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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 8, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 213—The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 213, The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would like to just start off by acknowledging a few individuals, in particular Raven Thundersky, Laurel Gardiner, Dorine Cooper and Jeff LaPlante for their input, in particular Raven who took the time to meet with me on a few occasions to talk about what is a very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know in terms of the best words to say in terms of trying somehow to convince members of this Chamber to allow this bill to go to committee. I will do my best at saying that I truly believe that it is in the best interests of all Manitobans if consideration would be given to allow this bill to go to committee. I say that because in discussions I have had with a wide variety of Manitobans, there is overwhelming support for Manitoba and this government to set a fixed price for milk. It is for those people that we are here to serve, and I ask all members of this Chamber to recognize the importance of Bill 213 and to allow this bill to ultimately become law.

One of the interesting e-mails that I had received, and this individual, I have no idea in terms of if they are even leaning towards a political party, but I want to take a direct quote from the e-mail, Mr. Speaker, in which it states, quote: We in Manitoba have a government which was founded upon and continues to state its commitment to social justice. These milk prices are anything but just. One group of our citizens, perhaps the most vulnerable, is being severely penalized. Is this racism once again rearing its evil head or merely indifference to human need?

Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate that the four-litre price of milk today in Winnipeg you can get for \$3.59. I was provided this just yesterday, where it lists off a number of places, and that same four litres of milk, for example, in Churchill would cost \$7.25; in Red Sucker Lake, \$11.89; in Oxford House, \$10.49; in Wasagamack, \$11.89. Excuse me if I get the pronunciation wrong. In Little Grand, \$7.25; in Gods River, \$10.49; in Tadoule Lake, \$17.40; in Shamattawa, \$12.29. As I say, my pronunciation might not necessarily be the best. My leader was able to correct me.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, it does not take away from the importance of doing something on this issue. You know, we set up a system that allowed for us to protect the dairy industry by establishing a floor so that we can protect our dairy farmers. What I am really asking this Chamber to do is to protect our children and not only our children but all Manitobans. It is not acceptable for us to be charging so much for the price of milk when milk provides so much in terms of our diet, and there are so many benefits.

I have had discussions, in particular, with individuals outside of this Legislature that talked about the reasons of health and the cost savings alone that could be saved if we had more children drinking milk. It is our responsibility to make sure that the price of milk is affordable no matter where you live in the province of Manitoba.

If we can protect the dairy farmer, why could we not go out there and do the right thing for our children in our province, Mr. Speaker? If we can say that a bottle of beer will cost this amount of dollars, or this amount, no matter where you live in the province of Manitoba, why do we not do the same thing for the price of a litre of milk? If we can do it for alcohol, why can we not do it for beer? That is, in essence, the challenge that I put out to the government.

Mr. Speaker, the communities that I referred to are represented from MLAs within the governing party in most part. *[interjection]* The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) says that we are going to hear from one. I know the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), who is very sympathetic, I believe, to what is being talked about. I know that he has had

some discussions with some of the individuals that I have referred to. This is an issue that should cross all political party lines because, at the end of the day, I truly do believe that all political parties can get behind this legislation.

The government, over the last little while, has been asking for us to pass their legislative agenda, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest to you that this particular bill is just as worthy of passage as any of the government pieces of legislation that they have to offer. So, if they see the merit in their own legislation, why not take a look at other ideas that are before this Legislature? They have the opportunity to make a real difference. I trust and I hope that they will do the right thing. At least allow the bill to pass this morning. By allowing the bill to pass second reading this morning, what will happen is we will be afforded the opportunity to go for public presentation.

* (10:10)

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there will be tens if not hundreds of individuals that would welcome the opportunity to advocate for setting the price of milk across the province of Manitoba. All I am asking for is allow Manitobans the opportunity to be heard. I would welcome the opportunity to in fact have the committee go to the community of Thompson or The Pas or Flin Flon, even onto one or two reserves which would be a first. Allow that opportunity to occur and you will hear first-hand from the people that are living in these communities how important of an issue milk is because they recognize the value of what milk has to our children, to all Manitobans.

It is not just the issue of milk, there are other products that are out there that need to be addressed, but milk, I think, sets the stage. My last appeal, because I am told my time is just about to run out, is I would call on the government to recognize what it did to protect the dairy industry. I would ask them to look at what they are doing in terms of the setting of the price of beer. If we can do it for the dairy farmers and we can do it for the alcohol consumers, surely to goodness we can do it for those that need to consume the price of milk. Let us make it affordable to all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, no matter where you live.

