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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 12, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I believe that there would be agreement to go straight to Bill 204, please.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to go directly to Bill 204, The Social Inclusion and Anti-Poverty Act? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 204—The Social Inclusion
and Anti-Poverty Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 204, The Social Inclusion and Anti-Poverty Act; Loi sur l'inclusion sociale et la lutte contre la pauvreté, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this is a bill which provides for the provincial government to present a plan to address poverty and that plan must have a goal of reducing poverty by 50 percent by the year 2013, four years from now. At the same time, it is a detailed outline of what needs to be in that plan, and I will talk about that in due course.

Why should we be doing this? We should be paying attention to this because Manitoba continues to have one of the highest rates of child poverty in Canada. The figures speak for themselves. It's very clear that, even after many years of an NDP government in this province, child poverty has not been adequately addressed so that we're comparable to the average of other provinces when we should, in fact, be among the very best of the provinces at addressing issues related to poverty.

Under the NDP, and I have graphs here that show that the support from social assistance has changed virtually not at all under the NDP over the last 10 years and, indeed, is less than the support was back in about 1991. This is true, not only in terms of the overall support, but the support in terms of

assistance with housing has been virtually unchanged for many years and this has resulted in people having to live in very, very low-cost housing, having very little choice. The result is that the housing has not been kept up adequately. We have problems, as we all know, with bed bugs and other inconveniences. I think it should be stronger than inconveniences; bed bugs should not be acceptable in Manitoba and, yet, here we are having repeated problems that, after many years, the NDP has not been able to address.

But what I want to talk about are the areas. This is a comprehensive approach to addressing poverty. It requires the provincial government to present a strategy, and that this strategy should address five major areas.

The first is specifically preventing poverty. Preventative measures need to be included in the provincial strategy. This needs to give consideration to recognizing families and supporting families; promoting school access; facilitating the integration of young people into schools; improving access to education and reducing the drop-out or push-out rate; making sure that we have not only basic support for people in poverty in terms of being able to get access to work, but also access to those things which are necessary for a healthy body; access to fitness and recreational activities; access to literacy, which is very important in helping people to climb out of poverty; and changing the social safety net.

The second major point is exactly that, which is dealing with the safety net, addressing the needs of raising the level of income assistance available to a level that's appropriate and helps people come out of poverty. Taking measures to encourage people who are at low incomes to enter or remain in the labour market. And here in Manitoba we have a major problem because the government, as soon as people who are on social assistance earn more than \$100 or thereabouts, the money is clawed back and it's clawed back at a very high rate, 70 percent, which is, essentially, a marginal tax rate. So the NDP is putting a marginal tax on the poor, which is higher than the marginal tax rate on the very richest in all of society. This is atrocious and totally unacceptable, is a barrier to advancement for those who are poor and needs to be changed.

I move on, then, to talk about the third major pillar, which is the promoting of access to employment, improving the employment assistance, favouring community-based interventions, the integration of social and economic development and making sure that we are working away so that there are real opportunities, that there are not barriers and that people are able to overcome the barriers of illiteracy, the barriers of access, and that it's not just a question of basic support, but it really is giving people a helping hand.

* (10:10)

Mr. Speaker, the fourth major pillar is promoting involvement, developing measures to be included in the provincial strategy to promote the involvement of society as a whole. Consideration in the plan or the strategy must be given to items which favour citizen participation, particularly by those living in poverty and ending the approach which ends up with a lot of social exclusion, supporting specific local and regional initiatives, recognizing the social responsibility of businesses and labour, recognizing the contribution of volunteered community action and the responsibility of individual citizens towards others.

The last major pillar of this program, the plan, the strategy to reduce poverty, would be considerations to make sure that the interventions are consistent and coherent, that policies and measures help in the fight against poverty, and social exclusion are complementary and work together, and work together just not in the short term but in a long-term manner so that programs are adapted and come together and make sure that there are no gaps.

We need to be abreast of and know what's happening elsewhere in reducing poverty. I note that other cities have done far better than we have in reducing the need for food banks, and that's part of what we have not done here is an effort which has inadequately addressed poverty but inadequately addressed the needs of people who are poor.

The measures, and there are many organizations and people, some of whom are here today with the Social Planning Council, with friendship centres, with RaY, who have ideas and suggestions and elements that they are ready to contribute to make sure that the provincial plan would be effective.

The provincial plan requires that there be an advisory council and that it designates the Social Planning Council as the minister's advisory council,

but also it says that the advisory council must seek information and guidance from citizens groups across the province. So it really is inclusive, allows for the minister to refer matters to the council and the council to refer matters to the minister, and provides that the minister who's responsible will provide an annual report on or before May 15 in each year, and that this must be publicly presented, measures to combat poverty, tracking of the results obtained as a result of the strategy.

We put this forward hoping that we will have the support of other members in the Chamber. This is an area where I have heard people from all sides speak of the importance. So let us all work together, use this bill as a template. If the members of the other parties have suggestions, we're certainly ready to include or make changes to adjust to those suggestions, but we would welcome everyone to participate in this debate and to hopefully move this forward so that we really can have an annual report on poverty and a plan that's going to be effective in moving this forward in Manitoba. Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, it's my honour today to speak to this piece of legislation and to take the opportunity to talk a bit about what has been the strategy and the plan of our government to reduce poverty and to include all Manitobans in the prosperity of our province.

I think at the outset I want to make clear that it has been our philosophy that the job of reducing poverty in Manitoba is not the job of any single department in the government. Mr. Speaker, it's not the job of the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) alone or the job of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) alone or the job of the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan) alone. It's the job of this entire government, and it is our goal of the entire government to reduce poverty for Manitobans.

I think, if you take a look at some of the programs and initiatives that we've put in place across departments, you will see that philosophy alive in all of the things that we do. I think that approach, a whole government approach to tackling poverty, has been showing progress. I will be the first to say that we need to make more progress, and we need to reduce poverty by even greater extents. But it is important, I think, to reflect for a moment on the progress that we have seen in the last 10 years since being elected.

If you look at almost every recent statistical measure on poverty, you will see that the poverty rate in Manitoba has been declining since 1999. We take a look, for example, at child poverty, and what Statistics Canada reports to us, we'll see that the child poverty rate in Manitoba has been reduced by 36 percent since 1999. In fact, the most recent child poverty rate reported for 2006 in the incoming Canada report shows that the child poverty rate in Manitoba is now the lowest rate since 1989.

So, a 20-year low, which is not perfect, which is not where we need to be at the end of the day. I think everybody in this House would agree that one child living in poverty is too many, but it is progress, and when you make that kind of progress, I think it's important to reflect on what the programs, initiatives and the structure of government has been to get you there.

If we look at another measure, if we look at single, female-led families, so single-mother families, which are families who have had some of the deepest and most resistant levels of poverty in our province, we will see tremendous progress in the last 10 years. In fact, we see the rate of poverty for those families declining from 59 percent in 1999 to 22 percent in 2006. That is an improvement that is astonishing—and, again, not enough, but certainly tremendous progress.

If we look at the new, market basket measure of poverty, which I think is probably a more accurate reflection of poverty, because it does take into account the cost of living across jurisdictions, you'll see that Manitoba has the third-lowest overall poverty rate in Canada. Again, I think we should have the lowest, and we're not there yet. But we have made progress.

Even with that kind of progress, Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that there are experiences of poverty in our province that are deep, and that the solutions to those populations who are living in poverty, the solutions for them are going to require some complexity. If we look, for example, at the issue of homelessness, an issue I think that has been brought into the public spotlight like it hasn't been in several years recently, if we take, for example, that issue, the issue that there are those in our province, in our city, who live without a home, I think it's important to discuss some of the most innovative approaches to solving that problem and some of the approaches that this government, as well, is

exploring, is listening to and looking at how we can incorporate.

One of those that I want to talk about is an approach called HOUSINGFirst. I know many in the field are much more familiar with this approach than I am, but I was introduced to it at a conference on housing that I attended in Ontario. I went to a workshop there held by people who worked for the Canadian Mental Health Association in Ottawa, and in Ottawa, that association actually owns housing, so it actually operates housing for people who are living with mental illness.

This was a part of their program to help address homelessness, where they had support workers whose first job was to help their clients achieve stable housing, and that meant, in some cases, that they did not take as their first job to make sure that their clients solved all of their addiction issues, to make sure that their clients solved all of their other issues. The first need that they addressed was housing, keep and maintain stable housing, and often the people that they were working with were people who had been homeless for many years, were people who had experienced evictions, who had experienced a great deal of difficulty maintaining their housing. But I found their approach so innovative and so refreshing, that they would start with the person that they were helping and with their needs.

I remember one man who worked in this program telling me that, for some of his clients, that meant that he helped them manage their budget so they could have enough money to meet the needs of their addiction, whatever that might be, and to meet their rent needs. He didn't start from a place of telling them, first you have to make sure that you have no addictions, then we'll help you find housing. He started with the approach that let's get you into stable housing, let's help you keep that housing, and maybe once we've done that, there will be time and there will be empowerment to address those other issues.

