

Third Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 12, 2005

The House met at 10 a.m.

Bill 203—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

PRAYERS

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Morris School, 16 Grade 11 students under the direction of Mrs. Corinna Derewianchuk, Miss Nancy Kendrick and Ms. Donna Martens. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

Mr. Speaker: We will move on to Bill 203, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure this morning on this great day to speak about Bill 203, a bill that has been brought forward by my colleague, the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

I want to just, as I begin my comments, pay tribute to the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) for bringing forward this issue on a number of occasions. She sees that it is an issue of equality, an issue of fairness and one that impacts her constituents directly or a few of them. Also, I think it has some effect for other Manitobans as well today in Manitoba and in the future.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

Bill 201—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We will resume debate on second readings of public bills. The first one we will do is Bill 201, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina? *[Agreed]*

Bill 202—The Health Services Amendment and Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We will go on to Bill 202, The Health Services Amendment and Health Services Insurance Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minto? *[Agreed]*

As the Member for River East often does, she is going forward and working hard on behalf of those who are perhaps disadvantaged in our society. As we talk about Manitoba Day the importance of our province and what we stand for as people within Manitoba, I think that the Member for River East has time and time again shown she is concerned about those who might not have all the advantages we would like for all of our citizens in the province, might not have all the advantages everyone has in Manitoba. That I think is the spirit that she has brought forward this particular private member's bill.

I understand from reading some of the past comments brought forward by the Member for River East and other members of this Legislature that the essence of this bill has to do with a very case-specific situation. In particular, I understand, there were two individuals who were both living off disability income, one from Canada Pension and one from Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation as a result of a settlement from an injury.

As happens in our society, these two married individuals separated and divorced at some point and took leave to have an income-splitting scenario when they went through their divorce. Unfortunately, as part of that settlement, the portion of the money that was going from one former spouse to another was part of the insurance settlement and is now being clawed back by the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

I understand the amount that was going per month was \$160 from one former spouse to another. That is actually now being clawed back by Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. Mr. Speaker, \$160 may not for all Manitobans seem like an awful lot of money, but we do know that for those who are living in disadvantaged circumstances, it is a lot of money. It is a significant amount of money.

I suspect that if the government has done the calculations on what this legislative change to ensure the clawback does not happen—if they would have done the calculation, they would see that from a government point of view, from a budget of some \$7 billion, it would not have a significant effect on the overall budget, but it does have a very strong impact on the individual who is involved here, Mr. Speaker. I suspect there are other individuals within the province of Manitoba and certainly in the future if this situation is not addressed, if there is not a solution to it, it will affect many others in Manitoba in the years ahead.

With those kinds of background comments, I wonder why the government has an opposition to moving forward on this particular amendment the member has brought forward. I think in the days of a Legislature and as we move from one government to another, there are always these hot political topics that are debated and discussed and often have an awful lot of controversy to them, but I do not understand, Mr. Speaker, why this particular piece of legislation would emit that kind of controversy from members of the government. It is not a political issue. I certainly do not think it is one that traditionally would divide us as parties, as Conservatives, as New Democrats or as Liberals. In fact, I would hope all members of this Legislature would be looking to address these situations, these inequalities, these perhaps unintended consequences of laws and legislation that we pass.

It is important that we know there are often unintended consequences of legislation, and it seems

the system MPI works under currently has resulted in that unintended circumstance. I would certainly hope and I would not ascribe to any member of the government a motive that would suggest they would want to see this kind of situation continue. I would want to put forward that all members of this House, including members of the government and of a third party, would want to see that there would be equality for Manitobans and that where there is a way to address a situation that would not have a significant economic impact for the province, but that would help those who are disadvantaged within our society that the government would want to address it.

* (10:10)

I know the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), as she often does, has reached out in a very non-political way, in a bipartisanship way, to members of the government to try to ensure that her private member's bill is brought forward. I understand, I think it might have even been today or maybe perhaps yesterday, a letter was circulated to all members of this Legislature asking that they review this particular piece of legislation, and if there are ways in fact that it could be brought forward in a co-operative way, if there are ways that it could be changed, if there are ways the issue could be addressed simply so it went through and simply so that change was enacted, that the Member for River East would be willing to see that happen. I think that is the kind of bipartisan spirit that Manitobans expect us to operate in.

I know we are all watching the goings-on in Ottawa these days and the difficult times that Parliament is having operating. I think many Canadians are disappointed to see that kind of fracas and disappointed to see the kind of back and forth that is happening in Ottawa. It is not just one party or the other. I think there is a general disappointment that there is not a sense of co-operation within there. We of course think—*[interjection]* well, I hear the Member for Brandon West speak up. We do not hear him speak very often in this House anymore. Oh, I am sorry, Brandon East. We do not really hear the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) speak very much or Brandon West, so it seems to be on both sides. I am glad he is speaking up today and that he is trying to get involved in this debate. I would challenge the Member for Brandon East to stand up and to speak to this bill and put his comments on the record as well.

Point of Order

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is sincere in his offer, I will, indeed, let him conclude his remarks right now and stand up to speak to this.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Brandon East does not have a point of order. Points of order are to be used to draw to the attention of the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure of Manitoba practice, not to be used for debate. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Steinbach has the floor.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member for Brandon East that I am very sincere in that offer and that I look forward to hearing his comments on this particular issue. But I do feel it is incumbent upon me to give him some advice before he speaks and to put some words on the record so that he might shape his own debate and shape his own mind around this particular issue. So we all look forward, maybe not with bated breath, maybe not with a huge degree of anticipation, but we do look forward with some anticipation to hearing the member from Brandon East speak on this issue and actually, probably, on any issue, we look forward to hearing him speak, but we will certainly hear what happens in the next few moments.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) has certainly gone out of her way to work in a bipartisan way on this particular issue. I certainly do not see how this could divide us as legislators on this particular issue when it talks about trying to help somebody who is in a disadvantaged situation, how it could separate us, how we could not find a way to bridge this gap and to come together as New Democrats, Conservatives and maybe even the Liberals. We will hear from the Liberals yet. I know we have got to do that quickly because they want to have their day end at noon today. If we do not move quickly, the Liberals will be leaving at noon because they want this to be a half workday, the part-time Liberals, but in fact, I suspect that we could all find a way to sit down together,

whether it was in the Legislature or whether it was in our individual caucuses, to make this situation work.

Really it is about making the situation work for Manitobans who are affected. I would hope that the government does not see this issue as too small for them to deal with, that this is not a broad issue, that it is not something maybe that will get them a front page headline, that it is not something that will get them into the newspaper on a day-after-day basis, but it is something that is just simply right to do, Mr. Speaker. I do think that we, as legislators have to focus on that, that there are times when there is just something that is proper to do, and it is not necessarily about getting the headlines, and it is not necessarily about getting one's name in the paper. But it is about doing what is right for Manitobans. It is about doing what is right. In particular on Manitoba Day, on this particular day we would hope that we would work together to do the right thing and do something that is going to benefit Manitobans well into the future.

I wonder why it is that members opposite would try to stall this particular piece of legislation. But I have been left to wonder on a number of issues that there are people who are disadvantaged. I refer to petitions that have come to this Legislature regarding insulin pumps and the ability to fund insulin pumps for those people living with type 1 diabetes. The members opposite have been silent about that particular issue even though it would not have a huge economic impact on the province of Manitoba but would, in fact, have a great impact on those people who are living with that particular disease.

Constituents within my area have raised this issue. They have raised it with the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale). Yet they have had no response. They have asked for meetings, and they have had no response. They have sent letters, and they have had very terse or kind of cursory responses. That, I do not think, is what people expect.