Let us consult, let us allow all Manitobans to make presentation on this bill. We have a wonderful opportunity to do that. All we have to do is allow Bill 213 to go to committee stage. We then establish a procedure that would allow for public input on this critically important issue, just as important as any

other piece of legislation that this Legislature is facing today. If in fact, Mr. Speaker, the government does not do that, rest assured this is going to be an issue that I will bring up from now until the issue has actually been dealt with where we have one set price.

So I ask the government to do the right thing on this issue. Thank you.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to speak on an issue that has been raised many, many times before, and that is the quality of food in the North.

Mr. Speaker, the member brings forward a proposal to put forward uniform prices across the province, but there is very little detail in this bill and there is no detail on how the Liberals would propose implementing this plan. Under the current system that we have they only regulate the high price of a one-litre container of milk, not all sizes. This bill does not seem to change that practice either.

Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the milk industry and he is right, we have supply management of the milk industry and that system is in place to set the price based on the cost of production formula of what it costs the farmer to produce the milk. He compares this to the liquor industry. I would say to the member, he knows full well that the Manitoba Liquor Commission is a Crown corporation and within that corporation there is ability to distribute, to cover off costs. I wonder whether he is suggesting that we now make a monopoly of the milk industry and take over full control of it. If that is what he is suggesting, I would also suggest that he better talk to the milk industry as well because I have not heard any suggestion from the industry that we should be monopolizing, taking over the milk production and monopolizing that industry as well.

So there are no solutions, but I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that this is an issue, and the cost of food is one that our government has taken very seriously. I can say to the member as well, I have had family that have lived in the North for many, many years and know the cost of food. Our family took different options to ensure that they had the nutritional value of milk but also took steps.

There are other options that people can take. There are powdered milk products. There are canned milk products that are available. There is a new product that is on the market, the UHT milk that can sit on the shelves without refrigeration for many,

many months. With the winter road system that we have, there is the ability to bring milk in during the winter road season and reduce the cost of the transportation which is the highest cost of moving food products into the North.

But, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that northerners have a higher costs structure, our government has taken several steps. We have provided Healthy Baby nutrition. It does not matter where people live, we have given back what was clawed back by the previous administration on child tax benefits so that there is more money there for families. We have also provided an additional benefit of \$25 a month, effective February 28, for northern Manitobans who receive income assistance to help because we recognize that there are increasing costs.

But, as well, Mr. Speaker, our government put together a group of people called the Northern Food Prices Project Steering Committee, and this committee had representatives from First Nations organizations, provincial and federal governments. This committee produced the *Northern Food Prices Report* which led to the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative.

I want to share with the member some of the comments that came out of this report. The issue of milk consumption in the North is a very complex issue. The issue of northern foods is very complex. The report that was written addressed the suggestion of establishing a system of selling milk at one price in the North, and this committee, Mr. Speaker, advised that we should not adopt this strategic option.

The reason is and I quote: "Milk is an important and healthy food but not the only nutritious food that is needed in a diet. . . . In fact, there are controversial issues related to lactose intolerance that make the consumption of fluid milk problematic for many northern citizens, especially those of Aboriginal origin. . . . In addition, many northern people do not see consumption of milk as an important part of their traditional eating habits." This is on page 47 of the *Northern Food Prices Report*.

So there are issues with regard to whether or not milk is one food that should be brought into the North because of intolerance and this is a report that came from a committee of northerners.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have taken other steps as well. The Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin) and myself have been working

on a northern food strategy, and that is how can we get back to producing more food in the North. There are projects like greenhouses, gardening projects that would allow for more production of healthier foods that will further help to reduce the costs that people pay for transporting food because the transportation costs do not only apply to milk; they apply to all foods.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we have taken some steps to help to reduce transportation costs, as well, by increasing the number of winter roads that have been put into the North. By giving northern people control over railway helps them, again, to have the ability to make some of their own decisions and take control of some of the costs that apply to them.

So, Mr. Speaker, the member comes forward with a bill that has been talked about in many circles. The member does not put forward any solutions as to how we might be able to address this particular issue. But I would encourage him to look at the other things that can be done to help northern people reduce their food costs, other steps that can be taken with regard to production of food in the North.

I can say to him that there were programs that were provided by the federal Liberal government, as well, in the Territories. I do not know whether they were provided in northern Manitoba, but in the Yukon I saw projects where the federal government was part of projects where they were encouraging people to have more food production in their own community. And, you know, Mr. Speaker, with the amount of daylight that is available in the North, although it is a short growing season, there is the ability to grow some of your vegetables.

