 2008 and made an apology on behalf of all Canadian people, on behalf of the Government of Canada with regard to residential schools. And he stated that it is a sad chapter in our history and there's no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the residential school system to ever again prevail.

So that, in itself, was an acknowledgment by the Government of Canada, an acknowledgment by our Conservative Prime Minister, and an historic acknowledgment, and I think that brought relief to many Aboriginal families and, in fact, it bought relief to a lot of Aboriginal families within Sagleeng First Nation, which, as I mentioned before, is within the constituency, as well as Little Black River.

And I've heard time and time again from Aboriginal people within those two communities that they felt very relieved, in fact, that there was an acknowledgment of the abuse that was occurring in those schools. The churches themselves, as well, the Anglican, Presbyterian, and United church also offered apologies for their roles in the residential school system and Pope Benedict, as well, also acknowledged their involvement with the residential school system.

These were important steps. Apologies were important steps in the healing process for people who went to those residential schools, and we must, I think, as legislatures, keep that in mind when developing any legislation and developing any policy

with respect to Aboriginal peoples. We keep this tragic chapter of our history in mind and we ensure that Aboriginal people are consulted when it comes time to their culture, their heritage, and their families.

Residential schools were clearly the wrong approach that was taken. Assimilation is not the answer; I think that history proves that. I think it's important to emphasize culture and I note that one of the bills in front of this Legislature, prepared and proposed and introduced by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) is a first step toward that in terms of recognizing the Aboriginal languages that are spoken within our communities and within our province.

The good news, though, is that in spite of the residential school system, in spite of the difficulties that occurred there, the good news is that our—the original culture, in fact, did survive and because it did survive, we are richer for it in this province, and we see that, I think, every year in terms of the cultural heritage of Manitoba when we go to Folklorama every August in this province in Winnipeg and celebrate the true culture that we have—the cultures that we have within our province, Aboriginal culture being one of them, of course.

* (11:20)

I note the commission that's—that has been set up by Prime Minister Harper is led by Justice Murray Sinclair, Manitoba's first Aboriginal judge, and I claim to know him, in fact, because he was a classmate of mine in law school, and so I have great respect for Judge Murray Sinclair. I think it's special, in fact, that a Manitoba judge is, in fact, leading the commission in Winnipeg, and it's important that—an important acknowledgement of the capabilities, I think, of Judge Sinclair.

In terms of the resolution itself, I note, Mr. Speaker, that the—that Judge Sinclair indicated that he feels that the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's funding should be continued for at least the term of our commission and the loss of programming would cause some survivors to hold back at the commission hearings. I would have to take Judge Sinclair's word at that. In fact—it may, in fact, have some effect, I think, in terms of what kind of testimony is going to be involved.

But I take exception, in a way, with the **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, Mr. Speaker. Basically, what this resolution is doing is blaming

entirely—the loss of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation entirely on the federal government, and I have some concerns about that.

And I commend, as I said, the member from The Pas, and I'm certain that the member from Rupertsland would also speak in support of this resolution as well, but to rely on the federal government for programming is kind of what we kind of do here in Manitoba. Relying on the federal government for a lot of things is what we do in Manitoba, and I recall when the Kenaston underpass was being constructed, we couldn't even, as a province, build an underpass under a railway track without federal government help.

And I take exception to that because 40 percent of our money in this province comes from the federal government in terms of transfer payments, and I would ask the member from The Pas whether or not—and I don't know whether he can answer that at this point, but whether or not he brought this resolution forward to caucus and whether or not the NDP members of government would have supported the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in the event that the federal government wouldn't.

Clearly, I think there's a role for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, and I respect Judge Sinclair's assessment of it, but I would like to hear, of course, from the member from The Pas and maybe the member from Rupertsland as to whether or not this government, this NDP government, would actually support it if the federal government doesn't or perhaps get together with the federal government and support it 50-50.

I haven't heard much about that, Mr. Speaker, and I would encourage the member from The Pas to go to his own caucus and perhaps look for funding from the provincial government if the federal government would partner with them or even if the federal government did not decide to go forward with it.

But I do commend the—Prime Minister Harper for, in fact, bringing forward the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I think it's an important step in the healing process for all Aboriginal people. It's an important step, I think, for all Manitobans to ensure that culture and heritage is preserved and that people have an opportunity to come forward and relate their stories to all Manitobans, so that we truly know what Aboriginal people went through in the past. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to put a few words on the record in response to the PMR put out by the member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), and I thank him very much for bringing forth this resolution.

