

First Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 11, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated.

Point of Order

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Allum: Events transpired in this House last Thursday morning, and I wanted to issue an apology for that. When you make a mistake, when you cross the line, you are required to acknowledge it, to address it and to apologize for it. Every member of this House has the right to rise in this House free of intimidation or to—made to feel that they are somehow singled out. For that I have great regret; I want to apologize quite directly to the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard). I apologized to her in the few minutes before the House. She was quite gracious in her reaction.

Also want to apologize to the—you, Madam Speaker, to our table officers, to our staff members and of course to our fantastic pages for any inconvenience our interventions may have made. And then, finally, I want to offer just a brief apology to the women members on our side of the House, especially my friend from St. Johns. She was caught—she was the first, I should say, to apologize on our behalf quite directly to the members across the floor. These were not circumstances of her own making. She is a bright, shining star in this House, and I very much regret my role in tarnishing her great reputation that she's earned over many, many years.

Madam Speaker: It is not a point of order but I thank the member for offering that apology.

Point of Order

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Swan: I also wish to apologize for my comments in this House during a vote on Thursday. Madam Speaker, I apologize certainly to the member for Fort Richmond. I apologize to you, and indeed I apologize to all members of this House, in particular the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for any unhappiness, any concern, that my comments caused.

I also want to apologize to the table officers and also, Madam Speaker, apologize to the pages. I was not thinking of the effort that, especially our new pages, need to do as they're trying to count off all members.

And I also appreciate, in addition to the inappropriateness of my comments, it also created a disruption for pages when they least needed it. So I do truly apologize for Thursday morning.

Madam Speaker: It is not a point of order, but I do thank the member for offering the apology.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, it is with a sad heart that I rise in this House to raise a matter of privilege. I rise to defend not only my own privilege but also the privilege of every other member in this House.

When we wish to examine matters of privilege, we should refer to the most authoritative source, the mother of parliaments itself, on page 190 of *Erskine May, Parliamentary Practice*, we find that, quote: More general reflections on members accusing them of corruption in the discharge of their duties or challenging their motives or veracity have also been found objectionable and proceeded against.

In an interview with the *Canadian Press*, published on Thursday, October 6, the member for St. Johns violated the privilege of every member by implying that the Speaker cannot be impartial. Late

on Thursday, this Canadian Press article was distributed by media outlets throughout Manitoba.

One such article, titled Changes at Manitoba Legislature, could lead to crackdown on protests: Opposition, reports the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) as indicating a, quote, department is non-partisan while the Speaker is an elected Progressive Conservative, end quote.

The rights and privileges of this whole House, of every member of this House, are exercised by us through the Speaker. The Speaker is the embodiment of this place, of the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings. The Speaker is a central and irreplaceable figure in the Westminster tradition. Without the Speaker, this House cannot function, cannot pass laws, cannot debate motions and cannot hold its members to account.

When we rise, we do so through the Speaker. When we speak, we do so through the Speaker rather than directly to one another. As we see on page 307 of O'Brien and Bosc's House of Commons Procedure and Practice, quote: The Speaker is the servant neither of any part of the House nor any majority in the House but of the entire institution and serves the best interests of the House as distilled over many generations in its practices, end quote.

The office of Speaker is not ornamental or symbolic but the embodiment of impartiality and central to our parliamentary process. To imply the Speaker is not impartial, to suggest she is biased in some way is to question not only Madam Speaker but the ability of every member here to perform their parliamentary function and also to question the integrity of this very place, this institution and this process. Such remarks undermine the efficacy of our democracy.

Madam Speaker, matters of privilege on this topic have been raised numerous times throughout parliaments like this one. Again, in O'Brien and Bosc, on page 313, it is written, quote: When in the Chair, the Speaker embodies the power and authority of the office, strengthened by rule and precedent. He or she must at all times show and be seen to show the impartiality required to sustain the trust and good will of the House. The actions of the Speaker may not be criticized in debate or in any means, except by way of substantive motion.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that it is quite clear that the member from St. Johns has at no point sought to bring forward the proper motion.

Furthermore, again on page 313, quote: "Reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker—an allegation of bias, for example—could be taken by the House as breaches of privilege and punished accordingly." End quote.

I think you will therefore find that the actions of the member from St. Johns constitute a prima facie case of privilege.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the member from Southdale, that my privilege as a parliamentarian has been breached and that the member for St. Johns should retract her statement and apologize to this House.

* (10:10)

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that remarks at this time by honourable members are limited to strictly relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): As we all know that the matter of privilege has to be raised at the earliest opportunity, I'm not convinced that this was in fact the case. The member refers to it happening on Thursday. We were sitting on Thursday, so I would suggest that perhaps the Speaker would want to check that, check the time on this to see if it in fact was raised at the earliest opportunity.

In terms of there being a prima facie case for this matter of privilege, I would have to review—we would have to review the press reports and see what was actually said and reprinted.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I'm going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities and will return to the House with a ruling.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I believe you'll find leave in this House to proceed with Bill 206 to second reading.

Madam Speaker: So we are proceeding this morning with bill—oh, is there leave of the House to proceed with Bill 206, The Health Care Accountability Act, health services act and health services insurance amendment act? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 206—The Health Care Accountability Act (Health Services Act and Health Services Insurance Act Amended)

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I move Bill 206, seconded by the member from River Heights, that Bill 206, The Health Care Accountability Act (Health Services Act and Health Services Insurance Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Lamoureux: Health care is something that we are all passionate about, and it is our responsibilities as elected officials at all levels to not only appreciate our health-care system but also protect what we have and to look at it in ways where we can improve it for generations to come.

Today's health-care system continues to excel in providing extensive and broad medical services that Manitobans need. As a result, it endures as one of the key sources of pride for our province. In order to sustain this, the proposed amendments within Bill 206 will further articulate and uphold the fundamental principles of health-care service delivery that Manitobans deserve from their health-care system.

Bill 206 adopts five principles set out in sections 7 to 12 of the Canada Health Act, which are (1) public administration, (2) comprehensiveness, (3) universality, (4) portability and (5) accessibility. These principles represent the underlying values of our national system of public health care. These principles have stood the test of time and continue to reflect the values of Canadians. Further, we within the Liberal Party believe that there should also be an addition of a sixth principle: accountability.

For a quick reminder for those of you who are new to the bill, I would like to briefly touch on each principle of our current Health Care Accountability Act. The principle of public administration leads to the creation of Manitoba's health insurance plan that must be administered and operated in a non-profit basis by a public authority appointed or designated

by the provincial government. This ensures that a single-payer system continues to operate in Manitoba's health-care system.

The principle of comprehensiveness means that health insurance plans include all insurable health services that are medically necessary. I believe that comprehensiveness will continuously change as Manitobans change their definition of comprehensive medical services. There should be periodic and consistent reviews as well as updates.

The principle of universality is the hallmark principle of Manitoba's health-care system. It promotes equality by ensuring that Manitobans and their health needs are serviced equally by all, no matter their social status. There should be zero means of discrimination on the provision of health care.

The principle of portability must be reviewed with respect to the mobility rights that our constitution guarantees. This means we can live anywhere in Canada we want. If Manitobans become ill or injured in another province, these services must be covered by Manitoba's insurance plan. Manitoba's insurance services must cover those who move to another province until they meet the resident requirements for their new home and province, and if Manitobans receive health care services from a different country, in specific situations they must be reimbursed.

Now, let me set the point of Bill 206: The last principle currently in place is accessibility. Accessibility guarantees that there are no barriers such as user fees or extra billing to Manitobans who want to access the system. The principle that needs to be added to The Health Care Accountability Act is accountability. Accountability is an appropriate addition to the aforementioned five as it would not only strengthen the confidence of Manitobans in their health-care system, but it would also guarantee more accountability.

This addition would ensure that people receive timely access to quality health-care services based on rationale including scientific evidence, levels of pain, and factors such as negative impact of denying a more timely access to health-care services.

My colleague from River Heights encouraged me to ask myself where I felt accountability and timely access to quality health care was lacking. Allow me to share a couple of examples that came to mind.

We are far from understanding all of the causes of autism. We do know that it is a complex brain developmental disorder caused by environmental influence and genetics. Autism is very prevalent here in Canada and, according to Autism Speaks, one in 68 children are currently diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

Autism is a lifelong spectrum disorder and is now the fastest growing and most commonly diagnosed neurological disorder in Canada. Unfortunately, autism is challenging to diagnose in babies and toddlers and is often undiagnosed until early childhood. At this point it is critical that children with autism receive immediate attention as their brains, patterns, and life skills are developing so rapidly.