*(10:20)

It is important that we work together with communities and preserving foods, as well. If you can do that there is the ability to reduce other costs. That, in conjunction with the additional monies that we have put in place, Mr. Speaker, do help to reduce some of those costs. I sincerely do understand the challenges that are facing some communities, and I encourage those people who are concerned about the price of food in the North to continue to work with us, to look at those projects that can be developed so that there is some production, but, Mr. Speaker, having the additional money will also help.

As we look at reducing the food costs in the North, we also have to be sensitive to northern needs and issues and respect the views of northern

communities. I can say to you that, as I reported from the *Northern Food Prices Report*, there are some issues with lactose intolerance in some communities. Mr. Speaker, I think we also have to look at what the other options are for milk, what is the ability of bringing in the UHT milk that is available, and that would last longer and not be as expensive to move, because the cost that the member refers to are really transportation costs and proper distribution.

So I would say to the member that there is more work to be done with northern food pricing other than just the milk, that we have to look at ensuring that there is a healthy food supply, and the ability to have more self-sufficiency in many of the communities. Those are the issues that we will continue to work on; food self-sufficiency, reducing transportation costs, looking at other options that will allow food to be coming in at a more reasonable price and we will continue to work with people in the North. As the member opposite said, we do represent those communities, and our members raised the issue of food prices in the North. That is why we have made changes—

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

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few words on the record in regard to the bill that was introduced by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill 213, The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act.

I commend the member for bringing this forward. I think that this is a bill that needs very, very serious consideration by the House. Something that I think that we have to be more aware of is the fact that we are dealing with a commodity that is a very, very necessary part of the nutrition of children, especially as they grow and as they develop and they mature. We can relate to a lot of the unfortunate discomfort that a lot of children have with tooth decay and tooth disease because of their diet and the amount of sugar and the amount that they get into their system and they unfortunately get tooth decay. One of the things that would be of tremendous benefit, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that milk is something that all children and all adults, in fact, should have, but specifically children should have the access and the ability to have milk with their daily diet.

When you look at some of the prices that the Member for Inkster brought into question in regard

to what a four-litre jug of milk is worth, like in Tadoule Lake at \$4.35, Little Grand at \$7.25, Red Sucker Lake at \$11.89 for a 2-percent four-litre, Mr. Speaker, those prices are horrendous in a place that is, in all likelihood, on very fixed incomes for a lot of residents in that area, for them to buy that type of milk. I think it is something that this government should look at very, very seriously, is to try to get a regulated price for milk in the northern area, because when you look at the city of Winnipeg, you can go to your neighbourhood's grocery store and pick up a four-litre jug of milk for around \$3.50, \$3.60 for four litres. When you compare that to, say, like I mentioned earlier, Red Sucker Lake at \$11.89, that is almost four times as much. That is incredible.

I think that with something like that something has to be very, very seriously considered by the government because they can regulate other commodities. They can regulate—particularly, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) talked about liquor and booze that can be regulated. I am not saying that these particular areas, some of them are dry, they are dry reserves and they do not have liquor on them, but that does not mean that they still cannot put the regulations on milk to get some sort of nutrition and better living conditions for the people in that particular area.

I remember when, I think it was two years ago, myself and the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), were talking about this and a resolution was brought forth. It was put on the Order Paper at that time, very similar to what the Member for Inkster is bringing forth. At that time it was a resolution for debate. This now, I guess, is a little bit more formal presentation to the House in the sense of a bill. With the presentation of a bill, it gives the opportunity for the House to react. It gives an opportunity for the government to introduce this bill, to bring it to committee and have something to regulate the price of milk. I know that a lot of the members on the other side do not have the ability or do not want to speak to this because they would be criticizing their own government. But I do recall back to, as I mentioned, the resolution that was brought forth by myself back in the Thirty-eighth Session of the Legislature. [*interjection*] Two years ago, I mentioned earlier, it was two years ago.

So this is something that I think has been looked at in a very serious way because of the dental health of pre-schoolers in northern Manitoba and the dental health of a lot of the children that we hear that are on tremendously long waiting lists because of the

ineffectiveness of the government over there to address the problem. We have a lot of children that, unfortunately, are suffering because of tooth decay and disease, and one of the reasons is because of nutrition. I think that is a proven fact that if the children are not getting the proper nutrition, and one of the biggest components of proper nutrition is milk, and the fact is something can be done. This is not something that is really of a grandiose nature of great change. All it is is changing the regulation.