It was less than two years ago in a downtown hotel that I was sitting with a group of elders and a group of people that had experienced—many of them had experienced coming through the residential school system, and I saw Prime Minister Harper on the satellite hookup with a huge television screen making this apology, and I can only say that it was riveting. I mean, in the room itself, there was this massive wave of emotion and I saw an awful lot of elders crying.

And it was just something that's really difficult to describe, Mr. Speaker, because you felt swept up in this emotion and, as you're swept up, you realize what some of these people must have experienced. Some of those details have already been given by the member from The Pas, but I felt it first-hand there and I could relate to it. I don't think there was a dry eye in the house.

And I must commend the Prime Minister for his courage to do this. I think this was a great first step. It was a wonderful first step. It signalled for the first time in a long time that healing was needed, that we could actually name the evil, that we're aware of it, that we're recognizing it, that we're no longer hiding it, that we're no longer whispering about it. The shame, the guilt, the negativity, the anguish could come out in the open. We could start to deal with it in a formal way, although informally, of course, it had been going on for almost—several generations, for 77 years, in fact. From 1898 to 1969, that's how long the federally supported residential schools were in operation.

Yes, we got the formal apology. Again, I thank the Prime Minister for that. It was a courageous act. There was the formal recognition, but from that flows something else and that is the healing process. The damage was done; now how do you repair the damage? And that's what the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was supposed to do.

Now, we can talk theoretical terms quite a bit, Mr. Speaker. Let me just talk about three examples that I can give from my own life, three examples where I've been in contact with Aboriginal people who told their story about abuse.

I remember Mr. Powderhorn, who was a member of the Sayisi Dene in Tadoule Lake, who came to visit me a number of years ago, and he's part of that group that calls themselves—or group that calls itself The Lost Boys. He was taken from his mother in Churchill many, many years ago, when he was—I think he was something like six or seven or eight or nine. I don't know the exact date, but certainly not a teenager—a young boy, taken from the street in Churchill, taken to a—I guess, which we would have to call a youth detention facility somewhere in southern Manitoba. I think it was near Dauphin, if I remember correctly—and was used basically, he says, as slave labour, living in extremely difficult circumstances, not allowed to speak his own language, getting no letters from his mother. The letters from his mother did come to reassure him that she still loved him and she was in the picture, but the letters were never given to him. When he was 18 years old, he was given a bundle of letters from his mother that he had never seen. That's the kind of stuff that was happening. The young man experienced not only trauma, he actually witnessed or was in—was not directly involved, but certainly witnessed—a murder. That's how tough things were at that detention facility.

I remember being in Lac Brochet, Northlands First Nation, with the member from Rupertsland not too long ago. We met an elderly lady and she talked about going to school in Guy Hill, to the residential school in Guy Hill, just outside of The Pas. She was there as a teenager. She was pregnant. The baby was delivered and she never saw the baby again. Allegedly, the baby died, passed away, but the mother wasn't told about it. The mother still grieves. The mother was never shown a grave. This is still a sore wound with her. She still cries about it today.

And I give you a third example, Mr. Speaker. I was in Nelson House, oh, maybe a decade or two ago, with Archbishop Peter Sutton, who was the archbishop for the Keewatin-Le Pas Archdiocese in the North. We were in Nelson House talking with a group of elders, and we're talking about the church's role in abuse—not only about just the negative stuff. The church also did good stuff. I'm sure all the churches did. The mentality was to help Aboriginal people, to assimilate them, but there was a whole negative underlay to this and we were trying to deal with this negative underlay. And then a lady stood up and talked about how she was physically abused and sexually abused in a church system by church people. This was horrible. And I can remember the

colour draining from the archbishop's face and he hung his head in shame, because he had to take on this as well.

But at least we named the evil. Once you name the evil and you acknowledge what's happening, you can start addressing it. And I think that's what we're trying to do.

But it can't be done on a fixed timetable. You can't say, well, we've got money for a year and a half or two years or whatever, and then it's the end. Healing doesn't work like that. And it seems only logical that after 77 years of much abuse that you're not going to fix this problem in just a couple of weeks or a couple of months or a couple of years. It takes a lot longer than that.

Mr. Speaker, up to 150,000 First Nation, Métis and Inuit children were affected. They were there to be so-called Christianized and assimilated. Children were forbidden to speak their own language, made to feel ashamed of their own culture and language. Children as young as six were taken from their homes. Parents would actually go out and try to hide their kids. They were taken from their home, and they could be brought back in the summer for a month or two possibly, sometimes not even that.