Let me give another example: Someone who is waiting for an MRI scan, believing that they could have some form of cancer. This wait will lead to further stress and anxiety which will cause a person's health to worsen, not to mention the potential problem of having a delayed accurate diagnosis.

We all can admit to this need, yet wait times and accessibility are appalling considering the fact that people are potentially jeopardizing their lives and brain functionality due to ultimate-untimely health-care services.

At this point I believe that I should state that the idea of accountability and timely access to health care does not necessarily mean the fastest care.

What if there was a new approach where health-care contributors could better co-ordinate? Is there a possibility that health care here in Manitoba could run smoother? I believe so. It's about managing these changes. No person is the same, which means no health concern is identical. What we do know is that we are all human.

We know that all professionals in the medical field are aware of their time, their abilities, and their constraints. We know that people have to schedule appointments, surgeries, and recoveries around work schedules, around children, and various responsibilities.

We also know that health-care cases such as addictions, there is a certain urgency for time in our health-care system. If a person is struggling with addiction and they've decided to come forward to

seek help, they should be able to receive that help immediately. Not everyone has a go-to person, and no matter how those around you perceive your life, no one really knows what's going on mentally except for you. There's no shame in talking to a specialist. Whether it's for me, my family, my constituents, this is something we can all identify with.

* (10:20)

If a person seeks out a specialist to talk to, which may be a therapist or a psychologist of any kind, they should have access to meet with that specialist while that desire is still relevant.

The last factor that has affected our Health Care Accountability Act that I would like to discuss a little bit is how money is being spent. We need to focus on what is best for patients and health-care workers. You know, during the election, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) said, and I quote, trust and accountability go hand in hand. We will lead by example, commit to the principles and back it up with the legislative teeth required to show Manitobans that there will be repercussions for elected officials who take their trust for granted.

Now, the onus is not only on the minister, nor is it solely on Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. In order to practise accountability and timely access to quality health care, all health-care professionals need to contribute and collaborate.

I would like to thank the government because I know they recognize the need for accountability and timely access to quality health care. They have demonstrated goodwill in their decision to create a dedicated stroke unit.

I also did some Hansard digging and found that members of this current government have supported the idea of an accountability principle being added to The Health Services Act in the past.

To wrap up, I would like to quote our respected Speaker as well as MLA from Charleswood from May 18th, 2010. Our Speaker, and I quote, said: I think the word accountability is something that is missing from the health-care system in this province. She continued to say that a good government needs to be more accountable to patients.

This is all that I am asking for. I hope that all members of this House will support my first private member's bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party. This is to be followed by a rotation between the parties, the independent member can ask a question and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): We—I'm very fortunate to have, in my prior life, be working in the health industry for 21 years. So I'm very supportive of anything moving forward. I know a bill similar to this came out in 2009; there was a discussion on it and I believe it was a member of your party that brought that forward at the time.

So my question right now is comparing what you're trying to do now to what was trying to be done in 2009. What have you changed and what's different?

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I appreciate the member's question. The main thing is accountability, whether it was being brought in back then or now. It's enforcing that. This new government constantly talks about accountability and transparency, so that's all that we're asking for. What is new is the timely access of it. If a patient's life can be changed in a timely access, let's allow them to have that care.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Just wondering if the member could comment on how exactly accountability is defined within this particular act or, maybe more broadly, how was it defined in the Romanow commission report?

Ms. Lamoureux: I'd like to thank the member from Concordia on his question.

Accountability being defined in this act is holding the government accountable to what they're saying. It's enforcing the promises that are being made, ensuring that Manitobans receive the health-care services that they deserve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Isleifson: Again, I want to carry on that conversation about accountability. And I understand it is—governments are accountable for things that we do. My concern is when we have a governing body such as the health colleges—and I want to know if the

member is saying that the health colleges are not doing their job or they're being inadequate in holding their members to account.

Ms. Lamoureux: No, I am certainly not saying that. I think that all of our front-line workers do a wonderful job. I think the importance here is coming together, bringing everyone to a round table and seeing on ways that we can improve for generations to come. Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, there are only corrective measures outlined with respect to situations where patients do not receive timely access to health care.

I'd like to ask the member: Should there be punitive measures, and should there be redress for patients who have not received timely access to health care?

Ms. Lamoureux: I'd like to thank the member from Concordia for his question; I think it's an excellent question and something that I would love to explore in a committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Isleifson: Throughout—I did some research and I was reading some of the information coming forward in Bill 206. And I'm just wondering, when I look at it, it's a lot of talk about quality health care and how everybody deserves quality health care. I would argue the fact that we wouldn't expect anything less. And I'm wondering what kind of consultations you did to—with any legal groups to determine the outcomes of your legislation that you're putting forward, and, again, if there would be a charter difference—any difficulties, pardon me, with this legislation.

Ms. Lamoureux: I think it's important to reiterate what the member said. We don't expect anything less than quality health care. Unfortunately, it is happening. Our health-care workers are doing the best that they can with the resources that they've been given, but, unfortunately, people are still waiting appalling amounts of time and the care that they are receiving isn't meeting standards.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wiebe: I could appreciate this is the member's first private members' bill before the House, and can appreciate that it's a daunting process to introduce legislation and work through the process here in an open forum such as this. But, you know, to say that

we should just go to committee maybe doesn't actually address the questions that we have and that I'm sure Manitobans have.

I'll ask another question: Will this act alter how critical incident reporting is conducted in RHAs?

Ms. Lamoureux: I would also like to talk about, a little bit how during the election when I was door knocking, a lot of the residents who live in my constituency of Burrows made mention to the Seven Oaks Hospital, and this where I'm referencing the need for quality health care.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I'd like to ask the honourable member from Burrows if she's going to speak with her federal counterparts to ensure Manitoba receives adequate health transfers.

Ms. Lamoureux: I'm sure the member can appreciate that I've spoken quite often with our federal counterparts about this very subject, and will continue to stay in close dialogue to see what we can improve the most here in Manitoba.

Mr. Wiebe: In that same vein, Madam Speaker, I note that Bill 206 has cleared a note that all Manitobans have this right to accountability in health care.

How will this right to accountability help ensure the federal government fulfill its current obligations, as well as these expanded obligations to First Nations health care?

Ms. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that goes hand in hand with working collaboratively with our federal government, with our federal counterparts so to say. We want to ensure that all Manitobans, which include the northern regions, receive quality health care.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I just had a quick question. This legislation looks very similar to the legislation brought forth by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in 2009.

I'm just wondering if any further consultations have been done since then and if any new information has been gleaned.

Ms. Lamoureux: It is very similar to the bill that was brought forward by my colleague in River Heights, and that's because we as Liberals have the same values, the same beliefs. And there has been further consultation done.

Like I said, my main priority is always the residents of the riding which I represent, Burrows, and, at the doors I heard this, I asked about it and I enquired, and these are the thoughts that people want written down; they want the government to held accountable and transparent in what they're doing.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Madam Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux) on bringing forward her first private members' bill to second reading.

My question has to do, Madam Speaker, with how the accountability mechanisms set out in this act defers from the role of the Manitoba Health Appeal Board.

* (10:30)

Ms. Lamoureux: Accountability is a very well-known term. People understand what it means. We're not asking for anything big and grand here. We're asking that the government do what they said they set out to do: be accountable and transparent. It's not here to differentiate between other bills; it's here to set clear lines as to what Manitobans deserve to know.

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Did the member review The Personal Health Information Act, if this information was already contained within?

Ms. Lamoureux: I'd like to thank the member from St. Norbert for his question. I think that no matter the act, the bill, the resolution, it goes back to accountability and transparency. It shouldn't matter where we're reviewing. The main thing is we're being honest with Manitobans; that's all that I'm asking.

Mr. Wiebe: I'd like to ask the member, what does active participation with respect to health-care decision making mean? The term is not defined in the act. Can the member clarify?

Ms. Lamoureux: I believe that active participation can be a variety of events. It can be, in fact, us here in committee, it can be debate here in the House, it can be conversations that happen around the dinner table, but it has to include front-line health-care workers, it has to include our government, it has to include Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. All these members have something to contribute. They all have first-hand experience and knowledge that contribute to how bills should be formed.