I know the New Democrats like to hold themselves up sometimes as the party for the people. Yet, when we find out that these kinds of issues are before us, we see that it is not true, Mr. Speaker, as the member for the Liberals says, the member from Inkster. It is not true.

I think that more and more Manitobans are coming to understand that, when there are issues of

compassion and issues of disadvantage, it is not the NDP who will stand up for them. It is not the NDP that will come to their defence. One has to look to the Liberals and the Conservatives to come to their defence.

Well, I am glad now that the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) has entered this debate as well. We all remember clearly the comments the Member for Burrows said about VLTs and lotteries and those sorts of things. Yet now we see that he and his party, the Member for Burrows and his party, are going after the poorest in our society when it comes to lotteries. We learned last week that there are now penny slots in the casinos, Mr. Speaker. Who could have believed, you know, if there was any denomination lower than a penny, I am sure they would find a way to put a slot machine into the casinos so they could take whatever that might be.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When speaking to a bill, we need to have a little bit of relevance to the—*[interjection]* Order. We are debating The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act. I ask all honourable members to be somewhat relevant to the bill that they are speaking on.

Mr. Goertzen: Let me tie this together, if I might, Mr. Speaker, because the bill that the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) has brought forward clearly has to do with helping somebody who is disadvantaged, and we wonder what the motive for the government is not to help people who are disadvantaged. We see now that there is a connection between trying to exploit people in casinos who are disadvantaged and not wanting to help other people who are disadvantaged in reference to Bill 203.

So there, Mr. Speaker, is the clear relevance of that particular issue. Sometimes, when you are dealing with this government, it is like putting together pieces of a puzzle. You spread those pieces out on a table, and you do not really see the whole picture. Then you start to put them together, and it becomes clearer over time.

As we look, Mr. Speaker, at one piece of the puzzle being the disadvantage in the casinos and the continued disadvantage there or the disadvantage of not trying to help out those individuals with insulin pumps or those people who are living in settings where their children might be living with disabilities,

we start to see that larger picture develop. So I know now that, with those comments, you, too, and all members of this Legislature see that particular relevance.

So, in conclusion, I know that my time is running short, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) speak on this particular issue. I know that if he has the compassion that I truly believe the Member for Brandon East has in his heart, because I do think he is a man of compassion, that he will support this particular legislation, that he will support this private member's bill, that he will not be blinded by ideology or the fact that it was not his particular bill.

* (10:20)

So I look forward to the Member for Brandon East supporting it. I would be shocked and saddened if he did anything less. But knowing that he is a man of integrity, I expect that he will stand up and support this bill.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your intervention in keeping the Member for Steinbach on track when he drifted from the relevance of the bill he was speaking to. I appreciate the Member for Steinbach in his remarks, his rambles if you will, offering me the opportunity to speak. I was disappointed that he did not sit in his place after making that offer, but we understand on this side that he had much, much more to talk about with a much, much louder voice, as is the member's indomitable way of speaking in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the bill brought forth by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). It does speak to a situation in her constituency that she feels very concerned about. I note that the focus of it is a little bit narrower than most bills that are brought before the Chamber, but I also note she is in dialogue with government to resolve the issue at hand. I hope she has success in achieving a resolution for her constituent.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we are here to represent all the people in the province of Manitoba. Our government is working with the member, and barring a larger focus for such legislation, I must not support the bill.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Steinbach, on a point of order.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that we are disappointed. I know *Beauchesne* would say that all members have to bring factual information. We waited with great anticipation to hear the member from Brandon East, and then we got 30 seconds of not supporting this bill. We are disappointed after all of that anticipation that the least he could not do was support the bill.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Brandon East, on the same point of order.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, it is not a point of order. I appreciate the bill brought forward, and in all good conscience, on behalf of all Manitobans, this is a bill, in its specifics, it is too narrow for me to support.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on the same point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I suspect it is a dispute over the facts. It is disappointing to hear that the member does not support individual Manitobans. It is very shameful, but I suspect it is a dispute over the facts.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Steinbach, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers? Okay, when this matter is again before the House, it will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg).

Bill 207—The Medical Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We will now move on to Public Bill 207, The Medical Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. James? *[Agreed]*

It is also standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lakeside, who has three minutes remaining.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, indeed it is an honour to stand today and put in a few final comments regarding Bill 207 that has been brought forward by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

Before I start, I want to wish Manitoba a happy 135th birthday today. What a day to be proud of as a Manitoban. Congratulations to all of us in the Chamber and make the laws of the land just that much better and a better place to live.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about one of our pride companies out of Portage la Prairie, Parrheim Foods, which takes beans and peas and processes them into an alternative food process not only for protein but also alternative medicines. This is another prime example of how Manitoba can take the leadership role in food development with that centre that is in Portage and the upgrades it just recently went through with their recent expansion. Being next door to such a facility gives the manager, Ferdi van Dongen the capacity to try and move more of their products into the world market. I know that a company such as this is taking the leadership role, and we are very proud of that fact.

I talked last week briefly about a product that is called Ambertose. That product is a phenomenal product that has been doing drastic changes in the health field. I know the members opposite will talk about some of their ideas as far as alternative medicines, and I know that physical exercise is something that is very important. I look forward to the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Oswald) to put some of her comments on record regarding this bill. Physical exercise is one portion of the important part of where we want to go with this particular bill.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we will let the others talk on it. We look forward to moving the bill forward through committee and passing it within the next few days.

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers? Okay, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) when the matter returns.

**Bill 212—The Pension Freedom Act
(Pension Benefits Act Amended)**

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move on to Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act (Pension Benefits Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain?
[Agreed]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 205—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Set Date Elections)

Mr. Speaker: We will now move on to second readings of public bills. We will first deal with Bill 205, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Set Date Elections).

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Portage la Prairie, that Bill 205, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Ste. Rose, seconded by the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurouchou), that Bill 205, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Set Date Elections), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to present this concept to the Legislature and to members of all political stripes. I understand the Premier (Mr. Doer) has somewhat out of hand rejected much debate on this principle. Nevertheless, I think there are a number of members in this House, I believe, including one other political party, that being the Liberal Party, that would see this as an appropriate approach to managing election dates in this province.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, it is a very simple bill. It is a very simple amendment, as you can see by the bill. The principle is very simple, that the people of this province would know on a regular basis when they could expect an election. Under current practice, which has served us well over decades and is steeped

in British parliamentary tradition, as Meir Serfaty from Brandon University was quick to point out in support of the Premier's comments, that the government of the day must call an election anytime before the end of what is known to be their mandate. That call is strictly in the hands of the Premier, or the truth to be told, while it talks about the governing party, it is very often one leader component of our system has the final call and makes that long walk over to the Lieutenant-Governor's house. Meanwhile, those of us and the unwashed public can be waiting any time between three years or two and a half years, up to almost five years by the time we reach the end of the fourth year for an election to be called.

On a very simple concept, it is important to feel that the public can and will want to be engaged in the political process. I think it is much easier for those who are considering seeking elected office, and I will be magnanimous about this, Mr. Speaker, elected office in any level of government. An elected office in this Chamber is, indeed, an important calling, much as we, from time to time as members, perhaps do not do justice to the responsibility we have. The public, sometimes rightly so, will attempt to deride what we do, and maybe have reason to be derisive, if you will, about what we do in this Chamber from time to time. We are lawmakers for the province. It is a calling of significant importance.

One of the things that happens, Mr. Speaker, is there are a lot of good people out there. I know I do not need to tell you this, but it needs to be put on the record. There are a lot of good people out there who would put their names forward to run for this Chamber, but it is very difficult, first of all, to take the risk to put your name on a ballot. Those who are in the prime of their lives, prime of their careers, have to put their career on hold and go to the electorate, and sometimes, unless you are independently wealthy or independently poor, you do not have that flexibility that is sometimes needed.