* (10:20)

So I think that approach shows a lot of promise for people who experience some of the deepest poverty in our midst. It's interesting to me, actually, that that approach was also singled out in a recent editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. So that may be the only editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* that ever had such an innovative social policy approach, but it was heartening to see it.

The other area, I think, we have spent some time on and need to do more on is around early childhood education and, particularly, for those kids who do live in poverty and for those children for whom poverty has become generational. We need to address those needs in a very fundamental way, but also in a very all-encompassing way. So we know, for example, the kids who are most at risk of not completing high school. We know them because they come into contact with many other systems in government. They come into contact with the Child and Family Services system. They may come into contact with the Employment and Income Assistance program. So we know who these kids are who are most at risk of not completing high school. We also know that not completing high school—and often, the critical year is the grade 8-grade 9 year. Not completing that year can be a predictor of children who will grow up to be adults who will struggle with poverty in their life.

So we know that interventions early in a child's life can help build the skills they need to help them complete high school. But we also know that we have to follow those kids, and we have to provide them with the supports they need to get through school. In some of our communities—as I'm sure we've heard before in this House—in some of our Aboriginal communities that struggle is made even more difficult by the fact that there are no high schools in the community. So if you can imagine, for a moment, having to leave your home community at the age of 15 or 16 to go away to high school and experience a new city, perhaps not have the kind of supports that you need and, at the same time, be required to study and finish high school. These are tremendous barriers that we're putting in the way of people who we should be finding the most help and the most assistance to, so they can graduate and so they can lead lives that are full of prosperity and full of promise.

I want to speak for a minute about the minimum wage. May 1 of this year the minimum wage increased by 25 cents, to \$8.75 an hour. It will increase again on October 1. We have increased the minimum wage every year we've been in office. It's instructive to me, Mr. Speaker, that when that question was asked in the leaders' debate—in the last election about increasing the minimum wage—our leader was the only one who committed to increasing the minimum wage. The leader that brought forward this legislation did not commit to increase the minimum wage. The Leader of the Opposition

(Mr. McFadyen) didn't commit to increasing the minimum wage, only our leader committed to steady and regular increases for the minimum wage.

So legislation, I suppose, can make us feel good, Mr. Speaker, but action is what counts. Action is what counts for the people in this province who are living in poverty, and we have made some improvements and will continue to do that. We'll continue to work with the community and with those representatives who are here today, and listen to their good advice on how to make those improvements. We have a long way to go. I agree with the leader of the third party that it's going to take all of us to do that, and that's exactly the approach our government has taken. It takes everyone sitting on these government benches to help reduce poverty; that's our philosophy, that's what we've done, that's what we'll continue to do.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I am pleased to rise today and speak briefly on Bill 204, The Social Inclusion and Anti-Poverty Act.

I think we all know, Mr. Speaker, that poverty is an issue that continues to be a serious problem in our province. It spans across demographics and across all regions of the province. I have to commend the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for the well-intentioned bill that is before our Legislature today. It is very big on vision and we all know that targets are very important if we hope to achieve a goal. But targets have been set in the past to eliminate poverty, and those targets haven't been met.

I think we need to think realistically about what may be able to happen, and we need to be moving in incremental steps towards eradicating poverty. There isn't any one government alone that has all of the solutions or all of the answers.

We hear, you know, members of the government side of the House saying they were the only party that committed to increasing the minimum wage, as if that was the be-all and the end-all to ending poverty in our province. Many of us have different ways and different ideas or suggestions on how we might move towards the elimination of poverty in our province.

Mr. Speaker, increasing the minimum wage sometimes has a very detrimental impact. It has an impact on businesses who may eliminate those entry-level jobs and not provide the opportunity for

Manitobans that are needing that entry-level job to—
[interjection]

Well, Mr. Speaker, members on the government side of the House laugh, but we do know that as a result of the increases to the minimum wage, there are some employers that have eliminated those jobs. We think that a better solution to eliminating poverty, in many instances, would be to significantly raise the basic personal exemption for all Manitobans. That wouldn't be the be-all and the end-all, either, but I think it could go a long way towards leaving more money in the pockets of low-income Manitobans, so they could make the choices on what they need to do with those scarce resources that they have.

So that's something that we would encourage government to do, and it's something that we would do and make a commitment to. It's not, Mr. Speaker, one thing or another, but it's a combination of many things that is going to work towards eliminating poverty in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I have said initially that I commend the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for his commitment to keeping poverty on the government's agenda, and for bringing this bill forward. I know that very often, you know, governments will brag about what they have done and all the wonderful things they have done to eliminate poverty, but the reality is we still see poverty exists, we still see the need for food banks in our province of Manitoba and we see an increasing need for those kinds of activities.

The problem isn't solved, and all of the things that are going on, Mr. Speaker, many of the initiatives that are undertaken by government are as a result of community coming together, identifying the need and looking to see where we can find some solutions or some support.

I would venture to guess that some of the ideas that the community has brought forward have been embraced by government and some of those initiatives are working, but the reality is we're still continuing to see far too much poverty in the province of Manitoba and there needs to be a comprehensive strategy. Mr. Speaker, we, again, would believe that by raising the basic personal exemption, we would find better options and opportunities for those living in poverty.

We saw, back in the '90s, when we were in government, a significant reduction in the transfers

from Ottawa: a \$250-million reduction to health and social transfers that had a significant impact on government in Manitoba and on government's ability to move forward and to make increases available in many, many areas throughout government. But you know, we have seen unprecedented revenues coming from Ottawa in the way of transfer payments, where almost 40 percent of the budget of the Province of Manitoba now comes from federal transfers. Those are unprecedented. Those aren't cuts to transfer payments. Those are significant increases. It's incumbent upon governments when the money is rolling in to make some of the priority decisions that need to be made to help some of the most vulnerable within our community.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure we've seen that kind of activity happen with the unprecedented revenues. We have seen, along with those unprecedented revenues from Ottawa, significant increases in user fees. We've seen significant increases in Pharmacare deductibles which do have a significant impact on those that are living in poverty or with very fixed incomes.

*(10:30)

We've seen many, many issues in our housing stock, Manitoba Housing stock, in Manitoba, where government hasn't kept up in times of unprecedented revenue growth from Ottawa. We haven't seen maintenance of our housing stock in the province of Manitoba keep up or keep pace with the revenues that have been coming in. We see mould issues in Manitoba Housing. Mr. Speaker, we see bed bug issues in Manitoba Housing that government can't seem to get a handle on. We see safety issues in Manitoba Housing that need to be addressed with a comprehensive strategy.

I know government talks about programs and initiatives that they have implemented, but, Mr. Speaker, those issues aren't getting better, they're getting worse. It is because the government hasn't made that commitment to increase the maintenance budget for Manitoba Housing to ensure that those in need have the opportunity to live in dignity in housing that our government provides.

Mr. Speaker, the homeless issue in Manitoba hasn't been adequately addressed. We know that there are community organizations out there that are looking to partner with government to try to ensure that those with addiction issues, with mental health issues, those that are living on our streets have a hand up somehow, and they're prepared to join with

government. They have recommendations that might look towards better support for those, and this government tends to, or seems to in some instances, turn a blind eye to some of those organizations.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't government that finds the problem or fixes the problems alone, it's the community that understands the issue of poverty and works on a daily basis with those living in poverty that have the best ideas for the best solutions. That's important for all of us, regardless of political stripe in this House, to listen to what they are saying and develop the partnerships with community that can have really meaningful positive outcomes for those living in poverty.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, I commend the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for bringing this forward, for putting this on the radar screen here in the Legislature, and, hopefully, we'll see those partnerships strengthen and develop, and government will listen to those that have the ideas out there in the community on how we can eradicate poverty and move towards a better society in Manitoba. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin as well by commending the Member for River Heights for his private member's bill. There are parts of it that I think all parties here can support. For example, he says that the strategy must be oriented towards preventing poverty and social exclusion, strengthening the social and economic safety net, promoting access to employment and increasing the attractiveness of work, promoting the involvement of society as a whole in combatting poverty and social exclusion, and ensuring that interventions are consistent and coherent at all levels. He pointed out that education is an important part of poverty prevention, that we must work harder to reduce the rate of dropouts, particularly in high school, and that's something that this government is committed to doing.

In fact, I'm going to be getting a guided tour by officials from Winnipeg School Division of a program called A Bright Futures Program. There are two locations currently, one in Winnipeg School Division and one in Seven Oaks School Division, and I visited, along with my colleague from The Maples, the site in Seven Oaks. This program is an after-school tutoring program for children who are at risk of dropping out. The whole goal is to improve their academic performance so they finish high school and therefore have a much more likely

possibility of going to university. They've already achieved some successes with these students in terms of increasing their grades.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with some of the things that the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) said in her remarks as well. I think that it is a combination of many things, not just one focus to reduce poverty. I agree that there's too much poverty, and that we must make better progress. I agree that we need a comprehensive strategy, and I believe that we do have one.