Mr. Isleifson: A lot of what we've seen lately are reports coming out through the Ombudsman's

office, talking about different departments within government. So I'm just wondering if you had any consultations with the Ombudsman, and are there any privacy concerns that would actually lead to less access as a result of this legislation?

Ms. Lamoureux: I think it's important that we bring it back to the accountability and transparency that this government promised us in the last election. I think that no matter the case, no matter who you meet with, it's important that we're open and transparent. And that's all Manitobans are asking for.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I am pleased to put a few words on record in regards to Bill 206. And I do want to thank the member from Burrows of bringing first-her first statement.

Again, as I mentioned, health care is very important. I believe that the member mentioned as well, health care is very important to all Manitobans, and all Manitobans do really have the need to have quality access. Health care, as you mentioned, to you, is also very near to my heart. Twenty-one years in the industry, I certainly worked hard to ensure that all people that participated or partaked in any type of health care, you know, was treated with the utmost respect and the utmost care.

We need to remember, when people come in to health care, they don't come in because they want to; they come in because they have to. We want to make sure—and I certainly understand the need to ensure that we have legislation in place, that we can provide top-quality care and that we have the top people in place already.

I go back to June 28th, 1995—which seems like a long time, but that's near and dear in my heart—8 a.m. that morning, I went to work for the first time. And it was all new to me, just like coming into the House here this past May, coming in and finding out what our roles and responsibilities are.

What we did at that time—I was fortunate, I worked in support services, so not in direct health care, not in direct patient services. However, I did have the opportunity to ensure that people that do come in get the help they need at the Brandon

general hospital at the time, because it was either them seeking care or their loved ones seeking care.

We always need to make sure that we have measures in place that we can certainly help folks out so that when they come in their stay is as short as possible, that we are accountable for what goes on in the health-care system and that we have a need there to improve as we go forward.

I can certainly attest to the last decade of debt, decay and decline, as I witnessed this first-hand in the industry, the devastating shape our health care is in the province. We do have some of the longest wait times. There's lots of work that we need to do to move forward onto that.

When we look at accountability, which was mentioned quite often, who is accountable for what? And I think that's some of the challenges that we have, is that we need to figure out who is accountable in what roles. And when we look at that, we can certainly look at what position are people in, what trust do we put people into.

You know, I certainly owe a lot to Mr. Gary McIntosh and Mr. Earl Backman for their trust in me and my supporters and my growth in the health-care industry. They showed that they had faith in me to do what I had set out to do when they hired me. And my commitment to them—and they supported me in my continuing education in the health-care management services sector. So, I spent two years in Ottawa getting my management certificate in health care so that I could help move the system forward.

Getting these two years—it was a full-time course while working full time, so I can certainly appreciate the need of people wanting to do more than, you know, what is directly on their plate to help the system at all. Again, I wanted to ensure myself had a good understanding of the health-care system so that I could move forward and help where need be, and I did. I have witnessed an increase in wait times as I said. We have a shortage of physicians; we have a shortage of nurses. The health-care sector right now needs help. And we need to look at—again, our members from the Liberal Party, they've already said they're going to go forward and speak with their federal counterparts, which helps tremendously, so that we can move this forward, a prime example of how working together can really help us all.

So we need to move that forward, and again, just to see what we can do in this system. To me, the bill that the member from Burrows is presenting just

falls a little bit short on responsibility, accessible health-care standards and to really address the problem that we're facing right now. And again, that is not so much accountability. We already know we have the accountability factor, but we need to look at, how do we reduce those wait times, how do we get more physicians practising in Manitoba, how do we get more physicians practising in rural Manitoba. Prairie Mountain Health is where I spent most of my time, and again, when I look at all the rural health-care facilities, you know, that are closing this week and closing the next week and closing the weekend after just simply because they don't have physicians in place.

So, do we need to look at accountability? Absolutely. Is it a No. 1 priority? It's definitely a priority, but should we be working more on giving them the tools that we need? I mentioned a couple of individuals. Earl Backman was the CEO of the Brandon General Hospital—or, pardon me, the Brandon Regional Health Centre—when I first started, and I had a lot of faith in him to bring us forward. We held him accountable for the actions that were going on. We now have a number of CEOs that I've worked for in the health district, not just in Prairie Mountain Health but in the Norman region as well in the northern health sector, the Winnipeg regional health sector as well.

You know, these are people that we put trust and faith in. These are the ones that we need to provide, as a government, we need to provide them with the tools to ensure they do their jobs. We definitely have the health colleges that we need to support. They have their different organizations. Physicians have their own organizations. And when we talk about accountability, we're all accountable. So, supporting the bill going forward on accountability, I think we need to look at other areas where we can do more work.

Our government is committed to making Canada's most improved province again, and we want to make Manitoba's families feel safer, and of course build a stronger economy. And we do that by working with these sectors.

Again, the new PC government is working hard to bring these professionals together to deliver exceptional care, with everyone having an opportunity to improve the system to reduce wait times. It's no secret out there, the NDP has left us with some of the worst time—wait times in the country,

and simply putting the intent in a bill that identifies the problem but it doesn't fix it.

I still struggle with the inclusiveness of access to quality care. I used an example just two days ago talking to someone. We talk about quality care. What is quality care? If I get a cut on my hand and I have to go in for three stitches, I expect the same care someone would be going in for a heart transplant. Everything needs to be quality. I think we have the people in place that provide quality care. I think we need to support them and what they do in providing quality care and ensure going forward that they have the necessary tools to keep up in their trade, to make sure we have enough nurses, to make sure we have enough physicians.

Again, we really need to look at the accessibility to care, reduce those wait times, lower the ambulance fees, make health care, when you talk accessible, is—take those barriers out of it so that someone doesn't have to go to a hospital in Melita and say, oh, sorry, we don't have a physician here; you now have to go to Brandon. Or someone shows up at another hospital where they have no attending physician, no emergency services so they have to go to another health-care facility in Winnipeg, in Portage, wherever the case might be.

* (10:40)

To me, that's the access to care, and it shouldn't be just access to quality care; it should be access to care. No one—and I mean no one—should have to decide whether or not they should take a cab to the hospital because they're having a heart attack because an ambulance is too much money. And that has happened, and I heard that time and time again, on the doorstep, during the campaign last spring. I actually had a lady say to me that she did take a cab, because she could afford a \$15 cab ride but she could not afford a \$700 ambulance ride.

So it's not so much the quality of care; it's the access to care itself that we need to look at. We need to make sure people are getting into the health-care facilities. We need to make sure people are being seen by the professionals.

So, again, should not all health care be quality health care? Should every Manitoban not have access to care? I think those are the important questions, Madam Speaker, that we need to be talking about, not so much the care itself. Let's give the ability to the physicians, to the nurses, to the administrators, to ensure that the care that they provide is quality care.

They're responsible and they answer to their own institutions. What we need to do as a government is we need to ensure they have access to that care, and we need to remove those barriers, which is unaffordable ambulance rides. Let's ensure people are in place to help them.

Again, accountability is the primary job of a regulator from the colleges and of Manitoba Health, who also regulates its goals and its registrations. They set standards; they investigate complaints; and they look at difference—confidence in them so that they can do it diligently. We need to have confidence in the structures moving forward and, if we don't, maybe that's where we need to look.

Again, 21 years, I had the opportunity to spend six of those years with the Brandon Regional Health Authority at the time, was the name of it, on the Provider Advisory Council. So we brought folks together from all realms of health care, support services, front-line services, administration support services such as equipment fixing and biomedical electronics, and we sat around the table numerous occasions and then reported back directly to the board of directors. We provided accountability to the board of directors so that they could have our ideas of what was going on, Madam Speaker, so that we could ensure that the board was moving forward in their initiatives.

So people working together make things happen. The onus should be on ensuring the professionals and the industry are given the authority that they need to act on what they do, and it's up to 'uf—pardon me, it's up to us as a government to ensure they have access to that care.