* (10:30)

I would appeal to the wisdom of this Chamber and the members of all parties to think about the fact that, well, British parliamentary tradition is an excellent tradition upon which our democracy is based. When you think about it, if you want to commit your name to run on a ballot at any level, but particularly at the provincial and federal level, you are making a huge commitment, and there are a lot

people out there who have to balance their willingness to make that commitment against their responsibilities to their family, responsibilities to their own career and whoever their associates are in that career.

There was always a running joke out there 30 years ago, 25 years ago, that Parliament was made up of rich people and lawyers. When I look around this room I do not see a lot of rich people and I do not see a lot of lawyers. I am getting a signal that there are three. I am not sure if that is three rich people or three lawyers. Three lawyers, I am being corrected by my colleague from Burrows, but the fact is that it is a reflection on how the makeup of this Chamber has changed.

I would like to use the simple example of a school teacher who would want to run for elected office in this Chamber. There are a number of school teachers in here, and good on them for putting their names forward and seeking elected office. To prepare for that, and indeed if it is going to be a competitive riding where you are not sure whether or not you will succeed, first of all, you are going to have to get a leave from your employer in order to seek that elected office. Then the school division is going to have to find someone to replace you in the classroom. So there is a disservice being done to those students in that classroom. If there is an unknown date, that school teacher cannot easily plan when they are going to be taking that leave of absence. Therefore, that school teacher has to make a decision about the loyalty and the responsibility they have to their students and to their profession in the classroom as to whether or not they are going to down tools and go off to an election on very short notice or whether they are going to plan far enough ahead so the administrators of their facility can plan properly for a replacement, that there will be some continuity in the classroom.

That is a very simple example, Mr. Speaker, but I can give you ones that extend further. It was a big debate at one time in this Chamber about whether or not those who were employed as civil servants in the government should be participating in the electoral process because historically they were deemed to have a conflict. There was some question about whether or not they might be ostracized as a result of getting involved in political activity. That has changed, and it was changed by the force of this Legislature saying that they had the same rights that

everyone else did and it should not be detrimental to their career, and that I think was a good and logical change. There were those who feared it would politicize the civil service. Well, my experience with civil service is, yes, there are people of all party affiliations and/or loyalties in the civil service, but the vast majority of the civil service operates in a non-political and very straightforward fashion to serve the people of this province no matter which political stripe is at that particular time in government.

I think that is probably too diverse an argument for what we are trying to discuss here today, Mr. Speaker. I really want to emphasize the fact that predictability is not Americanization of our system. That is the only complaint I have received directly from constituents and from others about whether or not this would be the Americanization of Canadian politics. I for one do not see Americanization as a swear word, but I know what they mean. They mean this would change the political system such that there would be something happening here, a very small part of what we do here happening the same way that it happens south of the border. I would argue that our system is still steeped in British parliamentary tradition, but this change would make it so that there was predictability. I would look even to the pages in this Chamber, not just the ones here today but ones who preceded them, ones who have followed, who may actually get a taste and a flavour for the idea of politics and might choose to become involved at some point down the road.

Let us say they were going to be involved in a significant business enterprise or in a legal forum or a profession. At the very time in life when they have gained some stature in the community and have got their political thinking under their hats, if you will, and are ready to make a commitment, that would probably be at their peak earning years. That would probably be when they are at the time when they are establishing relationships in the business world that will be very important into the future.

I know of young people right now who are thinking about the possibility of becoming involved in the electoral process, but they cannot tell their partners whether or not they will be available next July, let us say, because that might be an election. Their partners would be willing, and I am referring to their business partners, let alone their life partners, but their business partners would be willing to say,

"Okay, if I know in May of 2007 that you are going to be unavailable to this company because you are going to participate in the electoral process and run as a candidate, then good on you. I would expect you will manage your responsibilities within this company so that you will be prepared to turn it over so it would be in a good position and managed in your absence in a way that will not be detrimental to the company, while you go off and do what would be a very valuable service to the public." Whether you become elected or not, the participation is very important, and I would suggest something that we overlook far too often, though those who theorize about political process perhaps do not see the second phase of that.

I want to put a second aspect on the record, Mr. Speaker. I have figures here from the 2003 Annual Report for election in this province. The field costs for the electoral officer were \$4,474,000. The central costs were \$1.677 million, and reimbursements to candidates, and remember when the electoral system was changed here in this province so that candidates can receive from the taxpayer a fair bit of their expenses back. The cost to the taxpayer for that election was \$2,000,040, for a total direct cost to the taxpayer of this province of \$8,192,000. That is a lot of cash.

Mr. Speaker, that does not reflect the cost of the tax credits that those who donate to political parties and to political candidates would receive on top of that. That is an additional loss to the Treasury of this province, or additional cost, not a loss. I would argue that, in fact, the contribution to the political process is a legitimate cost. I still have some misgivings about the taxpayers sending me a cheque to reimburse me for part of my campaign costs.

An Honourable Member: Would you feel better if it came from corporations?

Mr. Cummings: Well, the member across said, "Would I feel better if it came from corporations?" I would argue that I would feel just about as good as he does if it comes from one of his larger unions here in the province. We better not go down that path because I think I have the list here from the union contributions that used to be made. I would not mind reading that into the record at some point, but I want to focus on the fact that we are talking here about a known date, and there are a number of reasons why that would make good sense.

I also look, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that there were 190 candidates that ran in the last election for 57 seats. Out of that, only 140 actually got enough votes to be reimbursed for the expenditures. That brings me to my plea to the members of this Legislature to get up and honestly debate whether or not we would like to have a known date for an election and whether or not that would be good for the public to participate, whether it would be good for candidates to participate. Let us not out of hand, for political reasons, dispense with this bill.

* (10:40)

Mr. Speaker, there is one very important aspect to this, and that is that every time we have unnecessary and early election calls, as we saw federally, as we have seen provincially, the government is spending, in advance, money for that election that I just outlined. Truth to tell, the public always says, "Once you go to almost the end of your mandate, the government of the day is afraid to go to the people." So why not make it a known date so that we can all participate, so the candidates will get ready and so the people of Manitoba can participate in the democratic process to the utmost.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate in regard to the bill posed by an honourable colleague from Ste. Rose. I support wholeheartedly the intent of the bill. I believe that all members should take a good, close look at this legislation and to evaluate its merit. I believe that, in the changing field of politics, we should look very strongly at the proposal, the established polling day, and provide for certainty, not only to the electorate, but also to those that participate in the election process.

Mr. Speaker, unless those have participated in the election process, one cannot truly appreciate the undertaking of seeking elected office. It involves a very intensive campaign, not only to secure the elected office, but first off, to secure the standing within the party through a nomination process which usually starts a year to two years in advance of the expected election date. Having the election day known, one can very much put into the planning stages the process of nomination and then the process of campaign and ultimately focus on a known date.

There is a lot of animosity, if I shall say, in the general public towards those of us that have chosen to seek elected office, and I believe it comes from activities as fundamental as selecting a polling day. Persons that are in the public watching the activities of the Legislative Assembly or Parliament wonder who truly are the elected officials there to represent. Are they representing the best interests of the public, or are they there trying to represent their own personal best interests?

I believe, when we look at the history of politics in both the provincial and federal levels, it is without question that, for the most part, polling days have been selected by the premiers, first ministers in the provinces, or the prime ministers at the federal level based upon an advantage that is perceived by the first ministers or the prime ministers so that they can be successful in re-election. That in itself brings forward a tainting, if you will, of those in public office as to really, truly who are they serving.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is really important that we, as elected individuals, recognize that even though we personally have no input into the selected days as it currently stands, we are, though, tainted by the perception by the public that election days are selected in order to favour re-election, rather than to truly ask the people for a mandate at the best date which serves the public. We have seen early spring, late spring, early fall, late fall. We have had summer elections and we have had winter elections, all for varied reasons. I believe those reasons have been to favour those in government.