Now it does take a lot of gall to stand up and speak as the former Minister of Family Services and Housing or Family Services for the previous government, to speak on this topic when we know that when she was the minister, welfare rates were reduced. The result of the budget cuts from Ottawa, by a Liberal government, were that poor people in Manitoba bore the brunt of those cuts. I don't think wealthy people paid the price for having \$250 million a year less from Ottawa, but poor people certainly did pay the price.

One of the reasons that we've made great strides in reducing the amount of poverty in Manitoba is that we've reversed some of those decisions of the previous government. There are many, many examples that I could give, beginning with the clawback of the national child benefit. When we became government, we said we would let all families keep that money and we did. We phased it in, in three phases: children from birth to six, six to 12 and six to 18 so that now all families keep all of the money.

That's probably one of the reasons why we made such good progress with single parents. Single mothers, according to Statistics Canada, the rate of children with single mothers on low incomes has declined from 59 percent in 1999 to 22 percent in 2006, an improvement of 63 percent. I know that my colleague from Fort Rouge already quoted this statistic, but it bears repeating as does the reduction in the overall poverty rate in Manitoba.

Members are probably aware that the federal government and many provinces are now measuring poverty with a market basket measure which makes a lot of sense in Manitoba because under the low income cut off of poverty lines, Winnipeg is lumped in with large Canadian cities. For example, any city with a population of over 500,000 is measured the same in terms of the LICO or low income cut off lines by Statistics Canada. Even Statistics Canada

will tell you that it's not actually a measure of poverty, but it's the most common measure of poverty that is used.

Everyone, I think, in Manitoba knows, that we have very affordable housing here. It's really not fair to put Winnipeg in the same category as Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and other Canadian cities. So if we use the market basket measure of poverty, Manitoba had the third-lowest overall poverty rate in Canada. This is according to Human Resources and Social Development Canada, the federal government.

So we are making good progress in a number of categories, but there is more that we can do. The Member for River Heights mentioned housing. Well, let me remind the Member for River Heights that in the 1990s when her party was in government, they wanted to privatize housing. They wanted to sell it to the private sector. So what happened? Well, the private sector took a look at some of the Manitoba Housing Authority units and they said, we don't want it. It would cost too much money to upgrade.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River Heights, on a point of order?

Mr. Gerrard: I think the member was referring to the MLA for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), not River Heights.

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

Mr. Martindale: On the same point of order. The member does have a point of order. I did mean the Member for River East and I apologize to the Member for River Heights.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the point of order raised by the honourable Member for River Heights has been clarified by the honourable Member for Burrows. So that should take care of the matter.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Burrows, to continue, please.

Mr. Martindale: I would not want to tar the member with that particular feature of the previous Conservative government.

Mr. Speaker, then the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) is criticizing our government for the maintenance of Manitoba Housing Authority properties. Well, first of all, we inherited a huge

maintenance deficit and then we did something about it.

Mr. Speaker, in December, 2008, we doubled our commitment to revitalizing Manitoba Housing to \$48 million. Among the renovations to be completed across the province are 893 units in Brandon and Winnipeg, giving approximately 2,000 people modern and comfortable homes. This strategy will create jobs, improve energy efficiency, enhance accessibility and improve the lives of tenants.

Over the next year, we will rejuvenate 61 family townhouses in Brandon as well as completely renovate Gilbert Park, Selkirk Park and Central Park in Winnipeg. In budget 2009, we announced investing over \$160 million, unprecedented announcements of new money for renovating public housing. The single largest ever investment for projects such as Lord Selkirk and Gilbert Park in Winnipeg; \$4.5 million in Brandon; \$9 million for Gilbert Park; \$15 million for Selkirk Park; and \$9 million for Central Park in Winnipeg. We are also providing funding for a range of housing options for individuals with mental health issues.

*(10:40)

So we are doing something about improving and upgrading; we're investing unprecedented amounts of money to improve public housing because housing is very important to people's stability, as the Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) was pointing out, for people with mental health and the housing first philosophy.

I remember a number of years ago reading a book by the founder of Kinew Housing, Stan Fulham. Stan had a very wonderful observation about the effect of stable housing on the people that lived in Kinew houses in the inner city and the North End. I've met some of those families in my constituency in Burrows. He said that when they began, 70 percent of people were unemployed and only 30 percent of their tenants were working. Ten years later that had completely reversed so that 70 percent were working and only 30 percent were unemployed. The reason is that they had stable, affordable housing. They weren't constantly moving in the inner city to find more affordable housing or quieter neighbours or more stable housing or housing without cockroaches or mice or whatever the health problem was. Instead, they were able to go back to school to improve their education, to look for work, to take upgrading, all of those things which

contributed to stable families because of the stable housing, and that was a very, very important observation.

So we are proud of our record. We need to do more. We are going to do more. Keep tuned for further announcements. But, you know, our strategy isn't starting now, in 2009. Our strategy started in 1999 when we were elected government, and every year we have made changes that have been positive, that have helped people living in poverty, whether it was child care, or housing, or social assistance rates, or education and training, or job creation. All of those things, collectively, are contributing to reducing the rate of poverty in Manitoba, and we're proud of our record.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to stand and put a few words on this particular bill. It's a bill which I believe does deserve a great deal of merit, and the best way the government can demonstrate its commitment to fighting poverty in the province of Manitoba is to actually accept this bill and pass it into law.

You know, I listen to members speak on the government benches in regard to this bill, and you know, words are one thing, action is another. If you truly believe what it is that you're talking about, I don't hear any arguments as to why this bill should not become law in the province of Manitoba. The reality is that the province of Québec has a law of a similar nature and its poverty is less than the province of Manitoba. What's wrong with setting some objectives or goals? What's wrong with having annual reports? What's wrong with getting more individuals across the province involved in the whole dialogue and debate about poverty?

You know, I think that, like all members of this House, we could all stand up and we can relay stories of damage that poverty has caused individual Manitobans and Manitobans as a whole, collectively, the cost to our society by not addressing poverty. Mr. Speaker, there are bills that come before this Legislature that are raised that deal specifically with issues that have a high correlation with poverty, and the government does what it's doing with this particular bill, and that is nothing, and one has to question why it chooses to do nothing. An example that I always like to bring up is the fixed price of milk. On one hand, you can say, well, you know, we can have a fixed set price for a bottle of beer no matter where it is you go in the province of

Manitoba, but try to get milk up in northern Manitoba.

Here's a good, progressive piece of legislation and the government ignores it, decides to do nothing, even though it's got wide support, wide public support, Mr. Speaker. One's got to question, well, why wouldn't the government address the bill? Same thing here. Here we have a bill that's very progressive in its thinking, and it's setting some goals. It's asking for an annual report. Why wouldn't the government speak not only in favour of the bill, but allow the bill to ultimately become law?

You know, yes, there have been improvements in combatting poverty in the province of Manitoba. I don't think that we should be blinded by some of the things that have worked and, in part, worked well. I think that there are many areas in which we could continue to explore.

The Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) said, well, our party, during the last leaders' debate in the last election said, the only party that brought up minimum wage.

Well, reality is, I remember the 1995 election. In 1995, the Leader of the Official Opposition then, today's Premier (Mr. Doer), said that he was going to increase minimum wage to \$9 an hour, Mr. Speaker. All they have to do is just review the '95 election and they'll find that that is the case. They said \$9 an hour; we're not even at \$9 an hour today. There are other things that even go beyond the minimum wage issue. *[interjection]* We opposed the increase?

Well, what I'm trying to emphasize is that the New Democrats, quite often, will talk about an issue in order to try to capture certain support from different communities, but when it comes to actually taking action, Mr. Speaker, they're not acting on ideas that could really make a difference. Whether it's this bill here, whether it's the minimum wage issue, whether it is the milk bill, I could talk about fetal alcohol syndrome and some of the initiatives that have been brought forward in which the government has completely ignored and done nothing in regard to.

The Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) talks about housing, and housing is critically important. During the '90s, I was the Housing critic. I remember the Member for Burrows when he was part of a housing group association that actually met with the Liberal caucus back then. I liked a lot of the ideas that were being talked about back then, but I don't

hear those ideas today being talked about, Mr. Speaker. Because it's more than just, here's \$10 million or \$5 million or \$30 million, and throwing it at public housing for renovations. It's important, don't get me wrong, it's important, but there needs to be an overall strategy dealing with non-profit housing and low-income housing.

We have things such as shelter allowance programs for individuals that are on fixed incomes. To what degree is the government ensuring that there is more money that's being flowed to those individuals that are low income, many of which are single parents? Single parents, over 20 percent, I believe, 22 percent in terms of the poverty issue. What about the shelter allowances?

How many housing co-ops have started since 1999, Mr. Speaker? I don't know if there have been any new housing co-ops. I never hear of the government talking about new housing co-ops. I look to the Member for Burrows, and others, to correct me if I'm wrong. I can't recall any—

An Honourable Member: Greenheart Housing Co-op.

Mr. Lamoureux: Greenheart Housing Co-op.