I think the bill lacks a little bit in that area. When we look at The Personal Health Information Act, it's already there. And, from there forward, I think we can do much better.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It's certainly my pleasure to rise in the House this morning to debate this bill, and I just would like to say at the outset that I don't intend to speak too long, because I do want to hear from other members of the House. I understand there's a willingness to move this bill forward and, after some robust debate, perhaps to even vote on it. So it's a great day that we can come together in this House and we can talk about a bill to strengthen the Canada Health Act and to discuss health care in Manitoba in general. And I certainly appreciate that

opportunity. I don't think we've had enough of an opportunity, I think, in this House, to discuss and debate this issue and, certainly, I look forward to hearing from the members opposite to hear more of their views, in particular, the Minister of Health and his views with regards to delivery of health care in this province.

So it's also very timely, I believe, Madam Speaker, in the sense that this is a time when the act is under siege in the courts, as many folks know, and has been robustly debated across the country. So it's very timely that we can bring this to this House and we can have this discussion here.

As I said, Madam Speaker, we have yet to hear a clear, definitive defense of the Canada Health Act from the minister and from the members opposite. And so this might be their opportunity to stand up and talk about their commitment to the other five principles of the Canada Health Act, which we have yet to hear their particular views on.

So, No. 1—public administration—keeping the system public and in public hands, a comprehensiveness, universality, portability and, of course, accessibility.

So we have yet to hear a definitive word from the members opposite, and I appreciate that this is an opportunity for them to do that. We have heard various times from the minister and from others with regards to the pressures on the health-care system, and this is certainly something that we can appreciate and we understand. In fact, the member from Burrows herself talked about an expanded responsibility when it comes to autism. This is just one very small piece of an ever-growing understanding of mental health, you know, and expanding that further into addictions and a whole myriad of issues that we now understand to be the responsibility of the health-care system to address and to take on.

Again, the minister has been very clear to say that he understands these pressures. He understands the increased responsibility of the health-care system, but he has not come out to say that he believes in a public delivery of services to address those issues. He certainly in the media not just last week equivocated on this and simply referred to the challenges and not to the solutions. So I can appreciate the member bringing this bill—giving the opportunity to the government to talk about these important issues.

And, if I could, you know, just expand on that and just open up the discussion hopefully a little bit further, whether it be from the members opposite or for the members of the Liberal Party, to talk a little bit more about First Nations health. And, of course, we know this is a challenge of the federal government that we feel hasn't been met, and we feel that there's a—certainly an opportunity here when discussing this particular bill to talk about what accountability looks like for First Nations health when, you know, it's a very clear argument that the federal government has fallen down on the first five principles with regards to the Canada Health Act in their delivery of health care directly to First Nations people.

So I'm hoping that that's part of the conversation, and I'm hoping that this morning we can talk in very clear terms from the opposition on what—where they stand in the delivery of health care, in making sure that we meet these five—first five obligations and then, of course, the accountability as a sixth principle of the Canada Health Act and the impacts that that would have here in Manitoba. And I think that this certainly moves the conversation forward in a positive way, and it's a way that, I think, all Manitobans want to hear some clear, direct commitment from this government on, and I welcome that debate.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I will turn the floor over to someone else that would like to speak.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I'm very pleased today to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 206, The Health Care Accountability Act.

Health care in this province touches every family at some time or another, and we're committed to making Manitoba Canada's most improved province. Our government's begun the hard work required to fix our finances, repair the damage and correct the course after a decade of NDP debt, decay, decline. We have taken steps that reflect the priorities of Manitobans and focusing on real partnerships that will deliver long-term, sustainable benefit to our province. The new PC government is working hard to bring these professionals together and deliver exceptional care, with everyone having an opportunity to improve the system.

After the decade—or after the decade of debt, decay and decline, the NDP left us with some of the worst wait times in the country. For example, in my

home constituency of Swan River, an ambulance has to make a trip at least five times daily in order to have patients in the hospital receive CT scans. It's a tremendous burden on our health-care system.

Winnipeg, for example, is left with the longest ER wait times in the country, the highest ambulance fees in the country and more doctors leaving than anywhere else. Doctor-exiting interviews are really important. Just recently, Madam Speaker, we learned of a doctor who will be leaving in December, and he is carrying thirteen to fifteen hundred patients. These patients are going and consulting, trying to find new doctors. These patients have gone forth, and the shortage of doctors has left them not to be able to receive the care that they need, and they've been informed that they're going to have to be going to the ER to receive the treatment that is necessary.

* (10:50)

We have a very diligent recruiting team, doctor-recruitment team, and is working very, very hard to try to bring community members back into the community where they can call the—their home constituency of Swan River home. And this is a real effort. They meet on a regular basis and, you know, it's the recruitment—or the exiting interviews is something that has never been done, and it's going to be essential for us to receive the health care that we need in this province.

After more than a decade of ignoring front-line services, our new government has made commitments to listen to those doing the job in the front lines—hearing the problem, finding solutions for those who know best, those front-line workers. These are the people that can offer the solutions to so many of the things that we lack.

With over 9 billion in health transfer payments in more than a decade Manitobans have a right to expect results. Instead, we saw a decade of decay and increased spending on administration and bureaucracy with absolutely no results.

I relayed, at this time, Elmer's story. And Elmer requires dialysis. Elmer had to go to Brandon over a long period of time through—and, of course, he's very concerned now that he is reaching these winter months again where travel, like yesterday, Madam Speaker, returning back to the Legislature on the leeward side of the Duck Mountain, was a terrible snow storm, and to think that he has to travel in these conditions. And then he had to travel to Russell for

three weeks and, again, it was a challenge. And then after that, now he's travelling to Dauphin.

And I had the honour of talking to him last night, and he is just waiting for the opportunity to be able to take part in a facility that we have in Swan River that is able to give dialysis; however, our shortage of nurses and front-line staff is inhibiting this opportunity. And here's a man that probably, you know, he's put so much into this province and this is how he is getting rewarded: through that 'decalay'—or decay and decline that we see.

With over 9 billion—or sorry—and then there's the Dayna story where, in obstetrics, we'd have—anybody who was wanting to have a child, bringing our young people in the community has to travel to Yorkton. And, fortunately, you know, there has been no tragedies yet, and—however, Dayna half way to Yorkton, at Kamsack, Saskatchewan, is where her child was delivered.

So, you know, these stories just make us—make—are these things so important to go on and make sure that we have a health-care system that addresses all Manitoban. The former administration did nothing to protect, improve front-line services; they worked hard to create a system of distrust and isolation amongst the professionals. Division, fear, frustration was the so-called improvements.

There's Norm—and I like sharing stories, because it just shows us the need and how the dire circumstances our present health-care system is in and the improvements that have to be made that our government is working so hard to make.

Norm had—whose wife suffered a stroke and a bed was needed at the rehab at the hospital, in Swan River, so she was getting transferred three hours to McCreary, because they had to make room for that bed. And Norm is in his 80s and, when he took his wife to that facility, she was clinging to him, not wanting him to leave. And that's the last time he saw her for a full month before she was able—or before she was able to get returned to Swan River.

And at—it's just sad when we take a look, and we take a look at all these stories. And I'm sure that all our honourable members and—have stories that they tell within their constituency, and this just makes us more determined to want to make the improvements that are necessary. And it's going to take a total team effort of all political parties to make this happen.

So, anyway, finally Stella was able to return, you know, to Swan River. And then Norm's—this—and this

is a recent situation, where a grandson—or to-be-grandson, you know, granddaughter was—he was going to become a great-grandfather. They identified some things on ultrasound, they wanted in Dauphin and Brandon to have this individual be able to—or so she could go there where she would be able to get a second opinion through ultrasound, and in both places there was a three-week waiting period.

So this created the situation where a birth was—where it happened in Yorkton again. They were going to deliver to the Health Sciences Centre, a transfer, got to Moosomin, there was a very, very difficult situation arose in Moosomin, and the—after the neonatal team consulted, they were able to make the transfer to Virden and have air ambulance transfer the great-grandson on to Winnipeg. So we look at these, and it's a very, very scary situation.

In addition to that, I would say that we're listening to Manitobans. Together we'll fix our province's finances, repair the services much needed and Manitoba families rely on, and rebuild our economy. Manitoba's government is committed to making Manitoba the most improved province in Canada, to make Manitoba families safer and stronger.

And I thank you for this opportunity to be able to share this as we move forward in any improvements in our health system.

Thank you.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I am looking forward to sharing some thoughts on record about Bill 206, The Health Care Accountability Act. Health care is a top priority for the majority of Manitobans, whether they have used health services frequently or just for the odd cold or flu. It is a service that we all have benefitted from in our times of need, and it is important that we ensure the support continues and in order to fix the areas needing attention.