This legislation takes a bold step towards addressing and taking the politics, if you will, out of the selection of the polling date and is just a first step, I believe, that has been not yet taken in Manitoba, but has been taken in British Columbia and is now being studied through legislation in Ontario. I believe there will be other provinces that will follow suit at a time not so distant in the future.

I know persons look to the American system that has established dates. I suggest that only because it is most familiar to Canadians, but there are many, many jurisdictions throughout the world that have established polling days and it works very, very well. It allows for persons to plan and to be able to make the polling day within their schedule, and so it does not conflict with holiday plans or business plans or whatever plans that may take persons away from the

province and make the particular date of voting unavailable to them. I know that there has been a lot of effort made on behalf of Elections Manitoba to address the issue in advance polling to try and make certain that all persons have that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, truly the statistics are borne out that more and more Manitobans are tuning out and not taking on their responsibility as they have in a democracy, to cast their ballot. We can see that now less than two-thirds of Manitobans in the prior elections had cast their ballot, but in 2003 we saw a dramatic, dramatic reduction in the number of Manitobans casting ballots in the province of Manitoba, 54.17 percent. Just a little more than one in every two Manitobans went out and voted.

Mr. Speaker, we have to seriously look at why almost half of Manitobans are not casting their ballots. They are tuning out and, I believe, it is because they recognize that the governing party is playing politics, calling the election on a date which favours themselves, and this past election by this New Democratic Party in 2003 was just that. Manitobans showed their distrust and their disdain for this type of activity, calling an early election, by not going out and voting. How can we establish the legitimacy of our democracy unless there is a participation in that democracy through casting of ballots?

If only half of Manitobans are doing so, Mr. Speaker, I think we are in jeopardy of that validity that is so necessary if a democracy is to be viewed, not only in our province but across our land and around the globe, as a legitimate governing party. I look to the members on the governing side of the House. How can they truly say that they have a mandate, the support of Manitobans, when just a little more than half of Manitobans cast a ballot, and then far less than half of those actually supported the government in their mandate that they are carrying out at present?

*(10:50)

So, Mr. Speaker, I think truly this move, very bold move, of providing for the legislation to establish a polling day that is known four years in advance and will re-occur on a four-year basis is a very bold but very necessary step that we must take. So I do truly support this legislation.

I personally believe that this is only one step towards remaking our democracy, if you will. That word "democracy" is so vital to the way of life here in Canada. We really, truly have spoken a lot of it lately on the basis of it being the 60th anniversary of the victory in Europe and the end of the Second World War because the veterans fought and many gave their lives towards preserving the democracy we have here in Canada.

Now, for those of us engaged actively in that democracy through elected office, to see that just a little more than half of the population eligible to vote in Manitoba are actually voting, I think that is a disgrace, something that we all must take the opportunity to look in the mirror and to do whatever we need to do to encourage persons to feel that they are part of the democracy, and it is their responsibility to cast a ballot when the election is called.

I think establishing an election date, which is known, more persons will engage themselves, and it does take the politics, if you can, out of the establishing of the election.

If I want, I could go a little further, Mr. Speaker. I tread a little lightly on wanting to dance even further down this road of taking the politics out of the process, if you will, and encouraging more people to participate in the election process even by limiting just to that of casting one's ballot but encouraging more persons to compete for elected office.

I believe that we all first must recognize the cost. We have to look at the cost of elections. Currently, a provincial election costs directly about \$8 million. When all is said and done, it is, in fact, greater than \$12 million that is directed towards a provincial election, \$12 million.

Think of what \$12 million could accomplish if that was to be placed into the various areas of government and the enhancement of services to Manitobans that could be garnered by the \$12 million. In fact, even if the \$12 million were not spent, it then could be left in the pockets of Manitobans for them to decide because they earned the money. They should have the opportunity to decide on how to spend it.

But election of individuals is something that I truly support. I think that it is a responsibility of

all of us to take our democracy and to support it. Even within our own Chamber here, we have taken a bold step in the election of you, Sir, to the office of Speaker. I believe that was long overdue. I do believe we should also, too, modify our own electoral process to recognize that you have stood before your peers and occupy the highest elected office within our province. That should be recognized somewhere and somehow within our electoral process, to recognize that you have stood before your peers and occupy the highest elected office within our province. That should be recognized somewhere and somehow within our electoral process that you have stood for even further office and have been successful as such.

I compliment you, Sir, for standing for office, to look at one's peers and have successfully garnered the necessary support to sit before and to make certain that the House operates in the fashion that we can all be proud. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to stand and speak in support of this very important legislation which is indeed a bold step forward to revitalizing and reintroducing our democracy to Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It is a pleasure to rise today and speak on the bill put forward by the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings). I want to compliment him on thinking outside the box in considering electoral reform. It is something that is raised in numerous forums and nice to see that our members opposite have an interest in this.

I think it is somewhat ironic, mind you, the fact that it is raised at this point when they are on the opposition benches. It always seems that these things come to light when you are actually not in government. When you are in government and you have the power to determine when the election is going to be held, quite often you think otherwise.

I imagine it must be just a little bit embarrassing for members opposite to be speaking on this today, given the machinations and the antics that are taking place at this very moment in Ottawa, as their federal counterparts are doing everything in their power to disrupt the electoral process. They are showing no respect whatsoever for the parliamentary system and the concept that a government is elected to serve for five years actually, not four years. That is a point I think should be raised as well.

They seem to have their hearts set on May 2007 where technically, as I understand it, governments are elected to serve five years. Perhaps they should consider making an amendment to their bill, and we would be going to the polls May 8, 2008, instead, which is technically the expiry on our five-year, not our four-year term in office. If members opposite are going to rise on this, I would hope they would address this point and possibly explain to us the logic of why suddenly they are leaning toward four-year terms as opposed to the five-year terms that are the law of the land, quite frankly.

I think some of them should stand up today and explain to us the actions of their national leader, Mr. Harper and company, who are showing no respect whatsoever and are doing everything in their power to bring the Canadian people back to the polls once again, less than a year since the last election.

We all know the cost. There is a cost to democracy. Elections come with a price tag, and there is a lot of fuss being made about the cost of the Gomery inquiry right now, which is considerable, but is not what an election would cost us. If the Tories in Ottawa are intent on pushing us to an election, it is going to cost the Canadian people probably a couple hundred million dollars, based on their raw ambition alone to seize power, they hope, in this country.

* (11:00)

I do not have much time. I want to caution members opposite. When they refer to set election dates, what is in the mindset of the public is they are thinking fixed election dates. They have to be aware that this is where the public is going to go, and myself, being a member of a constituency who has experienced first-hand how the Tories approach fixed elections, I was not involved in 1995 when they attempted to fix that election, Mr. Speaker, by abusing the Aboriginal peoples in our province. It was a classic example of blatant opportunism when they just assumed that First Nations people were not capable of independent thought and that they would naturally succumb to the shallow, facile plot that the Filmon team of days past orchestrated upon our people here. We all remember the independent native voice fiasco where they found three misguided people to attempt to subvert the elections—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 11 a.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) will have 10 minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS—COMMITTEE SELECTION

Res. 5—Government and Community Newspaper Partnership

Mr. Speaker We will now move on to resolutions.