An Honourable Member: On Sherbrook Street.

Mr. Lamoureux: On Sherbrook Street; so I'm told this is one co-op.

We used to have, in the '80s, a housing co-op program that provided incentive and a much more aggressive government in trying to get housing co-ops established. Housing co-ops are very important.

In the last provincial election, we, within the Liberal Party, talked about the possibilities of being able to convert some of that non-profit housing stock into housing co-ops. Imagine, if you will, turning tenants into residents, and there is a significant difference, Mr. Speaker. And that's what we mean in terms of you need to have an overall housing project that touches many different points.

Why not expand the Infill Housing Program? The Infill Housing Program provides the opportunity for many individuals that have never had the opportunity to be able to own a home.

* (10:50)

We do support Habitat for Humanity. There are other housing programs that are out there, and again, I'm not saying that the government has dropped the

ball in every area, but I am suggesting that we just shouldn't sit back and say, gee, how wonderful we are because overall it appears that our numbers have gone down. That's not good enough.

I believe that we need to recognize where we can make improvements, and then start focussing some attention and some policy discussion with the ministries that are there and the resources that the government has. Mr. Speaker, there is no reason why a more progressive government could not come up with more ideas that are going to make a real impact in terms of enabling people to get out of that cycle of poverty. Housing is critically important, and unfortunately we have a very limited time because, as much as I've said about housing, we can multiply in terms of the Department of Education, you know, Department of Health.

There are many issues within Family Services that we need to be able to deal with that, quite often, I think are almost barriers that are put into place and the difficulties that many individuals have within Child and Family Services and how it is that we might be able to smooth some of those things over, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest to you that there is.

Poverty is a large enough issue that all political parties, all MLAs, all Manitobans have something to be able to contribute to the debate. When something does come up that is good, such as this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, government and members then have the opportunity to actually take an action, a tangible action that will make a difference. That's why it's very telling when we see the government of the day take the actions that it takes. I would suggest that they should allow this bill to become law. Thank you.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak on this bill and to put a few corrections on the record. I think the Member for Inkster spent a lot of time talking about actions being more important than words, but then really all we've gotten from him have been words and just to put a few facts on the record as far as actions. We do come from a strong background and we do have a long way to go, but we're building on a strong foundation.

Just to give you some highlights of what this government has been actively doing, again putting those actions ahead of words, we have things like the Rewarding Work program which helps low-income people get and keep jobs by increasing the advantages of work over welfare.

We have the Employment Manitoba program which supports individuals to prepare for, return to, find and maintain employment. The Family Choices child-care agenda emphasises access, universality, affordability and quality child care.

Healthy Child Manitoba works across government to create the best possible outcomes for Manitoba children and their families. These are just a few things, and I'll go on with more later because I really want to get to the substantive part of this. We have been actively doing things. We have actively been working with Manitobans, and this has been a decade of change in progress, and yes, appreciate the fact that you're getting on board by wanting to put a bill forward but realize that putting a bill forward doesn't solve the problem.

What has been solving the problems and working towards things is the kind of action that this government has been taking. We have been actively doing things. So a piece of paper passed through the Legislature can have some significance, but what is more significant is working with the communities, working on things like the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative in rural and Aboriginal communities, supporting community projects that promote nutrition and build capacity to access healthy foods. That's what really matters. That's what feeds a family, not a piece of paper being passed through this Legislature.

The things that work are things like Adult Learning and Literacy, helping people to get a high school diploma, upgrade their courses, pursue higher education, and work on a province-wide literacy strategy. The ACCESS program, I have so many students of mine that came through that ACCESS program. That's what got them out from poverty into social inclusion, into prosperity. It was the ACCESS program.

So, there are actions, not words, not a piece of paper passing through this House. We have a track record, and, again, we're not going to sit here, pat ourselves on the back, and say, the problem is solved. But, we have accomplished much. There's far more to do, and we are on that path and building on a strong foundation.

When the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says, the only thing we can do or the best thing we can do is to pass this piece of this particular bill, I have to say no. The best thing we can do is keep building on the strong foundation that we already

have. That is what action is. That is about what it takes to really do this and do this properly.

The idea of having a specific target, well, again, targets are numbers. They're statistics, and they can be manipulated. Having worked with so many people that have come from those positions of poverty, a statistic means nothing if you can't feed your family, to know that X number of other people, or a certain percentage, are supposedly not impoverished anymore doesn't feed your family. It doesn't get you groceries. It doesn't get you into post-secondary education.

When we look at those numbers and setting benchmarks, yes, it's always good to have some kind of guideline or some kind of goal to shoot for, but if we make the only goal about attaining a particular number, then we're not actually working for people, we're working towards a statistic. It's like teaching kids to study for a test to teach them to pass the test, not teaching them to learn. That's not exactly great pedagogical practice.

This is the same thing. We have to have a holistic approach that, while we do have measures like the market basket measure to keep an eye on things, the measure is not the only goal. The real goal, the solid goal, is improving the lives of Manitobans through social inclusion. The thing is we do have—if you are going to be so caught up in statistics—we can say that Stats Canada, Manitoba's child poverty rate has been reduced by 36 percent since 1999. So, obviously, we have been doing something right. In fact, the most recent child poverty rate is the lowest rate seen in Manitoba since 1989.

We had members opposite actually drive up our poverty rate, and we just spent the past decade bringing it down. So, again, we have been doing stuff. If you're so caught up in markers, there are some markers showing that there have been tangible results. But, we do have, for example, the lowest unemployment rate. So, again, if you're caught up in the markers, we've already got them, and they're already showing that we're doing the work.

We've also taken a balanced approach to so many other things, and there's been criticism regarding minimum wage. Well, you know what? Minimum wage is a key aspect. It's part of the whole holistic package. So, again, you mentioned our current leader, back in the day, promising \$9 an hour and that we haven't got there yet. Well, guess what?

By October 1, we'll be there. So, again, we're actions, not words. It was an action—[*interjection*]

Hey, again, we actually took the action and, no, you know what? We're never going to move as fast as we want on poverty because, you know what? It's a large problem, there are so many things, and there are so many systemic things, that need to be worked on and the holistic thing. So, again, it would be nice to have a magic wand, and it would be nice to say that passing a particular bill would suddenly, magically at the snap of a finger, solve poverty. That's rather naive. We've got a decade of building, we're continuing to build, and that we are delivering on those things. Again, it never happens as fast as we want it to, but the point is it's happening, and it's happening because of actions.

Mr. Speaker, we're bringing it to that \$9 level, which is something that neither leader of the other parties would commit to during the 2007 election campaign. They didn't even have the words, much less the actions. So, members opposite should really watch when they make those comments, because, in addition to providing that, there were comments from the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) saying, well, you know, by driving that minimum wage up, you're going to make things tougher for business.

Well, funny, because you know what? We've actually reduced taxes for businesses at the same time that we've made increases to minimum wage. So, we are working to ensure that our businesses, and that our small businesses, are able to keep Manitobans employed. So, again, it's about a balanced approach.

We have done things like reducing the small business tax rate so it's going to be down to 1 percent and eventually eliminated. I know for the businesses that I meet within the Assiniboia Chamber of Commerce, those small businesses that are employing my neighbours, that matters, and by keeping those small businesses afloat and by them being able to employ people in my neighbourhood, that's a step towards social inclusion—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

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

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 9—Disraeli Freeway Must Remain Open

Mr. Speaker: The hour now being 11 a.m., we will move on to resolutions, and we will deal with Resolution No. 9, the Disraeli Freeway Must Remain Open.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that

WHEREAS the Disraeli Freeway is used an estimated 42,000 times per day by commuters to and from northeast Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS a closure of the Disraeli Freeway will force these 42,000 vehicles that use the bridge on a daily basis onto residential streets, single-lane bridges and back lanes; and

WHEREAS the safety of residents of nearby side streets and the safety of commuters using the Disraeli Freeway and other routes must be the top public priority; and

WHEREAS a 16-month closure of the Disraeli Freeway is unacceptable for residents and businesses in northeast Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS the traffic backlog and delays will have a negative effect on the environment; and

WHEREAS the initial funding of construction of the Disraeli Freeway was cost-shared between the City of Winnipeg, the city of East Kildonan and the Province of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS a project of this magnitude will require support and participation from all levels of government; and

WHEREAS finding an alternative to a full closure of the Disraeli Freeway is a non-partisan issue.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the provincial government in taking a leadership role to work with and pressure the City of Winnipeg and Government of Canada to find an alternative to a 16-month closure of the Disraeli Freeway during reconstruction.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for River East, seconded by the honourable Member for Springfield,

WHEREAS the Disraeli—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to sponsor this resolution and look forward to comments from all sides of the House on this issue.