The bill before us today, Madam Speaker, seems to read much the same as the bill presented back in 2009. Are there any changes based on new consultation that has been conducted in the last seven years? I would assume there would be more information that would come forth to help enhance the bill that had been presented earlier. Who were the stakeholders if there was some consultations that had been conducted? What was the advice that may have come forward to tweak this bill to maybe address some of the needs that Manitobans are facing?

Changes to any legislation will create ripple effects, so it's important that we do our due diligence in seeking out the trickle-down effects any of our suggested changes may have on the people it will impact. The best people to consult on such changes are the very people who work in the health-care field, as well as those who receive the care from these professionals.

I want to commend the member from Burrows for focusing energy on an area that has been neglected for the last decade under the previous government. Clearly, more could have been done; in fact, it should have been done, in health care, to address concerns, and it truly is a shame that the neglect took place.

It's never too late to be a part of the solution, and that is exactly what our government plans to do. Manitobans deserve better. Health care is such a broad and far-reaching topic, and every Manitoban has a story or two to share about their own experiences.

In some ways, my perspective about the system is both biased and objective. You see, my father is a retired geneticist and continues to be an active consultant within the health-care system. His particular expertise allows him to be involved in a patient's care from conception to end of life. In many ways, my father saw it all through the experiences of his patients.

Having grown up in a home where medical stories are the topic of dinner conversations, I was given a glimpse into some of the frustrations our caregivers face when what they know to be right—the right course for our patients is not the affordable choice for the administrators. There is a fine balance when your duty is to—

* (11:00)

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

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 5—Acknowledging the Benefits of the Provincial Government's Commitment to Adult Literacy

Madam Speaker: The hour's now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Acknowledging the Benefits of the Provincial Government's Commitment to Adult Literacy,

brought forward by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the MLA for Selkirk, that,

WHEREAS the Progressive Conservative Caucus believes that education opens the door to opportunities for newcomers and adult learners in the province; and

WHEREAS inclusion in society means more economic opportunity and social progress for immigrants and adult learners in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS enhanced support for adult learning and literacy creates additional access to education and training opportunities for Manitobans in need and empowers individuals to improve their lives; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has committed to repairing services that were broken under the previous Provincial Government; and

WHEREAS developing and investing in a long term literacy plan will help improve learning outcomes across Manitoba; and

WHEREAS adult learning services provide an important bridge to individuals in the path from education to employment; and

WHEREAS by enabling adult learners and newcomers to earn their high school diplomas, they are able to transition to further job training and post-secondary education.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognize the provincial government's efforts in repairing provincial services by enhancing literacy skills, which are a significant step towards helping newcomers and adult learners improve their futures in Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ewasko: It gives me great pleasure to rise on this resolution this morning and I thank all of those people that are joining us in the House today to see that this resolution, as a very important resolution, be passed this morning and I look to both sides of the House to get behind this resolution and see that it passes before noon today.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to say a happy, you know, past Thanksgiving to everyone and hopefully everybody's weekends were relaxing and they enjoyed that time with families, and those that are

maybe a little less fortunate had the opportunity to get out and make sure that they celebrated the weekend as well.

That being said, I know that a couple of the—my colleagues on both sides of the House are commenting on my Halloween tie this morning but it is, in fact, Madam Speaker, after Thanksgiving, and when I was still teaching in the school system, I found that after Thanksgiving, it was totally fine to start wearing things towards Halloween.

So, that being said, let's get to the matter of hand, which is the private member's resolution brought forward by myself, Acknowledging the Benefits of the Provincial Government's Commitment to Adult Literacy. We know that on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, we are committed to making Manitoba Canada's most improved province, which also, in turn, makes Manitoban families safer and stronger.

I look to my colleagues, as I mentioned earlier, from both sides of the House to back this resolution today and see that it moves forward. Within the resolution itself, a couple lines that I would like to reference, and that's:

WHEREAS the Progressive Conservative caucus believes that education opens the door to opportunities for newcomers and adult learners in the province; and

WHEREAS inclusion in society means more economic opportunity and social progress for immigrants and adult learners in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS enhanced support for adult learning and literacy creates additional access to education and training opportunities for Manitobans in need and empowers individuals to improve their lives.

And, with that, Madam Speaker, what I would like to do is speak for a couple minutes on the fact that when I was still teaching in the K-to-12 system, I spent quite a few years in student services, and with working with student services and working with students that were coming of age, had to have a close and a really good relationship with those people that were part of the adult education system. And so today I'd like to put on the record a few of those agencies or organizations within the Sunrise School Division that I worked closely with, and I'd like to mention a few of their staff as well.

The principal of the Agassiz adult learning centre, which also sees—oversees three other centres

within Sunrise School Division, his name is Glen Brouwer. And I know that over quite a few years, and I'm not going to say that's the exact number of years, but Glen has put in countless hours on making sure that not only himself but his staff are there to provide those services to adults in our communities all across Sunrise School Division so that whether it's adults or, you know, newly graduated students who might need to pick up the odd course for a post-secondary course that they're looking for, that they're there, they have the programs set up so that they can tackle those needs or fill in those gaps, Madam Speaker.

The Springfield Adult Learning Centre, which, again, is a learning centre which is underneath the umbrella overseen by Glen Brouwer, the teacher there is Carolyn Cameron. And then at Agassiz Adult Education Centre, which is located in Beausejour, the secretary is Virginia Szalai, and the teachers is Liz Fritsch, Andy Taylor, and a career counsellor is Brianna Mazur.

The New Directions School, which is located in Lac du Bonnet, Madam Speaker, the teacher there is Fran Vanstone. And we have one more, which is Empower Education Centre, which is located in Powerview-Pine Falls. Corrine Tetrault is the secretary. We have Ken McCorkle as the teacher, Shaney Fontaine, which is a teacher, and Karen Legall who is a career counsellor and literacy upgrading specialist.

The majority of these people who are in those positions I've had the pleasure of working with over the last 22, 23 years, Madam Speaker, and I know that our adults, our new immigrants, our visitors to our communities are being served quite well with these people in those positions.

As we know, learning is a lifelong process and we should encourage people of all skill levels to further their education to achieve their goals. Continued learning allows people to prosper. It allows for growth, open-mindedness and positive interaction in society. Continued learning empowers individuals to improve their lives. By enabling adult learners and newcomers to earn their high school diplomas, they're able to transition to further job opportunities and training and, of course, post-secondary education, Madam Speaker, by enhancing literacy skills which are a significant step towards helping newcomers and adult learners improve their future in Manitoba.

I would like to thank the hard work of the newly elected Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Wishart), the MLA for Portage la Prairie, for earlier in September brought forward a news—an announcement to increase funding for adult learning centres literacy programs on International Literacy Day, which, Madam Speaker, is held each and every year on September 8th, and that's International Literacy Day. And basically it was proclaimed by UNESCO in 1966.

The increase that the minister had brought forward is—total funding is \$20,250,000 for 2016-17. This is the most that these programs would have seen in forever, Madam Speaker. So I would like to acknowledge that the good work of the Minister of Education for seeing the need to increase funding to those very important centres within our province. And so with that I know that over 39 adult learning centres and 33 adult literacy programs will be sharing in some of those additional costs.

As many of the people in this House know, and maybe some of them do not know, that adult learning centres offer tuition, free tuition for credit programming to enable Manitoba adults to complete a high school diploma. High school graduates wishing to upgrade or complete prerequisite courses in preparation for post-secondary programs may earn up to four tuition-free credits.

*(11:10)

Now there are many students that throughout the time that I was still working in the education system that maybe fell a little bit short for their high school graduation diploma, and we had to make sure that they had an easy transition from high school years over to adulthood so that they could fulfill those post-secondary prerequisites and those requirements to carry on into the future for whatever occupation that they were looking forward to.

With that, Madam Speaker, I think what I would do is just say that over the last 10 years of various decline in—with the deficit and declining in our services within this province of Manitoba, I know that our new government elected in April has been charged with the job of making sure that our students, whether they're K to 12 or post-secondary, adults, new immigrants, everybody is starting to move forward with their education. We know that literacy, whether it's at the early years or in adulthood, is very important because they need to be able to move forward in order to excel at whatever program they're looking to do.