We will move on to the Resolution 5, brought forward by the honourable Member for Morris, Government and Community Newspaper Partnership.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Pembina,

WHEREAS local communities across Manitoba play a vital role in the economic development of our province; and

WHEREAS community newspapers are able to bring local residents together and build strong businesses and community partnerships; and

WHEREAS in its 85th year the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association (MCNA) represents 45 community newspapers with a combined weekly circulation of over 360 000 households and over 550 000 readers over the age of 18; and

WHEREAS over the past decade community newspapers have existed thanks to the support of local and provincial advertisers; and

WHEREAS the MCNA is making great strides in adapting to new technologies and changing times to make community newspapers more competitive and accessible; and

WHEREAS the provincial government represents a substantial revenue source for community newspapers who in return provide a valuable service by informing Manitobans of important government messages.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider recognizing April

17 as Community Newspaper Day in Manitoba to acknowledge the important role community newspapers play in our province.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Morris to change your seconder?

Mrs. Taillieu: I move, seconded by the member from Kirkfield Park. [*interjection*]

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), seconded by the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck),

WHEREAS local communities across—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure and pride today to speak to this resolution because I am a former member of the Manitoba Newspaper Association and former owner and publisher of a rural community newspaper which was called the *Headingley Headliner*.

I would like to start with a quote. "It is a simple axiom of journalism that the most effective way to connect with your audience is to make your reporting relevant to an individual's daily life." That was said by Peter Jennings. Community newspapers play a real significant part or role in what matters to its readers. It is relevant to our daily lives.

Community newspapers are the talk of the town. They are often the lifelines within the community. If you want to know what is happening anywhere in your community or your surrounding communities, all you need to do is look into your community newspaper. You will see your friends there. You will see your children there. You will see your neighbours and all of the daily and unsung heroes that reside in your community.

Community newspapers provide a great vehicle for advertising for the small local businesses who may not have another way to advertise, other than circulating flyers, because daily newspapers are fairly expensive in terms of advertising, much more expensive than the local community newspaper. Advertising helps promote the businesses in the community, and we must recognize that those people

that are advertising in the community newspaper are the readers of that community newspaper. What they want to see is they want to see things that are relevant to their community and their daily lives because that is how they know people will be reading that newspaper and actually reading their advertising.

Community newspapers enjoy a very strong readership base. In fact, in a study that was done, 77 percent of adults in Manitoba have read a community newspaper in the last week, as compared to 59 percent that read the daily newspaper. Who reads the community newspapers? Well, in a survey done, 77 percent are men, 75 percent are women; 74 percent are working adults, both with full or part-time jobs.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Even in a survey I did with my own local newspaper, we found that children under the age of 14 were reading their community newspaper because they recognized things about their school, about their sports teams. They saw themselves and their friends and their teachers and their parents and their neighbours in the community newspaper.

Community newspapers enjoy a strong loyalty to that paper. Virtually every community in Manitoba has a community newspaper or receives one from a neighbouring community, and some get more than one. I can recall in my early days of starting up my newspaper what we were looking for is recognition, gathering recognition not only in our home town but the neighbouring communities.

One day I was in a restaurant and I overheard someone at the next table say, "Well, where did you hear that?" and the other person said, "Well, I read that in the *Headliner*" was the reply given. To me, that was acceptance of this local newspaper, acceptance that because you read it in the local newspaper that it was true and, in short, it was credible. Community newspapers do have that credibility within the community as to what is written in that paper. It is not political. It is not slanted in one way or the other. It is a true statement of what is going on in your town and your neighbouring towns.

I also want to say that community newspapers also form the historical record within the community. Feature stories that are done actually get saved just like an archive, so when people refer back to

when something happened, community newspapers are often the place that they look. Community newspapers are saved. People save them. They do not throw them out, especially if there is something significant for them.

Community newspapers give you a sense of belonging. People become involved. They are very receptive to the news and the columns and the editorials that they have in the newspaper. People take ownership of a community newspaper. It becomes their newspaper. People have said to me, "That is a great paper, we love that paper," and the reason people would love a newspaper is because they become part of it.

I want to actually mention today, as well, that the *Scratching River Post* and *Crow Wing Warrior* from Morris have initiated a photo contest, and they have just presented the winner with an award downstairs at the base of the Legislature. Larry Manson from Domain in my constituency has taken a photograph of the Ste. Agathe elevator and captured it very nicely. He has been honoured as the first recipient of an initiative undertaken by Doug Penner and the *Scratching River Post* to celebrate Manitoba Day with a photo contest which they hope will become province-wide and all the rest of the community newspapers will begin to do this.

* (11:10)

I would just like to say a little bit about my experiences as a newspaper publisher. I would like to tell you a story. I can remember the long nights of putting together that newspaper, making sure the articles were done, making sure the advertisements were laid out. In those days, we had to actually lay them out on boards because it was just a little bit premature to having it all done on a computer. It was very time-consuming and was very deadline oriented because every day was a deadline. The newspaper came out on time every week, and there was never a time we missed that. The community newspapers not only provide you with news, but they are entertainment as well.

We had a number of columnists that would write for us. One was an older fellow within our community who wrote about days gone by. They were kind of historical stories of things that he remembered. We had a person who used to do household tips. Her name was Dolly Dennis so she

has a column called, "Hello Dolly." I myself was a humour columnist. I would write humour columns, and I called it "Mave's Raves." I have to say that I am honoured and pleased to have received a community newspaper award for that column. Some of you might recall Red Alix, who was a CJOB commentator years ago.

An Honourable Member: Red Alix.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, Red Alix. He lived in my constituency. We had a column called "Beefs and Bouquets" in our newspaper because that was what he used to run on the radio, was "Beefs and Bouquets." We got ourselves in a little bit of hot water over this because people would write in with beefs, and, of course, they were not signed. You know how things can get out of control sometimes. It became the real talk of the town what was going to be in that little column, in the "Beefs and Bouquets."

We also did something unique called "The Street Beat" where we would actually go and talk to people on the street, ask them a question, take their photo, put their photo and their response into the newspaper. That was one of the most well-recognized things we had in our paper. We did innovative things, like "Place the Face" contests where we would match up business people to their place of business, trying to get people circulating around through the businesses in the town to support the local businesses as well as recognize the people that worked there.

I have to say that on our second edition of the *Headingley Headliner* was "Headingley Jail Riot." We were right down the street from the Headingley jail, and we saw all these cruisers just screaming by. We thought, what better way to initiate a community newspaper, with a story like this.

Shortly after that, we had the flood of the century. We were the ones that posed the question to Manitoba Conservation: "What is happening at Brunkild?" That was before there was any flooding coming up in the Portage Diversion and the Morris River. We also covered the Morris McDonald School Division fiasco where the government ended up firing the local school board.

I would also like to mention a few people who worked with me, Tom Ayers, who was an editor extraordinaire, Bonnie Leullier, who was the happy

voice on the telephone and the one that was the accounts receivable person and Jean Roy, who joined us and was extremely good at advertising and advertising sales. All local people, all locally employed, all well-connected within the communities, all bringing together this community newspaper. I also want to mention Doug Penner from the Morris *Scratching River Post*, and *Crow Wing Warrior*. He was a mentor to me, teaching me about advertising rates. I actually, many years ago, did some reporting for him on a casual basis.

During my involvement in Manitoba Community Newspapers there are a number of people I associated with and people that have been in the newspaper business a very long time. I would like to mention, of course, Rick Major, who is the executive director of the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association. I want to recognize people like Rick Derksen from *The Steinbach Carillon*, Bill Hamilton from the *Portage Herald Leader Press*, Bill Potter from the *Morden Times* and *Winkler Times* and Carman *Valley Leader*, and I would also like to say just in passing that the Winkler paper enjoys 87% readership within the community, more than any other daily newspaper in the area.