* (11:30)

And you can imagine what happens when you're in an extended family, you speak the language, you have the culture, you have the values. You're now in a different system, run by priests or nuns or other religious people, by bureaucrats. It's not the same as a family. And when you come home as a child, you've lost your language. You've forgotten your language. You can't communicate any more. You're made to feel that your language and your culture isn't important any more. And worst of all, possibly the biggest negative of all of this is, how do you learn parenting skills if you're raised in an institution? You're part of an intricate, complicated, complex, wonderful extended family system in northern Manitoban, for example. When you're pulled out of that, how do you fit back into it again? How do you become a parent in the traditional Aboriginal sense? How do you stay an Indian if they take Indianness out of you? That's very difficult.

So we raised—our children were raised, then, not being very positive about their own culture, not understanding their own language, not knowing parenting skills because they had never really witnessed it because they were away from their

family. So when they became parents, they didn't know how to handle it. And you know what this intergenerational damage does when people are poor and deprived or abused in any situation anywhere on the globe. The abused person becomes the abuser. So this vicious cycle goes on and on.

So we perpetrated something that kept rolling on intergenerationally, and that has to be addressed. And that's what the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was supposedly to address and did address quite successfully to some degree, but as the member from The Pas so eloquently said, only the beginning of it. It was never finished. We have to continue it. We have to finish it.

As I said before, Aboriginal Healing Foundation was part of a process that helps to break the cycle of that kind of abuse. And there were successes, and I would like to list some of those successes because if the government felt they weren't getting value for their money, that is definitely incorrect.

Let me just list some of them. Participants in the programs expressed impacts such as improved family relationships, increased self-esteem and pride, achievement of higher education and employment and prevention of suicides. Suicide is almost, in some communities, epidemic.

Other important benefits experienced by participants are as follows: learning to take action and responsibility for one's own health and healing; increase in cultural knowledge, pride and celebration of culture and decreased shame in Aboriginal identity; letting go of the silence and shame surrounding residential school abuses; healing of trauma and negative emotions and the ability to engage in self-care; decrease in the feeling of isolation as participants share their experience of the residential schools; reuniting of mothers and children into care after mothers completed healing programs through the Aboriginal Healing Foundation; less tolerance for sexual abuse at the community level attributed to increased disclosures and heightened sense of self-worth and self-esteem; increase in connection between elders and youth, particularly those intergenerationally impacted; and the ability to connect better with other social, health and health agencies.

Those are some of the benefits, Mr. Speaker. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has just begun; it certainly is not finished. As I said before, it takes—well, this is by their own finding: The Aboriginal Health Foundation found that the Aboriginal

communities impacted negatively like this required an average of 10 years of ongoing healing support to address the effects of residential school abuse.

In Manitoba, we had funding for some 20 important AHF projects, and I would like to just mention just a few of them, those that were in my own constituency. In South Indian Lake, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin First Nation, the Mithwayatan Program in South Indian Lake helped survivors acquire the skills necessary to deal with physical and sexual abuse. That's very important programs.

Another program in my constituency was the one at Nelson House, the Pisimweyapiy Counselling Centre in Nelson House, which offered out-patient counselling for individuals and families impacted.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I, too, wanted to put a few words—or speak a few words on this particular resolution. It's a resolution in which we do support.

I want to emphasize the importance that funding should, in fact, be reinstated for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. We have recognized for many, many years—in fact, all members have recognized the negative impacts that the residential school survivors had to endure over the last many years and felt, ultimately, because of the effects of the residential schools in many ways, it did have a very strong negative effect on one's physical, sexual, mentally, spiritually and others—in other ways, so that there is a need for us to acknowledge that and to move forward in terms of doing what it is that we can do to try to remedy some of the mistakes that have been done and so many sad stories.

You know, the—whether it's the member from The Pas, the member from Flin Flon or even the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Hawranik), they've all spoken and shared with this Chamber in many ways very personal stories, in other ways some background knowledge that I think has enlightened me. And I continue to be enlightened on this particular issue and wanting to have a better sense in terms of what is actually—had taken place and the impact.

And it's not to say that I was not aware, Mr. Speaker. I think that it just reaffirms the beliefs that I have and that is that there was a great injustice that was done and we need, as governing—as a government, as a level of government, to do what we

can to try to remedy some of the issues that are still outstanding as a direct result.