It is something that's been highlighted since the City of Winnipeg determined and announced that they were going to reconstruct the Disraeli Freeway and that it would be closed permanently for 16 months. Mr. Speaker, this created a major uproar in northeast Winnipeg, and there were politicians on all sides, all sides of the House here in the Legislature, that spoke out opposed to the closure. We all know what a disruption the permanent full closure of the Disraeli Freeway would have for 16 months, not only for the 42,000 vehicles that use the Disraeli on a daily basis, but for all of the congestion that would occur on the side streets, on the other bridges. We look at the Louise Bridge, we look at Main Street, the Chief Peguis Bridge that goes from Henderson Highway to Main Street, and all of us agree that it would be an absolute disaster to see this happen.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just the residents of northeast Winnipeg that use the Disraeli Freeway. We have many, many commuter communities to the north of Winnipeg that use Henderson Highway as their route into the downtown and back out of the downtown of the city of Winnipeg. So we know that it is not only a City of Winnipeg issue, but it is a truly provincial issue because many of those residents that live outside of the city of Winnipeg will be impacted as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's incumbent for all of us in the Legislature to stand up together and united and ask that the provincial government take a leadership role. We know that when the Disraeli Bridge was first constructed many, many years ago the Province was almost an equal partner with the City of Winnipeg and the city of East Kildonan at that time to make the Disraeli Freeway a reality. Things haven't changed. There still is a need and a role for the provincial government to play in finding a solution.

Mr. Speaker, there's a need for the Government of Canada to come on board and be a part of the solution. This impacts travel back and forth into the city of Winnipeg from not only northeast Winnipeg, but many, many residents that live outside of the city

of Winnipeg. This shouldn't be partisan. This is something all of us should be able to join together and say, let's bring all levels of government together to try to find a solution.

I know the Premier (Mr. Doer) has indicated that he has talked to the mayor and he has said his preference would be to keep part of the Disraeli open during construction. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've got to put those kinds of words into action, and if we look at supporting this resolution today, and all of us jointly saying, let's bring the three levels of government together.

It's a significant capital project, one of the largest in the city of Winnipeg today and, Mr. Speaker, we all know the City of Winnipeg cannot do it alone. It is a freeway which is located within the city of Winnipeg, but it serves all Manitobans who choose to use Henderson Highway as their preferred route to go downtown.

So, let's look at it as an issue we can all support. Let's look at it as an issue where we all need to get together around the table and figure out what's in the best interests of the northeast quadrant of the city of Winnipeg and all of those other commuters that use that route on a daily basis. This should be something that's very easy for all of us to support, and I would encourage all members of the Legislature to vote unanimously on this resolution. Let's all get together. Let's take a leadership role as the Province of Manitoba, and make sure the Disraeli Bridge stays open or partially open during construction to alleviate some of the congestion concerns, some of the environmental concerns, and some of the safety concerns that are going to plague all of us that use that route on a regular basis. I'm encouraging everyone to stand up and support this resolution and let's get on with getting this major capital project under way with the right solution. Thank you.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood): I'd like to begin the debate on this motion by thanking the Member for River East for bringing forward the motion and also for being willing to change the day on which it was debated in order to facilitate my participation in this, and also the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who had a hand in making that possible as well.

I think the motion, as it stands before the House, is certainly a supportable motion. What it says, actually, Mr. Speaker, is: the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the provincial government in taking a leadership role to work with and pressure the City of Winnipeg and the Government of Canada

to find an alternative to the 16-month closure of the Disraeli Freeway.

Well, this is something I think I can report, in all honesty to the member, that the provincial government is already doing. We are already working closely with the City to come up with an alternative to the 16-month closure because, as the member so correctly put it, everyone in northeast Winnipeg knows the current plan is unacceptable. I mean, if there ever was an ecumenical moment in northeast Winnipeg, it's the way in which, it doesn't matter whether you're a federal, provincial, or municipal, whether you're Conservative or New Democrat—I don't believe we have any Liberals in northeast Winnipeg, which is a happy situation—but not wanting to transgress on the non-partisan nature of the debate, Mr. Speaker, we were all united, even those who were unelected, on the unacceptable nature of the 16-month closure that is part of the current plan the City has.

* (11:10)

So the challenge, it seemed to me, as the new MLA for Elmwood, was to set in motion a process by which the City and the Province, and hopefully, perhaps—and I commend the honourable member for urging the federal government of her own political stripe to perhaps come to the table as well. At the moment, the work is going on between the City and the provincial government to see if there can't be an alternative to the 16-month closure.

To its credit, the City has indicated a willingness to look at options which would involve either keeping the bridge open while it is being repaired or perhaps even building a second span before the existing span is repaired. This wouldn't necessarily include or involve the expansion of the number of lanes of the bridge. It might only be, for instance, that there would be a second span with two lanes and then the old span would be repaired and that would be another two lanes and you would have—so this doesn't presuppose one of the other options that some people have indicated support for which is, of course, the idea of expanding the Disraeli Bridge to six lanes.

The main problem as I perceived it and as it seemed to me the people of Elmwood and everyone else who contributed to the debate on the matter was to make sure that the bridge is not closed, that traffic continues to flow. As the honourable member said, and I think again quite rightly, it's not just a question for the people of Elmwood or for the people of East

Kildonan. It's a question for people who use Henderson Highway to come in from the north of the city, from East St. Paul and from further on. It's a question for the people of the North End if people have to take the Redwood Bridge or Chief Peguis and plug up the North End while the Disraeli would be closed. It's a question for people from Transcona. It's a question for people from St. Boniface. There are a whole lot of people going to be affected if this bridge is closed down for 16 months.

I think that we're at a point now where the City realizes that the 16-month closure is just not acceptable. It was done in the first place over against the objections of the three city councillors in the area who represent a variety of political stripes, so to speak. As I said before, whether you're municipal, whether you're provincial, whether you're federal, whatever your political persuasion we all know, if we have anything to do with northeast Winnipeg, that the current plan is unacceptable.

So the challenge, and the challenge was made harder by the fact that this is something that the City did on its own. The honourable member referenced the fact that the original bridge was built by the City of Winnipeg, the city of East Kildonan and the Province, but what happened here was that the City moved to do it on its own, in the context of a PPP and was content, at least for a while, to do it the way it wanted to do it. I think that, in fairness, people have all now realized that what's on the table is not acceptable and that there's a need to come up with a better plan.

I think to the credit of the Province and the Premier (Mr. Doer), we have indicated a willingness to consider and support other options, to be willing to sort of step up to the plate and work very closely with the City to see what kind of alternative is both feasible and financially doable. It seems to me that at this point in the process, we can be optimistic about the fact that some kind of alternative plan will be developed. Certainly having a motion before the Legislature at this point which supports what the provincial government is already doing and which calls on the federal government to take an interest in the matter as well, because this is an infrastructure project. There's lots of talk about infrastructure these days. There's lots of talk about shovel ready and all those sorts of things. It would seem to me that if, as the honourable member indicates in her resolution, the federal government was willing to come to the table as well we might even be able to consider even other options.

Hopefully, it will have that effect, but, in the meantime, if that doesn't happen, the City and the Province are working closely to come up with a solution. It's something that has to happen reasonably quickly as well because the bridge does need repairing. So whether you're going to repair it soon in a manner that keeps it open while you're repairing it or whether you're going to build something else first, these are all things that need to be done reasonably soon because we also have to take seriously the fact that the bridge needs to be repaired.

So I think that's just about it. I would say, in keeping with the non-partisan spirit of the motion and the debate, that I hope we can keep it that way. There was a temptation, certainly in the recent by-election, to "partisanize"—I don't know if there's such a word—the issue. I think it would serve all of us well if we resisted that temptation in the current context and supported the government in its discussions with the City to come up with an alternative to the current plan which, as I say, everyone in northeast Winnipeg knows is unacceptable and everyone in Winnipeg, actually, knows.

Having said that, once we get this problem solved, then we need to look at the larger needs of northeast Winnipeg in terms of access to the downtown because we are dealing with a situation where we've got huge expansion of the area and still basically the same access that we always have. We've got the Louise Bridge and the Disraeli Bridge. You could argue, of course, we have the Chief Peguis now, but, basically, you're dealing with the same few lanes servicing a population which is incredibly larger than it was many, many years ago when those bridges were seen to be sufficient.

I hope that at some point the city council can get their heads together and come up with a plan for northeast Winnipeg. I know that there was an attempt to do that recently in a way that it might have happened before the Disraeli Bridge had to be repaired. That didn't make it, but let's solve the Disraeli Bridge problem.

Let's keep the bridge open while it's being repaired, either by, as I say, building a second span first or by finding a way to repair it and keep it open at the same time. We'll be in a better position to discuss these things when we actually have some—no pun intended—concrete proposals from the City on this matter as to what's possible and what the difference is in the cost between—the added cost of keeping it open while you repair it or the added cost

of building a second span, the differential between that, and just what all is possible according to the engineer. I look forward to the time when we have that kind of information and we can—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member for Springfield.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I wish to add my voice to this debate in that the Disraeli Bridge must stay open.

In fact, it would be a disaster if all four lanes of the Disraeli Freeway bridge were closed for 16 months. Traffic would be drastically congested on Main Street, Henderson Highway, Highway 59 and the overflow traffic would take the side streets, causing safety concerns in residential neighbourhoods.