I would also like to mention Lana Meyer, *Stonewall Argus* and *Teulon Times* and her father, Merv Farmer before her, Bob Mummery from *Minnedosa Tribune*, and the *Minnedosa Tribune* is the oldest newspaper in the province of Manitoba and in Western Canada. Also, the Waddells from *The Neepawa Banner*. Gerry Dorge who was the publisher of Transcontinental Publishers who actually purchased my newspaper, Garry Struth, Struth Publishing, and Doug Penner, of course, from the *Crow Wing Warrior* and *Scratching River Post*. Manitoba Community Newspapers Association is celebrating 85 years this weekend, May 13 and 14, 2005, so the timing could not be better to announce Manitoba Community Newspapers Day to be celebrated every year on April 17. April was the first month that we printed the *Headingley Headliner*. April was the first month the *Headingley Headliner* received an award from the MCNA and April 17 has a personal significance to me, which is why I have chosen to suggest April 17 as the day on which we will celebrate community newspapers in Manitoba.

I want to recognize all the hardworking men and women who have committed to the Manitoba newspaper industry and the communities they serve, and I hope that we will always be celebrating

Manitoba Community Newspapers Day with pride. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to put a few words on the record regarding the resolution put forward by the member from Morris. I think there is a lot of merit in some of the information she put on the record. When she talks about the value of community newspapers and strengthening the community, I would have to say that seems to be a very accurate argument she puts forward.

I remember my time working in community services in the marketing division, and one of the articles we used to write was for the Transcontinental media, and they were the media that published *The Lance*, the *Metro One*, and *The Herald*. The articles that we used to put forward were dealing with the great events the community services department did and the great programs they did in community development and recreation services.

The newspaper we most wanted to have publish our information was *The Lance* or the *Metro One* or *The Herald*. That is because, as the member from Morris states, many members in the community actually read that newspaper and keep that newspaper. As an MLA I find, as I visit seniors in my constituency, it is often *The Lance* articles they discuss with me because, to them, that represents the community activities that take place.

Mr. Speaker, this last Sunday, May 8, I hosted an event in my constituency, an international Mothers' Day celebration. It is with pleasure that I had an opportunity to speak to Allan Fotheringham from *The Lance* and have an opportunity to explain the value of this program. I think community newspapers are valued very much by the community and I want to say that I think this is a resolution that has some merit.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I certainly would like to congratulate the honourable member from Morris for bringing forward this resolution on government and community newspaper partnership. I want to, off the top, acknowledge the fact that the member from Morris is the former owner of the newspaper, the *Headingley Headliner*. I know she also was a strong supporter and believer in the community newspaper association. If I understand correctly, she received an award for her column "Mave's Raves," a humorous column she wrote. I think it speaks to the fact

that she believes so strongly in the value of the Community Newspaper Association that she took the approach of trying to bring what I think Manitoba community newspapers do so well, and that is to really bring a sense of information, humour, issues of the day, right onto the kitchen table of so many Manitobans throughout the province of Manitoba. I want to congratulate her on that award that she received and certainly congratulate her as a former, previous owner of the *Headingley Headliner*.

* (11:20)

The beauty of the Manitoba community newspapers, I think, is that they are very focussed on local issues. From time to time, we see the major newspapers, television, radio perhaps, talking about some of the global issues, which are very important. It is not a matter of what is more important. It is a matter of ensuring that people at a local level are exposed and get a chance to read about some of the local goings-on in the community that are very, very important to everybody's days and everybody's lives on a daily basis.

I know that the statistics that we see from the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association, whether they publish weekly or daily, they clearly always have something to offer the readership. They are very strongly connected to the community. They have a long history in our province, and I thought it was interesting in the research that showed that *The Minnedosa Tribune* was established in 1883. It is the oldest newspaper in western Canada, the province, and it is one of the first to be on-line in Manitoba. What a great tribute to *The Minnedosa Tribune*. I know that Bob Mummery is out in Minnedosa, does a tremendous job for that newspaper, and certainly he should be saluted.

When you start looking at some of the things that the Manitoba community newspapers do, they have a tremendous readership, a tremendous loyalty in their readership. They have a tremendous opportunity for advertisers on a local level to advertise their local wares and to let the people in communities and surrounding areas know of some of the commerce that might take place in terms of the goods that they are able to sell.

There is a tremendous reach that the Manitoba community newspapers do throughout the province of Manitoba, and by "reach" I mean that they

take their message directly into the homes of so many people. I believe, when you talk to some of the writers, some of the editors of the community newspapers, they acknowledge that those newspapers stay around the kitchen table, the living room, for a long period of time. They are not thrown out on a daily basis. In fact, they are usually there because there are calendars of references of events coming. It could be a 4-H event. It could be a cattle auction. Some event that is going to be happening down the road, the community newspapers are sort of the lifeline that allows the communities to stay in touch with some of the events that go on, on an ongoing basis.

I know this Saturday there is going to be the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association awards banquet, and I certainly will be attending that, as I always do. I think it is a great opportunity for that association to acknowledge and celebrate some of the great writers, some of the great photographers, some of the great pictures that get taken over incidents that get reported through the newspaper association. I do not know who the winners are. As I say, I will be there on Saturday to celebrate with them, but I want to in advance congratulate them for the awards and to congratulate all who participate in the process, because there are numerous great participators that take places.

I want to acknowledge some of the people that I have had a tremendous chance to get to know and speak to about a lot of issues on the local level. Greg Nesbitt, I think, is one of the people involved with the Community Newspapers Association, a strong advocate, a strong Manitoban. In Gimli, Jim Mosher, the *Gimli Spectator*. At the *Dauphin Herald*, Shawn Bailey. The *Swan Valley Star and Times*, Derek Holtom. Rick Derksen of *The Steinbach Carillon*. Bill Potter, who has numerous newspapers: *Morden Times*, *Winkler Times*, the *Carman Valley Leader*. I have mentioned Bob Mummery from *The Minnedosa Tribune*. Of course, Ken and Chris Waddell out of *The Neepawa Banner* do a wonderful job. Certainly Chris and Jack Gibson of the *Neepawa Press* are two people as well that do a wonderful job in that area. Of course, Doug Penner from the *Morris Crow Wing Warrior* in the *Scratching River Post*.

The member from Morris was acknowledging that it was the *Scratching River Post* that took the initiative on Manitoba Day to celebrate Manitoba Day through a single photograph, that Larry Manson

was the eventual winner. They unveiled it just earlier at the stairs of the Legislature here inside, a tremendous photograph of the Ste. Agathe elevator with some grain cars sitting in front of it. It is a tremendous, tremendous, I think, image of why Manitoba is such a great province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very much supportive of this resolution brought forward by the member from Morris. The Manitoba community newspapers are a vital part of how we can communicate in the province of Manitoba. They are, indeed, to be recognized and celebrated for the hard work and excellent work that each and every one of them in their communities do and, as I say, I look forward to celebrating the award winners and all the people nominated on Saturday at the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to rise today and speak on the resolution put forward by the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu). I want to compliment her on her good works, and I know that members on all sides of the House here have a contribution to make, and certainly this is a classic example.

I have had the pleasure of working with the Member for Morris on the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force, and we have got to know each other throughout that process. I think it is a healthy process when we can do things on a bipartisan basis and get to know each other a little more as people, as opposed to always looking across the way at members of the opposition as our enemies. I was soundly chastised for that at one point in time when I had referred to members opposite as my enemies. It was a principal from one of my schools who brought that to my attention, and I certainly do not want to leave that impression. We all come to this Chamber with good intentions, I am sure, and some of us are more fortunate than others in being on the Government side of the House, although I, personally, am not quite on the government side of the House. I am still across the way here, but in spirit I am with you, although I may have to speak a little louder just to be heard across the way there.