And I ultimately believe that if there is things that we can do, that we should. And this is a resolution to that effect that I think does send a strong message. I would like to be able to see in terms of even the possibility—in terms of what the province might be able to do, as the member from Lac du Bonnet has pointed out.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to highlight and use this opportunity to highlight a real serious need that's still there today that is facing in good part our Aboriginal communities. And as much as we need to focus attention on this, I do believe that there is outstanding issues that also need to be addressed.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that there is avenues for government to be involved. We look to within our Aboriginal leadership as to what role that they might be able to play and the individual leadership, whether it's MLAs inside this Chamber, or leaders that are out and amongst our many different communities both in Winnipeg, in rural areas, in higher areas of population in terms of our communities such as Thompson and Portage la Prairie, to those individuals within our reserves.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity now for the last number of months to focus a lot of attention on health care and I see first-hand in terms of some of the needs that are there within the Aboriginal community. And I would suggest to you that a lot of that need can be rooted back into some of the consequences of these residential schools, you know. The idea of families and the important role that they play in developing future generations cannot be, you know, overestimated in terms of its importance.

And, sadly, today there are many individuals that live in dysfunctional—what I would classify as dysfunctional families—and quite often in the name of wanting to be politically correct at times we would appear as if we sacrifice the best interests of children in our province because we have to be ever so careful in terms of what it is that we say—because we do not want to offend.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that there is importance. You know, the Prime Minister made the official apology, put it in that sense, and it was fairly well received. I think that we need to be honest with each other and talk about some of the other issues that are there today, and in some ways they are more

predominant in some communities, and start looking at the roots of those causes.

* (11:40)

If we start dealing with, for example, whether it's the non-profit housing issues or Child and Family Services issues, issues that are facing our health care today, issues within our judicial system, in the way in which we distribute alternative measures, and I think that we could learn a lot if we take into consideration some of the traditions of our Aboriginal people and have many of those leaders be involved in resolving many of those outstanding issues.

Again, you know, I take a look at many of the streets that I'm familiar with, the Selkirk avenues and the Pritchards and the Burrows and some of the downtown streets here in the city of Winnipeg, and we witness first-hand many of the problems that are there and where they may originate from and what it is that we should be doing collectively or as individuals to try to make life better for all. And that is something in which—that I am committed to doing, Mr. Speaker, in the best way that I can, and that means, at times, attempting to talk about those difficult issues.

And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, in reflection on this particular resolution that the member from The Pas has brought forward, I see it as a positive resolution, but equally—and has my support, and my intentions in supporting it should never be misconstrued in any fashion. But I think that there's also a responsibility for all of us to take a look at where it is that we could be going in terms of public policy, in terms of consultation as to how it is that we're going to be able to better the lives of the generations of today, in particular our young people, our children, and what we can do that would, in fact, make a difference.

And, you know, I've made reference to legislation such as the—setting the price of milk, to dealing with fetal alcohol syndrome, to dealing with housing conditions. These are all very important issues that are having impact on our children in the province of Manitoba and, ultimately, I believe, also need to get more in terms of attention and resources in order, so that these children are not going to be our future mistakes because we didn't take the action that was necessary and we didn't do the right thing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): I am very thankful that the member has brought forth this resolution, and, at the same time, I am very saddened by it, because the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and its mandate from the federal government is a very important part of the process of reconciliation.

And, in my previous life, before entering this building, I spent the better part of two decades as a decolonization scholar. So I spent my time in the classroom and researching and lecturing on the subject of the colonization process that happened to First Nations, to Inuit people in this—on this continent and the long-term consequences of that that we all feel.

One of the things about colonization is that too often, as North Americans, we tend to view it as something that happened in the past, and the problem is that it did not just happen in the past. Colonization is something that was instigated by those who sought to find a trade route to China and stumbled across the Caribbean and eventually North America and basically decided that this so-called New World, a world that people had been living on for millennia—and quite happily, I might add—that they thought that they would not only arrive there but seek to take it over and to do so despite the fact, like I said, that people had been living here for millennia and doing quite well, thank you very much.

And, in doing so, the processes that they put the indigenous peoples through were horrific on so many levels, and whether that was—things like the Indian wars that were experienced in the U.S. in the 1890s, whether that was the genocide against the Beothuk, the cousins of the Mi'kmaq on the east coast, that occurred here in what is now Canada, the disruption of so many traditional societies in so many ways.