And so, with those few words, Madam Speaker, I look forward and I encourage all members opposite, whether it's with the New Democratic Party or the Liberal Party, to support this resolution and see it go forward this morning.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I'd like to ask whether the member from Lac du Bonnet is aware that the amounts of money that his government is dedicating towards adult learning centres and adult literacy programs this year is the same amount of dollars that were contemplated by the previous NDP government for this year.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I thank the member from Fort Rouge for the question.

I know that for many years, Madam Speaker, that we've seen the decline in our literacy accomplishments both at the adult side of it and the K to 12 has definitely declined. And I strongly feel that the announcement put forward by the Education Minister, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), has set a record amount of funding towards the adult learning centres.

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Would the member for Lac du Bonnet please explain the types of supports and—that adult learners and newcomers may need while trying to improve their futures here in Manitoba?

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the member from Thompson for the excellent, excellent question. You know, programming is designed to enable Manitobans to improve their ability to understand and employ printed information in daily living activities at work, at home and in the community and to obtain high school credentials so they can access higher education and-or better employment opportunities. Thank you.

Mr. Kinew: Given the fact that the current government's support for adult learning centres and adult literacy programs is the same as what was

contemplated by the previous government, I'd like to ask the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) why he's taken the unnecessarily partisan tone in some of the whereas clauses of his resolution when there's apparently no difference between the two approaches.

Mr. Ewasko: Again, I'd like to thank the member from Fort Rouge for the question. As far as partisan tones within the resolution, as I've mentioned in my preamble and for my 10-minute speech there, I'm encouraging all members on both sides of the House to support the resolution because I know that the member from Fort Rouge feels strongly that we not only need, you know, our students and our graduates, our adults, our new immigrants to improve in their literacy skills, so with this resolution, I basically—we are happy with what the Education Minister has brought forward—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Bindle: Can the member for Lac du Bonnet please explain the importance of adult literacy?

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like to thank the member from Thompson again for an excellent question. I think the importance of adult literacy is quite evident. We see it each and every day when we are not only in this House but when we leave for constituency work in our own constituents. I know that whatever the reason for any adult returning to—for some education, we can definitely rely on many of the learning centres that are found in Manitoba, and not only does the education provide opportunities, it opens the door for so many individuals in our province by enabling people to participate—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Adult learners and newcomers need a variety of supports in order to be successful students. Does the member of Lac du Bonnet believe that building affordable social housing would help adult learners succeed?

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the member from The Pas for the question. I know that what has happened in the last 10 years, Madam Speaker, under the NDP government. I'm going to try to keep it from being too partisan because I do feel strongly about this resolution and that I think that all members in this great House see the importance of increasing the literacy levels and skills to our—not only our adult learners but our new immigrants, our—and also our other visitors to Manitoba, including our indigenous population as well, of course.

Mr. Bindle: Can the member for Lac du Bonnet outline some of the work being done in Manitoba and explain how that may have an impact on the lives of newcomers?

Mr. Ewasko: Again, once again, to the member from Thompson, thank you for a great question. It gives me an opportunity to put a few words on the record in regards to what is being done here in Manitoba.

Manitoba's new government announced we are boosting funding for adult learning centres and literacy programs by 2 per cent to support learners wanting to improve their futures. We are pleased to announce record support for adult learning and literacy, which creates additional access to education and training opportunities for Manitobans in need and empowers individuals to improve their lives. Our government is committed to developing and investing in a long-term literacy plan to improve learning outcomes across the province.

Ms. Lathlin: Once again, adult learners and newcomers need a variety of supports in order to be successful students. Does the member of Lac du Bonnet believe that access to affordable public child care is important to helping adult learners, especially women, succeed?

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, I'd like to thank the member from The Pas for the great question.

Madam Speaker, we know that on this side of the House, in the April election, that we've inherited a decade of debt, a decade of decay, and we've also received a decade of decline which was passed over to us from the previous NDP government, and we, on this side of the House, are charged with fixing our finances, repairing our services and rebuilding our economy, which will help all Manitobans.

Mr. Bindle: Can the member for Lac du Bonnet talk about the benefits of the Provincial Nominee Program and how the former PC member for River East, Bonnie Mitchelson, was instrumental in welcoming more immigrants to our province?

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like to thank the member from Thompson for a great question. And I don't think I have enough time this morning, Madam Speaker, to speak about all of the good things that the previous member for River East, Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson, had done not only for her constituency for—but for all Manitobans.

* (11:20)

The Provincial Nominee Program is a great program that has been very successful to immigrant entrepreneurs by providing effective social and economic integration services to newcomers.

The former member of River East fought hard for this program, and we are very proud of our former member and we'll all work hard as she did for all Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Kinew: The member from Lac du Bonnet has spoken about the importance of devoting resources to this challenge; however, the amount of dollars that has been committed is the same as was previously contemplated by the last government.

So I would like to know whether the member from Lac du Bonnet will undertake to go to the Treasury Board and caucus table and advocate for more dollars for adult learning programs and adult literacy centres.

Mr. Ewasko: And, again, I'd like to thank the member from Fort Rouge for the question. In fact, the amount of funding increase has increased, Madam Speaker; it has gone up by 2 per cent, which out of a total funding just over \$20 million which was an increase of \$381,000 from last year.

So, as the Minister of Education had reported, on International Literacy Day, this is a very important move—a very important step forward for the commitment that we've made to make sure that Manitoba is Canada's most improved province and making Manitoba families stronger and safer, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): My question is what is the current literacy rate for northern and indigenous communities.

Mr. Ewasko: I thank my neighbouring colleague, the MLA for Kewatinook, for the question.

I know that if I had some more time, Madam Speaker, we could get into the fact that over the decade of decay and debt brought forward over by the previous NDP government, we know that under the NDP in the international assessment of adult competencies, which was reported in 2012, that we scored—Manitoba had scored the second—or scored the lowest in reading, science and math. We also know that we had the second highest percentage of university grads in literacy skills, and under the previous NDP government we had the highest

percentage of university grads with low numeracy skills.

So I look forward to the member from Kewatinook—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The time for questions has expired. The debate is open.

Debate

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I'd just like to begin by correcting my colleague from Lac du Bonnet who made a comment in one of the answers to his questions that he thought that these services should apply to all visitors including indigenous people.

So I would just like—I'm sure that he just misspoke and, you know, in an extemporaneous fashion and probably meant to differentiate between both visitors and indigenous people, because indigenous people by very definition are not visitors but the original inhabitants of Manitoba or Manito Ahbee, as we say in Ojibway.

That brief comment aside, I would again like to offer another subtle correction, one that actually goes to the heart of this resolution here. It was already planned under the previous NDP government for the funding for adult learning centres to be increased by \$382,000 for this year, and for adult literacy programs to increase by \$187,000, Madam Speaker. You will note that this is the same amount of dollar increase year over year as the new Progressive Conservative government has brought forth both for the adult literacy programs and also for the adult learning centres.

And so, while we heard in the member for Lac du Bonnet's (Mr. Ewasko) comments where he attempted to draw a stark demarcation between the approach of the former government and the approach of the current government, we see—the numbers tell us—that it is very much the same approach, it's on the same path.

With that in mind I'd draw your attention, Madam Speaker, to the fourth WHEREAS provision in this private members' resolution where he speaks to, quote, repairing services, unquote, and I'd suggest to you humbly that probably that clause should read the current government—WHEREAS the current government is committed to continuing the same direction undertaken by the previous government.

And so, with that proviso in mind, I question what the goal of this resolution is here—to draw, like, an unnecessarily partisan lens to the very important issue of adult literacy and adult learning in our province, when, in fact, there doesn't appear to be much of a difference between the two approaches. So I simply want to put that on the record.

Of course, adult literacy and adult learning are issues which are very important to the future of our province. We know that in order to have every Manitoban contributing to their full potential and to be able to be mobilized to participate fully in the workforce that we would want everyone to be able to be literate and to be able to exercise their skills in numeracy to the highest level.

In my previous career, prior to entering the Legislative Assembly here, I did have the privilege of working to manage an adult literacy program. It was offered to the community free of charge through a collaboration between the University of Winnipeg and Winnipeg adult ed. And over and above being a job prep and skill development program, the program also was an opportunity to build community in a very real way. And so we had adults from many different walks of life: some of them indigenous, some of them newcomers, others, you know, from other parts of the province and different life experiences; all able to come together and not only learn the skills that they need to be able to succeed, but also to be able to learn a bit about one another and of course to make our social fabric that much richer.