The Member for Morris and I, just to belabour the point a little bit, we even had the opportunity to pray together at one point in time. There was a function, I think it was the Aboriginal Achievement

Awards—was it?—where we were all in attendance. The honourable Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) assembled us all in a circle at the end of the event, and we all held hands and he said a prayer for us. So how could I consider the Member for Morris an enemy after having held hands and praying with her? I compliment her on her resolution that she has brought forward today.

I would like to speak a little bit about the community newspaper that services my area, the Interlake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is *The Interlake Spectator*. It has been a very useful tool for myself over the years in that they are very responsive to any concerns or issues that I want to raise. It is nice to have a local entity where you can establish a personal relationship with the reporter of the day or with the editor, for that matter, and have your issues brought to the forefront in a very timely manner. I have always felt that I have had that close bond with the editorial staff and the reporters for *The Spectator*, and I really compliment them on that front.

* (11:30)

The current editor is Mr. Jim Mosher. He has been very good and very proactive in maintaining contact with myself. On that basis, quite often I am given the opportunity to express my views through that tool to the membership of the constituency.

We in the Legislature only have so many opportunities. We have, I think it is three franks a year to mass-mail our entire constituencies. So having a local newspaper, such as *The Interlake Spectator*, adds to our ability to communicate with the electorate, not only through interviews with reporters, them coming out to cover events that we might be attending but also the mechanism of letters to the editor. Over the years, I have written a few, some might think more than a few, but I get that more from my political opponents across the way, not necessarily from my constituents. They always appreciate when I take the time to write a letter to the editor, and I do so upon occasion.

I might add that in the five years that I have been a member of the Legislature, the letters that I have written to the editor, every one of them, Mr. Speaker, have been published. So *The Interlake Spectator* has been very good in acknowledging my role and allowing me to put my thoughts on the record through their mechanism.

A very nice thing about *The Interlake Spectator*, I might add, is that it is offered free to the people of the Interlake. You can buy it in some outlets. You can go to gas stations, for example, that might carry it, but it is offered free. I think that is a pretty good gesture on their part, non-capitalist let us say. Although they do garner most of their revenues through their advertising section, and I contribute to that as well, I might add, in running my monthly ads and bulletins and so forth.

The local newspapers are very valuable, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of addressing some of the local issues of the day. I could mention a few. I am thinking in particular of the efforts that we have undertaken to get a conservation district formed in the Interlake region. It has been a real uphill struggle from the very beginning. Typically, municipal governments like to maintain control over things like water management within their zones. We have endeavoured to get them to think outside the box and to think in a broader perspective, think in terms of strategizing on a regional basis, on a watershed basis.

Watersheds do not necessarily respect municipal boundaries. So it has been somewhat of a challenge to get this message across. I compliment the municipal leaders in the area because, for the most part, they have come around to this concept. I know they clung to the watershed management associations that were, in their minds, de facto conservation districts.

But we wanted to work with a mechanism that was recognized in law, which is the Conservation Districts program and have been largely successful through the good advertising and coverage that we got in the *Interlake Spectator* to move this issue forward, to keep the pressure on all fronts, and we have managed to largely push this over the top. It is not a fait accompli at this point in time, but we are very near to reality in achieving a conservation district, at least on the eastern half of the Interlake. I think our work is still ahead of us, both as politicians and as journalists and editors in keeping this issue on the forefront, and hopefully the entire region, before too long, will come onside and we will have conservation districts which will cover the entire region.

Something else that comes to mind in terms of coverage at the local level, I have to go back to 1999 and something that I was just beginning to touch on

earlier this morning which was some of the skullduggery that was attempted against me personally when I was a candidate for the first time, and a very rude awakening, to say the least, to the political system, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I realized very quickly that at times politics can be a cutthroat business. Sometimes, people can be tempted to cross the line and to in short subvert the system, which is certainly what I experienced in my first election.

The Interlake Spectator was very good at covering this issue. They did careful analysis of it and showed true professionalism in bringing the issues to light. Thankfully, those persons who were perpetrating this skullduggery were exposed, and we did have justice and honour at the end of the day.

These local entities, community newspapers, certainly serve their purpose. They give voice to locals that you might not necessarily achieve in dealing with some of the larger newspapers, *The Free Press*, for instance. I am sure they must get literally dozens of letters to the editor every day from citizens. They obviously cannot print all of them so they have to be more selective. I find with the smaller newspapers, they do have that flexibility, and pretty much every citizen of the region, if they choose to do so, can make a statement and go public with it.

I have read these letters to the editor religiously over the last five or ten years, and some names come to mind. I am sure the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) are familiar with the name Maggie Stefanson [*phonetic*], who has written many letters to the editor over the years. A very colourful individual, and I always make sure that when I see her name at the bottom, I read her comments because she does put a different perspective on things, and with a very droll sense of humour, I might add, brings to light maybe some of the deficiencies in the leadership, whether it is ourselves at the provincial level or down to the municipal level.

Say, for the sake of argument, an individual such as herself is given this forum and takes those of us in public office to task, which is a good thing, which is really the essence of the democracy, the ability of individuals to speak freely, to speak their mind, to point out flaws in the system or flaws in individuals for that matter. Certainly, it is the local entities, local papers, that give people this opportunity.

* (11:40)

We do have to fear, Mr. Speaker, that as newspapers are consolidated into larger and larger entities, the local voice is lost. This is the greatest threat to democracy, I think, that the voice of the people is not heard and you will find that as you go higher and higher up.

Some of the national newspapers, for instance, tend to try and control the agenda a little bit more, try to put their political spin on things through the editorial boards. That is the greatest threat, I think, to our system, that free speech should be subverted at that level. So I am all for the community newspapers, and I compliment the member from Morris for bringing this motion forward. Thank you for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to just put a few words on this resolution which is in support of a day, April 17, for community newspapers. Community newspapers make a tremendous contribution to life in Manitoba and, whether that be community newspapers within Winnipeg or community newspapers all over rural Manitoba, there is a big impact and a big effect, and they do a good job of making sure that people are aware of what is going on in their area. So I think it would be admirable and timely to have a day in the honour of community newspapers in Manitoba. My colleague Kevin Lamoureux and I certainly support this resolution and would like to—the Member for Inkster and I would like to support this resolution and ensure that we have April 17 as an annual community newspaper day in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this morning to put a few words on the record in terms of this fine resolution brought forward by the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu). I was interested in her speech and her comments about her life when she was a publisher of a small newspaper. She pointed out that she had a humour column called Mavis Raves, Mave's Raves. Maybe she could bring us some old past copies of that and we can be entertained here in the Chamber.

I think all of us have reflected upon the importance of community newspapers, Mr. Speaker. I know in my own community we have had various newspapers over the years. It used to be called the *Selkirk Enterprise* for years and now it

is called the *Selkirk Journal*, part of the Interlake Publishing group the Member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) has referenced. I believe it is also part of *The Winnipeg Sun* chain because often you will see articles from *The Winnipeg Sun* that are published in the Selkirk paper and articles in *The Winnipeg Sun* that were published originally from Selkirk. We talk about how important this is. It reflects a lot of what happens in communities and gives the members a sense of belonging in a community such as ours.

This past Saturday night in Selkirk, as I raised earlier in a private member's statement, there was a dinner in support of palliative care, a service offered at the Selkirk General Hospital. There were over a thousand individuals from the community attended the event. The *Interlake Publishing* and the Selkirk paper were a partner to that event. They allowed us to run an ad in their paper at a discounted rate. They attended a press conference which we held and publicized the event. In that way, Mr. Speaker, as well they have contacted some of the organizers of the event and they are doing a follow-up story. The hope is to bring further awareness to the importance of the palliative care service that is offered throughout this province, as we tried to do on Saturday night in Selkirk.