Again, I taught entire courses on this, so to keep it down to the required number of minutes is going to be a bit of a challenge, but what is the most disturbing part of this is that in the in the past couple of decades, progress, slow progress, has been made in some areas. And that apology that we heard from the federal government was a very significant one.

And so to move forward in healing means that we need to do a number of things, and part of that healing process was the mandate of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. And so with one hand to give an apology to First Nations and say that we need to heal, we need to reconcile our relationship as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, as the

colonized and the colonizers, to have this funding cut with the other hand really, sadly speaks to the continuation of a colonizing legacy by federal governments.

The relationship with First People by federal governments, has sad—has been a very sad one for so long and that every step forward seems to be followed, in so many cases, by steps backwards, and that is what saddens me about this resolution, the fact that there is a need for it. The fact that funding was put in place, that a move towards reconciliation was being made, and then right now, just months before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission gets started, very significant funding is pulled to that, undermining the healing process in a way that, again, for so many of us that have taught this and for those that have lived it, just seems to be one more slap in the face towards First Nations.

The legacy of residential schools is one that is intergenerational. This is not about the experiences of just the individuals but as many others here have said, this is about something that affects people across generations. The idea of the dehumanizing behaviour, think to yourselves of what—how you would feel if you had to hide your children to keep them from basically from being kidnapped, thrown into a school miles away where they were no longer allowed to speak their language, speak to each other and were dehumanized and brutalized on so many levels. How can any one individual go out into the world and function anything even remotely close to normal under those circumstances? That's one thing. Now imagine doing that to entire cultures and entire generations.

The social, economic, health consequences that have been felt by First Nations are overwhelming on so many levels. And it has taken far too long for those of us who come from ancestries that have their origins elsewhere, colonizers. And, yes, that is one thing that all of us who are not of Inuit or First Nations ancestry need to realize, that when our own ancestors came over here or if we immigrated here ourselves, and whether it happened a couple hundred years ago or it happened last week, we are still in the role of the colonizers, and we are also colonized. Colonization does not just occur to those on the receiving end. Those of us that are in the role of colonizers, again, by default and often not of our own volition, it's because we are part of a larger social system that is built on that colonial process that sought to undermine, assimilate and, interestingly enough, obliterate, was the actual goal

of the Indian Act. We were part of a process whether we realized it or not.

And so as a non-Aboriginal Canadian and as someone, again, who has spent a good bulk of my adult life teaching about decolonization, one of the first steps in decolonization is for an individual to realize where they fit in the larger social dynamic and realize that while you may not have had an individual role in the implications of particular colonial processes or in the residential school processes, that as a non-Aboriginal Canadian, you have to take responsibility. Are you going to be part of the solution or you—are you going to maintain the status quo and, therefore, be part of the ongoing problem?

* (11:50)

And what I find sad about the federal government's move is that they went and in words said that they wanted to be part of the solution, that they wanted to see healing and reconciliation but, as I've said many times in this House, I'm a firm believer that actions speak louder than words, and what really saddens me is wondering now, with the actions that have come in pulling the funding to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, how hollow were those words? Did those words really have meaning, because those words were given on behalf of all Canadians, and when those words were given on my behalf as a Canadian citizen, I was thankful but I was also sceptical because I knew that words could be given freely, but I wanted to see what actions would come and back them up.

So to see funding going into that, to see funding going into the Sisters in Spirit gave me hope. But, sadly, that hope has been undermined and, again, it is with sadness that I support this resolution and that I think, as Canadians, we should all be offended by the fact that this funding was pulled because it undermines the apology that was collectively given on all our behalves by the federal government, to be a part of healing and reconciling the relationship between First Peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians that have come to call this country home.

Part of the decolonization process is the incursion and the takeover domination of other cultures. Part of the decolonization process is reconciling that through processes of the return to self-government and self-determination for First Peoples and Indigenous peoples worldwide. But to do that, the colonizing cultures need to take account of what they have done. They need to

apologize but they also need to, in atoning for those things, put processes into place that do what they can to mediate and rectify the damage that's been done. It sadly can never be undone but the idea is just, as with any healing process, if we think of a physical injury, a cut or a wound, we do whatever we can to clean that wound, to heal it but we know there will be a scar. We do what we can to minimize the scar and the implications of that scar.