And so I definitely do agree with the member from Lac du Bonnet as to the importance of adult literacy programs and adult learning centres, and I stand with him on that point, though, of course, I do, you know, not agree with respect to certain partisan shots or partisan statements that are made in the House today. And I would actually argue that the, you know, the previous NDP government did have a strong record when it came to adult literacy and adult learning. And, you know, I hope that we can collaborate together to ensure that that program continues.

We've already seen from the Minister of Education who's not—well, we've already—let me walk that back—we've already heard from the Minister of Education that in terms of the dollars being allocated, that he is committed to continuing that same direction of program support and funding support. And so that is certainly a good sign. *[interjection]* And I hear the member from Lac du

Bonnet reiterating his commitment to work together in a bipartisan, above-the-board, above-the-fray fashion to get results for Manitobans. And, certainly, insofar as we can work together on that, I'm happy to indulge him on that front.

I want to also share, you know, just to underline the importance of collaborating with refugee communities here in Manitoba and also with working to—working with newcomers on this important area, that I've seen first-hand the importance of this. It was some perhaps eight or nine years ago, Madam Speaker, where I was volunteering with immigrant and refugee communities of Manitoba—an organization called IRCOM—working in one of their after-school programs with some young people in the inner city, and working in particular with a young man who, prior to coming to Canada, was a child soldier in his country of origin. And we sat together, and the whole idea of the program was to use, you know, music and songwriting to try and build literacy skills.

And so I sat with this young man, and we spoke together about what he wanted to write in the song that he was about to create. And I asked him, Madam Speaker, I said, you know, what do you want to say? And he said, well, I would like to say, you know, every day I'm hustling. So I said, okay, well, go ahead and write that down. And he said, well, I'm not quite sure how to write that.

* (11:30)

And I said, well, just begin with every day; write every day down on the paper. And, he said, I don't know how to write every day. And I said, well, it's e-v-e-r-y-d-a-y. And he said E, he paused, Madam Speaker, and he looked to me and said, what is E? And this was a young adult male who had been, you know, brought to our country and, you know, getting his life started in the inner city of Winnipeg. And then he asked me, you know, in a very kind of deliberate fashion, is this E? And he with three separate strokes of the pen proceeded to draw out a lower-case E on the page.

And so for me that really helped to underline some of the challenges that we must meet when dealing with adult literacy and adult learning here in our province. In—for many people they come from a life experience where they have been afforded every opportunity. We also know that too many First Nations children and other children in our country have not been afforded the same opportunities with respect to education as a result of the different

approaches taken by the various levels of government to providing education to children in our country.

But we also must understand that people from different walks of life, different parts of the world and from different life experiences have not—in some cases have not been given those opportunities and as a result it is incumbent on us to do all that we can as a society broadly but specifically also as members in this House acting towards the good governance of our province, to try and ameliorate that by providing educational opportunities to people once they come here.

It's simply not enough to say that we bring refugees, or newcomers to this country, and that in itself is enough with respect to the creation of opportunity. We also must ensure that there are strong educational supports. We have to ensure that there are strong supports to literacy and numeracy improvement.

So that really speaks to the heart of the matter here. And, as a result, that's why I am inclined to support action in this area, action to improve the literacy of adults in our province, to ensure that there is an opportunity for life-long learning here in the province of Manitoba.

But it's my thought that we can pursue those things best by proceeding in an objective fashion by looking at the evidence both in terms of the outcomes, but also in looking at what the actual track record of previous governments were. And rather than try to draw distinctions or to score points here and there by pointing out imagined inconsistencies, that we should focus really on the needs of young people such as the one I just spoke about and indeed all people in our province.

So, with this in mind, again, adult literacy is important, adult learning is important, and I hope that we can see good outcomes in that area.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): It's a privilege for me to stand here today before my honourable colleagues and speak on the benefits of a provincial government's commitment to adult literacy.

Before I start on that, I'd like to point out a few things that—it's important to note that under the NDP that Manitoba has the second lowest reading scores in Canada. Under the NDP, that Manitoba had the third lowest math scores in Canada. And under the

NDP, Manitoba has the second lowest science scores in Canada. In fact, Madam Speaker, under the NDP, Manitoba scored the lowest in reading, science and math compared to all other provinces in Canada.

Under the NDP, Manitoba had the second highest percentage of university grads with low literacy scores. And under the NDP, Manitoba had the highest percentage of university grads with low numeracy skills.

Because of that, Manitoba's elected a new Progressive Conservative government which was committed to fixing our finances, to repairing our services and rebuilding our economy. Manitobans told us in April that they could not afford another NDP decade of debt, decade of decay, and decade of decline.

Madam Speaker, we are committed to making Manitoba Canada's most improved province, making Manitoban families safer and stronger. Our government's commitment to adult literacy will go a long way to ensuring this will happen.

Learning is a lifelong process and we should encourage people of all skill levels to further their education to achieve their goals. Continued learning allows people to prosper. It allows for growth, open-mindedness and positive interaction in society.

For me, this really hits home because of my background, being from northern Manitoba. My grandfather was a hunter and trapper; he had minimal literacy skills. And moving on to my father—my father, he only attained grade 9 education. I don't even think he was able to finish grade 9 before he dropped out. For me, I still remember I was about seven years old and coming home from school, telling my grandmother how I hated school, and I wanted to drop out. And I was seven. And she sat me down and said, education is one of the most important things you will ever have in your life. So I asked her why, and she said—because I thought I was learning all the skills I needed to be a hunter or trapper, somebody to survive in the North—but she sat me down and she said, if you want an opportunity for a future, if you want an opportunity to be able to get a job and look after your family and succeed, you will need an education.

So I stayed in school, continued on with my studies, finished grade 12, but by the time I finished grade 12, I was of the opinion that education was no longer going to help me, so I actually dropped out of school two weeks before the end of the term so I

could get a job and move on with my life. I thought I would get a job making big money in northern camps. I was lucky enough to get on with Jenpeg then, one of the first big major Hydro projects in the North, and while working there, it soon hit me the importance of the message that my grandmother was telling me. I was not going to move on; I was not going to move up without an education.

So, with that, I came back to university, attended University of Manitoba, obtained a degree in agriculture. I had trouble finding a job here in Manitoba, moved on to Alberta, found a job out there, was able to move up in a major company out in Alberta, becoming a territorial sales manager within a year.

But the desire for education was still strong in me, and I came back to the University of Saskatchewan and pursued a master's degree in business administration. While at the University of Saskatchewan, I realized my interest lied in scientific knowledge, and I applied to the University of Saskatchewan, ended up obtaining a degree in veterinary medicine, and came back to Manitoba to practise.

But, all in all, even with all of that education that I had, everybody says education provided you opportunity. Education opens doors for you, doors to help you move on. Education never opened any doors for me; education gave me the key to open any door that I wanted to move forward, and I'm very proud to say that because of my grandmother's influence—there were six of us in our family: two sisters, one that became a registered nurse, one that became a teacher. I had three brothers, siblings who also decided as I did at a younger age that education wasn't that important. But, after I obtained my degrees and came back and started talking about the importance of education, I'm proud to say that one of them now is a Red Seal electrician; one of them is a gas pipefitter; and one of them is a first class power engineer. And they always sit me down and say, thank you for pushing us to move on to get further education.

And I've continued to do that with other family members—family members who have dropped out of school, didn't think they had the opportunity to move on. I am very proud to say a cousin of mine just finished his grade 12 equivalency and is moving on now, and he's hoping to become a welder.

* (11:40)

So it shows you the importance of the opportunities to provide for learning centres, safe environments for people to learn every—even everyday life skills. Coming from the North down to the city here, life can be so much different than you experience in a northern community. So having the ability to learn life skills, first of all so you can move on to a secondary education, is really important.

Providing training, as we said, allows our immigrants to have opportunity for inclusion, and without an education inclusion in society isn't there. So with inclusion you have more opportunity for economic success and social progress, so that's why it's important for all adult learners.

I am very proud to say that in my community, the Lord Selkirk education—Lord Selkirk School Division, we have an education centre for—adult learning centre, and it is a highly successful program designed to assist adults in upgrading high school courses, help them complete their grade 12. The course, it offers core subjects from grade 9 through to grade 12, and the centre provides an adult learning environment with scheduled classes in math, English, and in some sciences. Now it also offers non-teacher instructed learning for an independent format where there's no regular class attendance required but students can still obtain a grade 12 equivalency by studying and moving on.