I followed the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), and it is interesting, Mr. Speaker, that I am reminded of a kind of an exposé that was done by the Selkirk paper in terms of the member's comments as it relates to the operation for the support of the floodway, where the member came to Selkirk and he held a meeting with his local Selkirk Liberal Party supporters. He told them that he was going to single-handedly stop an all-party resolution in support of the floodway, and that was published in the Selkirk paper.

A few weeks later, he was in this House rising from his seat and calling upon the government to move quicker on the expansion of the floodway. What they were able to do was to point out how the Member for River Heights is on two sides of the same issue, and fortunately we were able to obtain that article from the Selkirk paper.

Of course, his comments that he puts on Hansard are recorded, and we are able to prove that during the last provincial election. Surprise, surprise. There was a nice article in the *Selkirk Journal* during the

election, pointing out the two-sided nature of the Liberal Leader.

As someone has mentioned, the Liberals have had, on occasion, three sides. When it comes to the sale of MTS, for example, where one voted in favour, one voted against and a third abstained. Fortunately, they only have two members in the House, so they are having a hard time coming up with a decision when it comes to some of the more important public issues confronting Manitobans.

We are speaking today about the value of community newspapers. In my community, as the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) has mentioned, the paper is provided free. In my own area now, what they have done is they used to have home delivery and, regrettably, they now have a mailbox we go to. You pick the paper up, and you will notice that there are more and more papers that are unclaimed and left behind, so hopefully people will continue to read them.

People use them as a source of local news. I myself advertise in the paper. Of course, we use them as all political parties do. We use them during the election campaigns to get our message out to publicize our candidates, and it appears we may be heading down that road soon again, at least at the federal level.

I want to once again just thank the member for bringing forward this resolution, and we anticipate the passage this morning. Thank you.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I know there are a number of people who are anxious to put a couple of words on the record regarding this resolution. I want to take the opportunity to commend the Community Newspapers Association and to offer support to this resolution.

I have a very close personal reason for wanting to see recognition of community newspapers. The community I come from, the town of Neepawa, is fortunate enough to have two community newspapers. One is the long-time and long-standing historic publication in our community, that of the *Neepawa Press*, owned currently by Jack Gibson and formerly by Jack and his partner Ewan Pow over the last decade or so.

Also, there is *The Neepawa Banner*, owned by Ken and Chris Waddell, which sprang up, frankly,

from the fact that Ken was an auctioneer and was publishing his own auction publication, found that he could do that on his own and always enjoyed creating controversial items for discussion. Without going into much detail, it grew from that into what is now a competitive community newspaper.

These two entities create a certain dynamic tension within our community, to be honest, because they each have their own very unique approach to what they publish, their editorial page and how they comment on issues within the community. One has a very obvious editorial approach in the way they put their publication together, and the other a little less direct, but certainly they have their own style and their own way of putting their stamp on their view of what is happening in the community.

* (11:50)

As a result, and it is the same pattern that is followed across all of our communities where we have access to community newspapers, they are that local sounding board. They are that local opportunity to speak and be heard. Certainly for local news that cannot be beaten, and certainly for local advertising and communication, they are the vehicle of choice for many, many local businesses and entrepreneurs.

The other thing that happens is that these community newspapers, to a large extent, have a large number of people who may have moved on from the community, or may have at one time lived in the community, who keep up a subscription so that they can stay in touch with the community that they at one time lived in.

All of our community newspapers, and the ones that surround my area as well, Dauphin, Portage and Brandon, Brandon obviously being a larger publication, as is Portage and Dauphin, but they all provide a very unique and very important service to our communities. I think this would probably be a great opportunity to show everyone that we are quite happy to have them in the role that they play, and we want them to continue and recognize their good service.

Now, I want to make it very clear that the owners of our two local newspapers, as in the *Neepawa Press*, it is currently owned by Jack Gibson, as I pointed out. My leader was pointing out, and there was a hyphenated pause between the

two papers when he was speaking, I want to make it very clear that he was referring to Ken and Chris Waddell as being the owners of *The Neepawa Banner* and Jack Gibson, who is in fact the owner of the *Neepawa Press*. Certainly, we want to make sure the record is very clear on that.

I support this resolution, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): I would like to put a few comments on the record. The community newspapers are very important to community life of residents. They inform them of many issues, events within the community. They provide a sense of identity and belonging.

Mr. Speaker, I have lived in rural areas, and found them very informative. In fact, I can remember, I grew up in Boissevain, we had the *Boissevain Recorder*. It has been going for many, many years. It was basically the most informative newspaper we had in the area. Especially when you live in a rural area, and you do not go to town every day, you do not get maybe the *Brandon Sun* or the *Winnipeg Free Press*. What you read is the local paper.

I taught in Morden, Manitoba, at one time, and they had the *Morden Times*. I must say, I was a manager of the local hockey team, and I used to write articles on the success of the hockey team. I would hear people at the coffee shop talking about our great hockey team, and they would be saying what I had written in the local newspaper. I would hear my words come back to me. Mr. Speaker, what I want to say is you can influence people through the newspaper, and many people read it.

Also, in North Kildonan, we have the newspaper called *The Herald*, and it is read by many residents. Just the other day I got a phone call from people on Cheriton Street who said they were not getting *The Herald*. They wanted to read it. For several weeks they had not received *The Herald*. So I made a phone call to the headquarters of the newspaper, and now they are getting their paper, so they informed me.

So I have a long history of reading local newspapers. Even politicians use that newspaper very much during election time, even before the election, because some of them read it very carefully, more so than many of the daily newspapers. It is

used for advertising grocery stores with a sale on. So people read it very carefully. It is important to them.

Also, the community newspapers are also important media for government, providing an avenue informing Manitobans of important government messages, activities, events, and in return, the provincial government provides a substantial revenue source to community newspapers through advertising sales. Many community newspapers are provided free to local residents, providing access of information to a larger body of readers than daily subscription papers.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) has done here. It has provided much information. Many of the speakers here today have spoken on the youthful purpose that the local papers play in our community. So I thank you.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today in support of the resolution as presented to this Assembly by the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu). Her personal experience, I believe, speaks well of what community newspapers can mean to our rural communities, and also, too, although we have spoken of rural orientation of community newspapers, the city of Winnipeg has a number of community newspapers that provide a vital service to localized areas of the city of Winnipeg. Many persons rely on those newspapers for sources of information.

I will say that our community newspapers, from my perspective in Portage la Prairie, allowed a sharing of news, and to keep people abreast of the activities of our communities. It also allowed for us to keep up, through the local writers, their interests in what their own family members were pursuing. The newspaper was always looked forward to; its delivery in the mail box, and was read cover to cover, and sometimes more than once, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I truly appreciate the Member for Morris and her proposal of this resolution, and I look forward to its passage here today. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I, too, just want to congratulate the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) for bringing in this resolution. I want to take this

opportunity to thank the newspapers that cover the southern part of the province. We have got the Pembina *Times* located in Winkler, and also in Morden. I want to thank the editorial board there, Don Radford and Lorne Stelmach for the work that they continue to do in representing the events that take place, and, of course, the local news that takes place within our community. But added to that we also have the *Southern Shopper*, which is a small family-owned newspaper. It is located in the community of Darlingford and so, again, to them as well, they have got a large readership. They send that throughout the southern province. I just want to thank them for the work that they do.

With those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that there is a will to pass this resolution, and I want to thank all members for their contributions. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any more speakers? Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered. The Chair declares the resolution carried.

Mr. Dyck: Could we make that unanimous, please?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there agreement in the House that it be made unanimous? [*Agreed*]

Is it the will of the House to call it twelve o'clock? [*Agreed*]

The hour being 12 p.m., the Chair is interrupting the proceedings. We will resume session at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 12, 2005

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