What has effectively been done here has been something that will undo that healing process. It will slow it down. It will possibly set in, you know—a metaphorical infection, so to speak, is now more likely and, again, the undermining of the apology is something that as a Canadian—

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

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): In regards to the private member's resolution brought forward by the member from The Pas, I do want to put a few things on the record in regards to the resolution.

I'm certainly pleased that the member from Kirkfield, the member from Flin Flon and, of course, I'm assuming the member from Rupertsland would be in support of the funding that's being asked for here in regards to the final resolution that's been brought forward by the member from The Pas, and I know if they approach the ministers and the Cabinet, that they probably would get support, financial support that they're asking for to be shared equally, probably, by the federal government and the provincial government.

So I would encourage the members to do that and I know that not all schools were bad, and I know that, in particular, in the town of Teulon, we had a boys' residence and a girls' residence that was very prosperous and very forward thinking, and it was sponsored back in those days by the United Church. And I can tell you what an asset it was to have those students come into our area. In fact, one in particular, John Thunder, I believe he's down in the southern part of the province now and he's running the recreational programs there and is a director. I believe that's what he's doing—and just a fantastic individual that was a graduate from Teulon Collegiate, and I know the principal, at that time, was a fellow by the name of Ted Revel, and he took that responsibility of educating and looking after the students that came in from various parts of the province, had their education there in the town of Teulon—was quite serious about making sure that

they had the best education, the best thing that was given to them.

And, of course, the residence, itself, was immaculate, and they created a number of jobs, and I know that that's not what this resolution's all about, but I think there's a lot of good things that came about as a result of some of those individuals being taken out of their area, and most of them did have an opportunity to make that decision.

I know, in the earlier years, that they didn't have that opportunity to make those decisions, and that's unfortunate. And I know that a number of the residents—that was throughout the province, and they talk, in particular, about Brandon and Churchill and The Pas, Dauphin, of course Winnipeg. These schools right here in the province of Manitoba certainly had their schools which different residents came from different parts of the province. And I'm sure it was a life-changing event. And, myself, you know, included, I know that I had the opportunity to, through my wife, a number of students, before the residences were actually built, into—a number of those students were housed within the community, and they got to know the culture. They learned from each other.

And I know that a number of those individuals, my wife in particular, still stays in touch with some of those people, and their friendships lasted forever. In fact, just further to that, I know when my wife went off to university, she actually housed with one of the students and they became very good friends. And I know as a result of that, they both learned from each other, and it was an opportunity that they both took advantage of.

But I know that there was a lot of hurt that came a result of some of the schools that wasn't looked after as well as those that was in Teulon, and it was a sad chapter in the history of this great country. And I know it was recognized by the Prime Minister, that permission—or not permission, but the historic apology on behalf of the Government of Canada for their support of the residential program. They stated: This is a sad chapter in our history, and there's no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspire the residential school system to ever again prevail.

And I know that we've seen new schools being built throughout the province on reserve land, and I've been to a number of those reserves, and I know that I've had the experience of seeing some of the technology that's going on in some of those schools,

and it's beyond that. And I can tell you that they should be very proud of the steps that's been taken to keep their youth within their own communities in order to help and encourage them to be better educated, to be educated on their home grounds and learn more about their own culture.

Of course, you know, when you're taken away from that culture that you're brought up with each and every day certainly lends times to change and those changes have come about as a result of these changes, and I know that those are going to be long-lasting, forever. And I know when we look at the BE IT RESOLVED on this, is it—you know, the federal and provincial governments continue to support initiatives to heal not only the wounds of residential schools, that the federal government has launched the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which seeks to examine the truth of our common experiences and pave the way to reconciliation.

And a number of issues that have come about as regards to this, one is the commission that's being held by the honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Manitoba's first Aboriginal judge. For us, in Manitoba, this commission has a special meaning as being led by a Manitoba judge and that the commission is based in Winnipeg. It is our hope that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be an enduring instrument of the healing and reconciliation between Aboriginals people, and Aboriginals people in Manitoba. Ideally, it will serve to facilitate a more hopeful future.

And when we think about these in general, I think that what's going to come out of this is we're going to be a better province and a better community and a better Canada as a result of that. And I know that the Aboriginal people take this quite seriously, as well they should, and every Manitoban should take it very seriously as well.

And I know that the damages that have been done will be down in history forever. We can't erase what has happened, but we do need to make sure that as a result of these changes and what we can learn from these changes that have come about, I know that there's a number of opportunities for us to make sure—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have three minutes remaining.

The hour now being 12 noon, we will recess and reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 25, 2010

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