So increases in funding will bring the total funding, I'm told, to \$20,250,000 for the 2016-2017 year, an increase of \$381,000 over last year's spending in the area. So grants totalling a total of \$17,550,000 will go to 39 adult learning centres, while 33 adult literacy programs will share \$2,700,000; a significant amount of money put towards increasing adult literacy. It shows our government's commitment to developing and investing in long-term literacy plan to improve learning outcomes across our province.

Adult learning services provide an important bridge for individuals who have experienced a break in the path from education and employment. And visiting these learning centres, I am very proud to say that when I had the opportunity to speak to a lot of the students that were in there, students who dropped out in grade 9 or grade 10 and now were given the opportunity to go back and complete grade 12, a lot of them were looking forward to careers in the future—welding, going on to nursing, whatever they could. So it goes back to the

importance of providing these opportunities. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank the—my colleague from Lac du Bonnet for bringing up this private members' resolution. We on this side of the House fully acknowledge the benefits of adult literacy centres. When we were in government, we made sure that this is a program that is funded and being resourced properly because we believe in the benefits that it gives to people, to Manitobans, especially those who would not have otherwise proceeded to finishing their high school diploma for many, many reasons. Madam Speaker, I've seen first-hand how adult literacy centres and our adult learning programs have transformed lives of many, many people.

In my former responsibility, I was the minister for Multiculturalism and Literacy. When I took on this position, I felt so happy and grateful because this is one aspect of the departments or workings of our government that is very close to my heart. I fully believe that a person who is literate, a person who is educated, is able to overcome whatever challenges he or she has in life.

In my capacity as the minister, I—it was a very delightful experience for me to visit adult learning centres, especially attend high school adult learning high school graduations. In one of the graduations I attended, the speaker at that event was a graduate of that adult literacy centre. She's female, and she said she is a First Nations person. She said she has never been able to get away from the cycle of poverty. However, she decided—and she wasn't able to finish high school before her 18th year. She got married, had five children, and when—her children are in their early teens and some before teen years. She decided she wanted to change her life. She wanted to finish high school and be able to work and get off the welfare. She has never been off welfare. No one in her immediate family is able to work. So she pursued and finished her program with one of our adult learning centres. She graduated with honours, and right after, she was able to work with the provincial government. And, of course, that's a very big change in her life. She was so proud of herself, and her family was very proud of her, and so was—is her community.

And this particular situation has been replicated many times over. I've had the delight and the privilege of visiting each and every adult learning centre outside of Winnipeg and several from

Winnipeg as well. And, in all these visits that I've done, I'm so heartened, so inspired and so thrilled to know of the success stories. Of course, there are many challenges to be overcome, but the success stories of students as well as—I learned first-hand the dedication, the commitment and the love for learning and love for students of our teachers and workers in our adult learning centres.

As I've said, I've visited adult learning centres in the Peguis reserve, Brokenhead, Moose Lake, Waywayseecappo. I've visited adult learning centres then we had in OCN in The Pas, the Kelsey adult learning centres in The Pas, Cranberry Portage learning centres, the one in Flin Flon, Pine Falls, Powerview, Lac du Bonnet, Beausejour, Thompson, Dauphin, Oak Bank, Winkler, Morden, Roblin, Dawson Trail, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk, Virden. I may have missed some.

* (11:50)

I made sure that I could visit as many adult learning centres as I could because literacy is very close to my heart. And I take—I took this job very seriously because I know education is the great leveller and the great equalizer. And I found that out myself when I visited all these learning centres, attended the graduations that I could.

I've heard the challenges faced by many students of adult learning centres. They have to juggle, male or female, between studying and working, if they can find work, and raising their family with very limited resources because of the situation they found themselves in life. Many of them—some of them, rather, quit and many pursued. And the teachers that I've spoken to tried their best to talk to the students. The teachers fully appreciated and understood the challenges. And some of the students came back as a result of the persistence of teachers. So we in Manitoba, we are lucky and we should be grateful that we have staff persons in all our adult learning centres who are fully committed to making sure this adult literacy program will be successful. This program will improve lives of many, many people.

Another interesting discovery is these adult learning programs are not only for people who are in their—past their 18th year. There are also people in their 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. And there was several above 70, above 80, students I spoke to, and they, most of them, told me that they have to work hard. They're new immigrants; they have to work hard when they first came in, they had—they barely

spoke English, and they worked in the farms, and they made—they were successful as farmers.

In fact, one student, when we visited the adult learning centre, brought with him a very big watermelon, the biggest that I've seen in my life, from his farm. He's a very successful farmer. And when I asked him, how come you're—it's only now that you're attending adult learning centres? He said, oh, I had to raise my family. I had to work hard. But now that the kids are gone, even grandchildren are—

Madam Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, I've heard the honourable interim leader mention a lot of adult centres, but I didn't specifically hear any in a remote community.

Adult literacy is a must for northern and especially remote First Nations. They have endured chronic underfunding, fear of leaving communities for school due to the Indian residential school system, fear of leaving home in general. We see an overwhelming number of people who don't have the necessary basic literacy skills. The majority of young adults soon are young parents. This leads to a high dropout rate. We need to ensure these people retain the keys to success.

Every year I see requests on Facebook, social media, for adult education in various communities. The desire for attaining an adult high school diploma or for a certificate in office administration is ever-present. Yet year after year, the chronic underfunding translates into no adult ed programs.

If we are ever to make this province the most improved, we need to ensure that all Manitobans are included. This includes the northern and indigenous people. They need to have the skills necessary for job placement. It has also been well documented that if parents are given these tools their children's lives and personal educational successes increase exponentially.

I appreciate the inclusion for the newcomers as well. I can remember my young son coming home from school one day, he was quite upset because his teacher had broken down into tears in the class. Let me explain, there was a tragic accident in which a young immigrant couple had died. They had left behind 11 children, she was also carrying one at the time.

One of those kids was in my son's class. He was my son's classmate, and yet that child had come to school that day—the very next day despite his parents passing. No one had told the immigrant family that it would be okay to give them time for the kids to mourn for the family, to mourn together and to stay at home. The school quickly gathered all the children and took them back to their parents' home and explain that some absences are okay.

We need to ensure that all adults in Manitoba are equipped to deal with adult responsibilities and their respective challenges. We need to empower everyone when we educate them; that is the way.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Thank you, Madam Speaker for the honour and privilege to stand here to provide a few words on this very important matter throughout our province here.

I just wanted to share with the House that the theme of education has been very prominent throughout my career. For example, I had the honour of being part of the community of Beat the Street adult learning centre. It used to be located on Ellice and Donald, I believe, and I got this job through the Winnipeg Friendship Centre. I started out as the receptionist and quickly worked my way up into the intake worker position as it became aware that I was capable and worked well with our people. We had people from many walks of life, for example, working with people who used to belong to a gang, women and men who used to work on the streets, people with probation officers, people with mental health issues, as well.

So it was an honour to work within the Beat the Street learning centre because every day we had committed, retired school teachers who came in every day to tutor our people who did not learn how to read or to write. And, in fact, when I would tutor some of the students there, as well, it was just beyond to—it was just—I couldn't understand and I—it was just—it was an—what I'm trying to say it was a humbling experience to learn that our many Manitobans went throughout their adulthood without even learning how to read, like something like three-letter words.

I would ask them, how did you get through life like this? How did you survive? And they basically explained to me they just memorized the letters but didn't quite comprehend as to why they came

together, for example, s-t-o-p meant stop. So with that they would share many stories like that with me.

And also, too, with newcomers I had the honour of working with three women from the Philippines who wanted to be tutored to write their GED to enter the Red River College in order to enter the health field, and with that, probably a year after that I resigned from that position, it was an absolute delight to be stopped on the street, informed by one of those students saying, thank you, Amanda, and to the learning centre, I wrote the GED successfully, got into Red River College.

So, with that, adult learning centres are quite significant to improve people's lives such as those

students, our newcomers that came to that centre for that specific reason to be tutored and to get into higher education and improve their quality of life.

Also, too, when I said education has been prominent throughout my career, Kelsey Adult Learning Centre, which is based in The Pas, that is my favourite graduation to attend because when the Opasquia Times, our local newspaper—

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 11, 2016

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