I would fully support the proposal to expand the bridge to three lanes in each direction and agree that keeping one lane open in each direction throughout construction is essential. It is the safest alternative and the increased capacity ensures we are planning today for the infrastructure needs of tomorrow.

Because, Mr. Speaker, there was a vision many years ago and the Disraeli Freeway was built. It was built at a time when Elmwood—I believe at that time Transcona was probably its own hamlet or municipality—North Kildonan, East Kildonan, River East—in fact, when the bridge was built, I suspect, East St. Paul was just a sleepy little hamlet, as were all the other communities going north. It took a lot of vision to build the bridge and it was built considering that there would be growth taking place in the northeast side of Winnipeg. The premier of the day, the mayor of the day, the politicians of the day got together and decided it was time that something had to be built for the northeast quadrant of the city.

Mr. Speaker, I can remember driving across that bridge as a young boy. There was a metal grate system and you would drive across and the tires would hum on this grating system. I'd like to point out to the House, at that time, there was no concrete barrier between the lanes. It was actually quite dangerous because if there was any ice or if you had sudden frost, that bridge became very slippery and there were a lot of head-on collisions. The decision was then made to pave the bridge and then after that, to put a barrier on.

* (11:20)

So the bridge has been adapted. I mean, there was a vision for what was needed for the northeast side of the city. It was then adapted, improved on, and clearly, it has now come to the end of its life span.

It is time to replace it, and I don't think anybody here disagrees with that; it's a matter of how we're going to do that. What we're calling on is, once again, those that are in charge of the public purse, politicians, whether it be at the civic, provincial or federal level, get together again and once more reconstitute that vision of what's necessary for the northeast side of the city.

I'd like to read for the House a few of the communities that will now be impacted by this new bridge. We would still have Elmwood, Transcona, North Kildonan, West Kildonan, River East, and if anybody has driven those communities you start to notice—and it was just recently again I was driving to soccer games, strangely enough—and you notice that Transcona and Elmwood and those communities, I mean, slowly it's all growing together. There aren't those clear fields separating the communities, slowly it's all growing together, and there has been substantial growth since the Disraeli Freeway was built. Included in that now is a very strong and vibrant community in East St. Paul and West St. Paul. St. Clements has grown substantially, St. Andrews all the way up to Lockport. Selkirk. Selkirk is growing; there are all kinds of new and exciting developments taking place there. Beausejour. Beausejour is growing substantially. And that's only to mention a few of the communities.

And those communities all have to come down Highway 59, Henderson Highway, Main Street. If you close the bridge going over the Red River, the Disraeli Freeway, it will cause considerable difficulty for all of those communities to access the city of Winnipeg.

This isn't just an Elmwood issue. This isn't just a Transcona or the Kildonans. This isn't a north Main Street, East St. Paul, West St. Paul or beyond. This is an issue that will impact all of us.

In the era of when we want to be more environmentally friendly, having thousands of cars idling, trying to get into their place of work, is not where we should be going. In an era where we want to develop a more friendly, an easier-to-commute-in city, shutting down one of the major arteries of our city is just not on.

I think this resolution is the right one, and I would echo, with other colleagues of this House, that the best is to keep this as non-partisan as possible. Let's call on those in decision-making authority. We call on the mayor and council, we call on the Premier and the Legislature, and on the members of Parliament, our federal government. Let's come to the table. Let's do what's right for our communities. This will impact the city. It is far, far too big, far too important of a transportation route to shut down for 16 months.

If anybody has done any mailers on it, I've done one and the response has been unbelievable. I know that the former Member for Elmwood—and now the member of Parliament—did a lot of mailings on this and got a lot of feedback. If you think you got a lot of mail on this issue now, close that bridge entirely for 16 months and—by the way, I wouldn't be surprised if there were politicians that were tarred and feathered because people will be absolutely aghast at what carnage will be on our streets as far as traffic is concerned, because the other infrastructure will not be able to handle the traffic and the kind of demands that will be on our roads. It will be harmful to our citizens, harmful to our schools, our children. It will actually affect the quality of life in the northeast quadrant of the city.

I call upon all levels of government, all political stripes, let's do the right thing. Let's show some vision and build a bridge, build a roadway, like the last time it was built, and do the right thing. Shutting it down for 16 months shouldn't even be on the table.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the resolution, an issue that has been raised in the Legislature in a different form, in question period, in a slightly more partisan way on occasion by no less than the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), who has taken a decidedly different tack in this resolution, more in terms of style and substance. But I did want to note that I think the tone of the resolution is constructive. Not that the tone of other resolutions isn't constructive, but certainly there seems to be an attempt to reach some common ground.

I want to start from that basic premise that, when this issue was first raised, I know it was certainly the former Member for Elmwood, I know he was just mentioned—he's now obviously our member of Parliament for Elmwood-Transcona—did raise the issue directly with the City, something I know the

new Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) has already done. I believe the new Member for Elmwood has already met with the mayor to outline the concerns of his constituents. I think he can speak with authority for the whole northeast quadrant of the city because this is not an Elmwood issue in a restricted sense. It really affects the whole quadrant of the city.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to also acknowledge that, as a province, when we build or repair bridges, when we construct highways, we make a point of limiting the impact on access. I can talk as a former Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, former Transportation Minister, we go out of our way to plan in such a way as not to cut off access. Obviously, you have to repair and refurbish bridges. You have to build new bridges on occasion. The whole point is to improve access for the public, not to disrupt access in a major way.

We all know what can happen when you disrupt access, bridge access. It can have impacts certainly on safety, as has been indicated here. But the business community—there are many businesses that are very dependent on a specific transportation link being open. If that link is not open, it can have a devastating impact. I've seen businesses here in the city that have been negatively impacted by construction that limits road access for maybe a few weeks at a time. I just talked to people who have been through that. It can be a huge issue for businesses. Members opposite know that is a real problem. I know that when we've dealt with bridges, we have been able to find ways to do it in the least disruptive manner.

I want to particularly echo what the Member for Elmwood talked about in terms of the whole quadrant of the city. What strikes me of northeast Winnipeg, there is a lot of growth. There are a lot of encouraging signs that we see. There's some tremendous growth that is taking place. We're seeing a lot of growth and development in downtown Winnipeg. We are seeing people increasingly working and seeking recreation in downtown Winnipeg. A lot of those people are coming from northeast Winnipeg. When we talk about the Disraeli Bridge, I think it's important to note that that's not just a link for the northeast quadrant, it's an important link for the downtown. If that link is closed, it's going to impact on a lot of the real progress we're seeing downtown over the last number of years. I think that's important to note.

I want to indicate, by the way, that we're very proud of our support as a province for municipal roads, particularly in the city of Winnipeg. I think it's important to put on the record the degree to which we do fund city street works. I mean, \$33 million in residential street repairs, \$31 million for major multi-year projects, the Inkster, McGillivray boulevards, the Fort Garry bridge and the Hamilton bridge. Now, I say that, by the way, because this part of our five-year \$125-million commitment to the City of Winnipeg, we're at the point where, the last couple of years, we're almost at 50 percent provincial cost sharing of residential street work in the city of Winnipeg. Fifty percent. I think that's hugely significant.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Now, in terms of the Disraeli, it has not been part of the City's proposals to us. They are looking at a very different model, what's called a P3 model. They may at some point in time, seek federal or provincial funding. Their priorities have been focussed on obviously some of the bridges that are under construction now and under repair now.

So I don't want to preclude any further discussions, but whether or not we are part of the financing of the bridge, I want to indicate to members of the House that, going back for at least a year, we have communicated either as MLAs or else through government some of the real concerns that people in northeast Winnipeg have about the proposals to not only close the Disraeli Bridge, but the level of construction that's going to take place. I mean, how many lanes? I want to stress that.

* (11:30)

I also want to point out something else that I think is important to note here, and that's the degree to which we're not just talking about, you know, traffic in northeast Winnipeg in terms of automobile traffic. I think it's important to note that I'm very proud of the fact that we, as a province, now have an agreement with the City of Winnipeg, with some federal cost sharing as well, to build rapid transit from downtown Winnipeg to what will be the Jubilee station. We precommitted the provincial share to go all the way to the University of Manitoba. And if you look at the City of Winnipeg's Rapid Transit Task Force report—I think Councillor Wyatt was the Chair; I think Councillor Gerbasi was an important part of that—they indicated that in terms of planning, perspective, the next link would be for northeast Winnipeg.

In fact, I remember the former Member for Elmwood used to carry around a document, a futuristic document from the '60s, you know, talking about the potential for a subway. Shows you, in a way, how much forward thinking there was but, you know, here in 2008 and 2009, we're actually now doing what many other jurisdictions have done, which is commit to rapid transit. And that's important because even if you deal with the closure of the Disraeli Bridge, even if you deal with some of the traffic issues, if you want that link between the downtown and northeast Winnipeg to continue to develop to the degree that it has, rapid transit has to be part of the mix.

By the way, when I say rapid transit, active transportation as well. I want it to be known that we are planning for bike commuter paths for the rapid transit corridor already to the University of Manitoba.

That's important because, you know, one thing I note when I talk to anybody from northeast Winnipeg—now correct me if I'm wrong here—I look to, perhaps the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) who's got considerable experience in representing that quadrant of the city and just went through a by-election, but there's a lot of people, I find, in northeast Winnipeg feel left out a lot of times, feel like northeast Winnipeg doesn't necessarily get the recognition it deserves; I don't know if that's a fair statement. You know, I feel a bit of a kinship with northern Manitoba at times. Mind you, a lot of northern communities don't have bridges, period, so it's a bit more of a challenge. I know the Member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead) can speak about Norway House—*[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: Oh, Niki Ashton—

Mr. Ashton: —but you know, and yes, I know our member of Parliament is working hard on that. I thank the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) for putting that on the record.

But I digress. I mean, the bottom line here is I don't think, at times, northeast Winnipeg gets the recognition it deserves, and I think we as a provincial government have done a lot to start giving it that kind of recognition. Yes, by raising issues like the Disraeli Bridge, but, you know, more importantly, down the line, working on other issues, including, obviously, further issues related to Disraeli Bridge, but rapid transit.

You know, we're building community health centres in northeast Winnipeg. We're, you know, part, I believe, of some dramatic improvements that have been taking place in transportation, improvements to Highway 59 and some of the other links into the northeast of Winnipeg.

So I just want to put on the record that we will continue to raise this with the City. We'll continue to ask them to show some common sense. We will assist in whatever way we can in terms of their planning. You know, we plan to keep our links open as much as possible, but I think our message to the citizens of northeast Winnipeg is that the message is being heard, you know, it's being heard loud and clear.

The bottom line is here at the Manitoba Legislature, I think, through this debate and discussion today on this resolution, we're saying it's very important to listen to the voices in northeast Winnipeg, make sure it gets the immediate recognition on the Disraeli Bridge, but in the long term continues to get the increased recognition it's getting in so many areas. You know, that's the bottom line for northeast Winnipeg; it deserves a lot more recognition and, quite frankly, I believe we're giving it the kind of recognition it deserves. Yes, on this issue, but many other issues as well. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Acting Speaker, I rise to, first of all, indicate that I'm a very strong supporter of this resolution. It's very important the Disraeli Bridge, when it is repaired, that there be an alternative route or routes that will remain open, that we don't have a complete closure of the Disraeli Freeway without any other compensatory approach, which will recognize that there is a huge, huge traffic flow every day back and forth down the Disraeli, across the Disraeli Freeway, and that people in northeast Winnipeg and, indeed, people in Beausejour and in East St. Paul and in East Selkirk and in Birds Hill, and all the other areas in northeast of Winnipeg, deserve to make sure that there are strong, open transportation arteries going to the city of Winnipeg, the centre of Winnipeg and that these arteries are functioning well and that people don't have long delays because of the closure of the Disraeli Freeway.

Some of the initial proposals to close the Disraeli Freeway without making any compensatory approaches clearly were inappropriate, didn't recognize the huge amount of traffic, the tremendous

disruption that would result, the traffic chaos that would result if there wasn't attention to this.

Now I hear the MLA for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) in terms of his wish not to make this political. I interpret that as, please don't attack me, I'm working hard for you and I'm doing what I can. We've heard during the campaign that the MLA for Elmwood promised that he would make sure the Disraeli didn't close and we all are looking forward to when he's able to fulfil that promise. We're sure that the MLA will vote with us as we all vote, hopefully, before this comes to a close to support this resolution and to combine effort to make sure that people in northeast Winnipeg are well supported. But at the same time we have to be practical in the way that we approach this.

The Disraeli Bridge is a single structure and the problem is that when you repair it there are going to be times during that repair where it is not possible to keep the alternative or two lanes open. So that's a huge problem and the reality is that you need an alternative. An extra span beside it is not a very practical alternative because of the huge cost because of the fact that you're going to have to expropriate a lot of property to do that.

It would have been possible if the government had worked quickly on rapid transit to put in a lane that could have been used, a bridge in the long run for rapid transit and a temporary could have been used for traffic on Disraeli. I don't believe this government will act fast enough for that.

There's a more practical alternative, and that is to put a span beside the Louise Bridge and change the arteries which come in to the Louise Bridge. That is certainly doable and that could make a huge difference if done well and done properly.

I think all of us are waiting for action. The by-election is now over almost two months ago and no specific concrete plan has been presented. Let us move forward in supporting this because that concrete plan needs to be here and we need to have action.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Thank you very much, Madam Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to add my comments today about Resolution No. 9, the Disraeli Freeway bridge repair, Disraeli Freeway Must Remain Open, sponsored by the Member for River East. I thank the honourable member for being the sponsor and bringing forward this matter here.

I have listened to the comments of all members of this House that have spoken so far on this issue and I must say with respect to the resolution itself it looks very familiar to the comments that were made by the former Member for Elmwood when he was a member of this Chamber. Looking at the advertising that he has done now with respect to this issue, for well over a year, with respect to keeping the Disraeli open, while there's progress being made on the construction of a new component to the Disraeli Freeway as the former Member for Elmwood had been suggesting now for a considerable amount of time. But I do know that the comments that are contained or the portions of the resolution contained here today bear a striking resemblance to the comments that were made by the former Member for Elmwood who is now the member of Parliament for Elmwood-Transcona.

But having said that, Madam Acting Speaker, I will add comments with respect to the issue itself. I do know that I had commented on this issue before with the impact that it's going to have upon the community in which—that I represent, the community of Transcona. Having had the opportunity to talk with the member of Parliament for Elmwood-Transcona about this issue on many occasions, we've come to the conclusion that it's not only folks that utilize the Disraeli Freeway that are going to be inconvenienced to a significant degree if the Disraeli was to close for 16 months, as some are suggesting, but I suggest to those members that, perhaps, construction being what it is, and being weather conditional, there is some prospect that that could be delayed even longer than the 16 months that are being considered or contemplated here.

* (11:40)

I know the member of Parliament for Elmwood-Transcona, and I have talked about this and options that he might propose to keeping this matter open. I know the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) currently, and I welcome him to this debate and to this Chamber here, as well as the Member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead). This issue is important to the larger community, not just to the communities of Elmwood and Transcona as being the communities directly affected, but also the larger, surrounding communities of East St. Paul, West St. Paul and into the Kildonans that are going to be impacted, as well, by any closure that would occur with respect to the Disraeli Freeway.

Now, I have said on the public record that I'm supportive of having additional lanes constructed alongside of the existing lanes that need to be rejuvenated or replaced. I believe that that will be one of the solutions, serious suggestions that should be considered to minimize the impact on the traffic flows, the 42,000-plus vehicles a day that utilize the Disraeli Freeway that would have to find an alternative route into the downtown area of the city of Winnipeg.

So I'm a supporter of having the additional lanes constructed and that those lanes should be constructed prior to the closure for rebuilding or rejuvenation of the existing Disraeli Freeway. I think that construction should start sooner rather than later on those additional two lanes.

Having said that, I find it interesting that the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), in her resolution, which is, from my interpretation, a relatively non-partisan resolution in comparison to the questions that she had asked in October of last year, which were quite partisan in nature, but her suggestions with respect to the impacts that are going to be with respect to congestion of the traffic flow from the northeast quadrant and beyond of that part of Winnipeg, the impacts environmental with all of the cars and trucks that are going to be now diverted onto alternate bridges into the centre of the city of Winnipeg, and the amount of idling of those vehicles that is going to occur as a result of that traffic congestion.

Obviously, it's important to all members and we want to find a solution to that, but I suggest to the Member for River East, if she is serious about this resolution, and I anticipate that she is, that I ask her to communicate with the federal government to make sure that the federal government is onside as a full and willing partner to rebuild these new spans and to rejuvenate the Disraeli Freeway. I hope she has communicated with the federal government to make sure that they are a partner in that, and also communicate with the other partners to make sure that she's expressed to them her support for having the three-partnership arrangement to have this project move forward.

I know the federal government is interested in shovel-ready projects, as the Member for Elmwood has indicated here. That is no secret in this province, or elsewhere across Canada. We think that the federal government wants the shovel-ready projects to proceed under one of two different packages and

we hope that those projects will proceed quite quickly. I'm hopeful that, with respect to the Disraeli, that that project can proceed with the additional lanes sooner, and that the federal government will come to the table much more quickly.

I know the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has indicated his interest in having additional lanes. I think he said a span beside the Louise Bridge. Now, everybody knows that the Louise Bridge was constructed originally as an inducement or encouragement to have CP Rail bring their rail lines into the city of Winnipeg versus what is now the city of Selkirk. So that bridge was originally constructed as a railway bridge and has been in service for going on nearly 100 years now. So it was obviously a well-built structure in the beginning, but obviously that bridge, too, will need to be replaced in the near future and additional lanes to service the northeast quadrant of the city of Winnipeg and beyond is obviously something that, hopefully, the three partners will consider. I think that we want to make sure we have the necessary programs or alternatives in place before the construction is undertaken and that additional lanes put in place, but I don't see the additional span for the Louise Bridge as being possible immediately at this time to alleviate the concerns with respect to the Disraeli. I think the additional lanes need to be alongside the Disraeli first, and then, of course, taking the additional work for the Disraeli upgrade.

Now, I believe there will be a concern with the residents of northeast Winnipeg. I know my colleague the member of Parliament for Elmwood-Transcona has conducted a petition of residents all around northeast Winnipeg and has received many, many thousands of signatures back by members of the public who are going to be, and rightly so, quite concerned if the Disraeli is closed without having some alternatives put in place. I know the member opposite in this Chamber has made mention of that.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, if I could suggest that members of this Legislature take the steps to communicate with both the federal government, the City of Winnipeg, and the provincial government to make sure we have a full partnership arrangement involved in the upgrading of these bridge structures that are so crucial to the continued well-being of our communities, I think that is the appropriate step.

I know the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) has referenced here today the significant expansion that we have taking place. My wife and I were just

out walking in our community, as we do many nights of the week, and looking at all the new homes being built in Transcona area and all of the new families. I know, yes, Bill Blaikie Way is one of those streets we walk around—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. In the House, we recognize members by their constituencies or ministers by their portfolios. I just remind all members we do not call individuals by their given name.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker, but I'm sure you will recall that I referenced the last word was "Way," so it was in reference not to a particular individual but to a particular street name under which new homes are being constructed. I just wanted to clarify for members of the House the significant expansion and new families that are moving to the community of Transcona.

Of course, for those who want to shop or to take part in the recreational opportunities in the downtown area of Winnipeg or to come back and forth to work or to visit friends and family, those bridge structures are important, and I would not want to see them closed, causing significant disruption to those families that are choosing Transcona in addition to the existing families who live in the northeast part of Winnipeg.

With those few words, Madam Acting Speaker, I think this resolution has some merit in encouraging the three-way partnership to participate. I'm hopeful. I don't know for certain, but I'm hopeful that the City of Winnipeg will have communicated with the federal government and asked them to come on board as a partner for this Disraeli infrastructure project and perhaps other bridge infrastructure projects that need to be improved. I'm hopeful that the City of Winnipeg will undertake that action as the Member for River East indicates she has, and I know I have as well, asked other partners to be involved. I know that our provincial government is extremely interested in ensuring that the traffic and the lives are not disrupted for the citizens of northeast Winnipeg as a result of the Disraeli closure. Thank you.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I rise here to put some of my thoughts and some words on this resolution from the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) which I think is very sensible for all of us to work on this resolution in a positive and non-partisan way.

I'd like to begin with the statement, as the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) and the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) said, that northeast had been, at one time, taken for granted, that a lot of things that are developing there were not looked at from a perspective of future transportation and traffic management. I think we are doing it now, and I'm very happy to see a new wave of understanding to facilitate the traffic flow from the community that has emerged is very, very important for the city.

I remember once at an event I said northeast is important. I mean, it could be a little bit of, you know, emotional statement, but the way I spoke at that event, which was liked by people, that in my faith, north is where God lives and east is where sun rises. So northeast is very, very important from a spiritual point of view.

* (11:50)

There are a lot of good things happening in the northeast, in terms of houses being built, industry is moving and people there very, very friendly. I must say, I am very fortunate to be in Radisson, and I support the people and the people support my ideas in trying to make that community very liveable and wonderful for a lot of other aspects.

Having said all that, I would like to say, the idea of building or repairing of a bridge is a very complicated issue. It's not that simple because it's an engineering function. It's something which relates to safety, and I would say that we are working with the City. I am pleased the City is looking into the aspects of how to make the repairs which are absolutely important because, as people are talking about here, there are bridges which are 100 years old and you can't leave those bridges because it's managing traffic. You've got to repair them. You've got to fix so that they don't really hurt people if they are damaged and some accidents happen. So it's important for us to look at how to do that.

The question is simply this is a project that cannot be decided by one of the three levels of government. We have heard from the Member for Elmwood in the past. We heard from the current Member for Elmwood. We heard from the Member for Transcona. We have heard from the Member for River East. We also heard from the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) that we are all talking the same thing. The question will be—which I am very positive about. If we can make the conscience of our own and sit together, then there will be a solution.

I'm pretty sure that we all know if there is a will there is a way.

Question is: How do we do that? Who will fund? To expect one party to come along and say, yes, either we should build six lanes or we should build two lanes or we should not build anything or we should let the traffic be jammed. I mean, these are some of the things that cannot be discussed in this Chamber. It should be discussed across the table that we all sit together and look at solutions, which are engineering solutions, yes—[*interjection*] Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) is giving a very good idea that, yes, we will be like this. We will be united to make the solution work. I think that it is possible. I thank, again, the Member for River Heights to bring this issue from her perspective.

So we see here, first time I think I've seen after a long time, that all three parties are talking about the same thing: to work together to bring this solution of this traffic, which is very important from the northeast.

So I would say, that from my own perspective of the government, we have done remarkably well in working with the municipalities. I think the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) spoke, as a Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs that we have done remarkably well in working with municipalities.

I can see that since 2007-08, we have provided \$33 million to residential street repairs. Madam Acting Speaker, we have paid \$31 million for major multi-year projects, including the twinning of both Inkster and McGillivray Boulevards, while also providing funding for the Fort Garry Bridge and Hamilton bridge. So we have done our job in terms of taking priorities to solve problems which makes people commute from one end to the other end of the city of our province.

We have also looked at infrastructure funding, which is important for any society to think how do we make the infrastructure funding work, which is not actually only for a showpiece, but functional. So I think that we have—I am positive that we have that attitude. We have that leadership and we have the ideas how to move and go forward.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I think safety, engineering, these are some of the concerns that I emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that whenever we come across the table, we cannot compromise the ideas of safety for long term. Engineering is a very, very sophisticated faculty that

when we repair a bridge, you should not makeshift repair. You should be repairing so that, another hundred years, or another mode of traffic comes, that bridge should sustain that particular type of engineering load.

I'm positive this was a good resolution to be brought here in the Chamber. I'm also sharing with the House my own constituents living that far off of the city, that they commute. I myself take the Disraeli Bridge a few times when I go out from where I live to do some shopping and do some things in the downtown on the weekends, and I see the traffic will be a disaster if the bridge is not kept open or the traffic flow is totally stopped.

We are all in agreement. People are in agreement, parties are in agreement, we are all in agreement. So with these words, I like to say that, yes, I support this resolution in a non-partisan way. We should work together and build the kind of unity together. Sit with the City, sit with the federal government and try to make this real solution, good for people of the northeast and for the whole of Winnipeg.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I'm pleased to participate in the debate today about the Disraeli Bridge. Of course, I represent the constituency of Selkirk, which is a rural provincial constituency, Mr. Speaker, but, as the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) and others have said, some of my constituents perhaps travel over the Disraeli probably on a daily basis as they commute from their homes into the downtown.

I represent the area of south St. Clements or all of St. Clements, of course, the city of Selkirk, and I do live in the region as well. Of course, I have alternate ways to get down into the downtown. We have, as we know, Highway 7, Highway 8, Highway 9 and Highway 59, Mr. Speaker. As I say, I live in the south end of the constituency, and I travel down Highway 8 and Highway 9 to get down to the center of the city, to get to this Legislature.

Members have talked about the non-partisan nature of this resolution which is a departure, of course, from actions and comments made by the Conservative and the Liberal members in this Chamber, both in questions prior to the by-election and during the by-election. We know that the by-election, of course was, as is the case, a very partisan situation, and we know that partisan comments were

made by the Leader of the Liberal Party and his candidate and the members for the Conservative Party. Mr. Speaker, now that that's over, and our new Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) was elected and joins us in this House, we could perhaps take now a non-partisan approach to dealing with this infrastructure issue.

I don't think anybody would like to see the bridge close. I know my friend, Mr. Maloway, our member for Elmwood-Transcona, he of course raised this many times, both in this Chamber and in his constituency. I remember he put signs up throughout the Elmwood area, Keep Disraeli Open, and he'd have petitions and he used this, and he still, to this day, uses this issue. It's an important issue to him and to his constituents. I know he even raised it in the House of Commons. He did a member's statement and this was the issue that he focussed on.

Mr. Speaker, we can be very proud of what we've done, the amount of money that we've invested

in some of the thoroughfares that enter the north end of Winnipeg. For example, I know Highway 8 was completely rebuilt, a northbound lane, leading from Winnipeg to the St. Andrews Airport. I believe the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) can tell me, I think it was \$25 million or \$30 million invested in that stretch.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we rebuilt the intersection of Highway 9 and 27 which was spent, again, about \$10 million, which was something that Glen Findlay promised to do when he was the Minister of Highways in 1995, and leading up into the provincial election, of course, they ignored it, and we were able to accomplish—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Selkirk will have 7 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 12, 2009

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