What the Member for Inkster is saying, let us review it, let us establish a commission to look at what is the possible solution for it. I recommend that this government do take this to committee and have the public come forth, make presentation, and to be conscientious of the fact that they are doing something for the people of the North in trying to help the children of the North, particularly with the milk and the ability to have proper nutrition. So, with those short words, Mr. Speaker, I would recommend that we now push the bill on to committee for further review. Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I rise to speak on Bill 213, The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act. Milk pricing is actually something that I know a little bit about because I worked on dairy farms when I was in high school. The first one that I worked on was owned by my first cousins, Donald and Dorothy Martindale, and they shipped milk to, I believe, a business called Villanova, which was a cheese and butter manufacturing plant. They got a terrible price for their milk and, basically, made a subsistence living. In spite of that, I think they were the hardest working people I have ever met in my life.

Then I worked for Melvin and Elsie Wellman, who had a fluid milk quota, and because this was a marketing board type of arrangement, they got the cost of production plus a small profit and they made a good living.

Now, today's bill refers to regulation of fluid milk prices. If one were to look into the history of this, you would find that this was very controversial in the past because there were regulations at one time in Manitoba that regulated the retail price of milk. There were great struggles between those who wanted to keep the price of milk down in order to help the poor in Manitoba, and I think probably the private sector on the other hand wanted to deregulate milk pricing. So now we are presented with a bill that wants to go back to regulating the price of milk

at the retail level. This is seen as a way of helping, especially low income people in northern Manitoba.

* (10:30)

The parallel that the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) gives is the uniform pricing of alcohol throughout Manitoba. I think that the member needs to consider that there are both pros and cons of that. If the price of alcohol was not regulated, and the price of transportation was included to northern Manitoba, I think that would probably lead to a great increase in the problem of bootlegging. I do not think that the Member for Inkster considered that when he uses the parallel of alcohol pricing in Manitoba.

This bill requires the Manitoba Milk Price Review Commission to establish a fixed price for at least one type of fluid milk that is to be charged by retailers throughout the province.

We are aware of the additional challenges facing northern Manitobans. We represent in this Legislature all constituents in northern Manitoba because all of those constituencies are represented in the government caucus. In fact, I think the next speaker will be the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) who represents many northerners very well in this Legislature.

So we are familiar with these issues, and that is why we increased a northern allowance for people receiving employment and income assistance payments for those living north of latitude 53. Effective February 2005 eligible families received an increase of 20 percent of their food component, and if you look at how that affects families, it actually made quite a difference to their food allowance. For example, a single person on general assistance received an increase of \$23.98; a single person with a disability, \$30.76; a single parent, one child four years old, \$46.02; a single parent, two children 10 and 13, an increase of \$77.12; and two parents on general assistance with two children ages four and six, \$85.24.

I think, since these are monthly increases that I am talking about, that that would buy a lot of milk. So this was a good change in the rates and beneficial to northerners because it was targeted to northerners to recognize the increased costs of food products in the North, including milk. I think the main reason for that has to do with transportation costs.

In 2002, our government appointed the Northern Food Prices Project Steering Committee. This committee included representation from First

Nations organizations, the provincial and federal governments and the Northern Association of Community Councils.

Our government provides a Healthy Baby nutritional benefit to all mothers in Manitoba, regardless of whether they live on First Nations communities or not, to assist with the cost of healthy food. I think this is very innovative on the part of our government because normally, if it is a provincial program, it only applies to non-First Nations residents. If it is a federal program, normally it applies to First Nations residents only on-reserve and not off-reserve.

There is a lengthy history here, which I am sure the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos) is partly familiar with because he has been here so long, and that is that the federal government used to pay for welfare off-reserve.

In fact, this is something that drove the former provincial government crazy because they off-loaded that expense to the provincial government, and when the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was the Minister of Family Services and I was her critic, I remember the minister saying that this was costing the Province of Manitoba \$25 million a year of a new expense because the federal government just refused to pay for welfare costs for off-reserve First Nations or treaty people. But what we did was we did not worry about jurisdiction or who was supposed to pay for a program in a certain area. We did not introduce it by the provincial government and then hope that the federal government would follow, and follow a good idea. Instead, the nutritional benefit went to all women in Manitoba regardless of whether they are on-reserve or off-reserve.

The committee that I referred to produced the *Northern Food Prices Report*, which led to the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative. So we acted on one of their recommendations. The report contains a thorough review of the issues facing northern Manitobans and access to healthy food choices.

This issue is more complex than simply the issue of access to milk. The report addressed the suggestion of establishing a system of selling milk at one price across the province and advised it did not adopt this as a strategic option because, although milk is an important and healthy food, but it is not the only nutritious food that is needed in the diet. In fact, there are controversial issues related to lactose intolerance that make the consumption of fluid milk problematic for many northern citizens, especially

those of Aboriginal origin. In addition, many Aboriginal people do not see the consumption of milk as important to their traditional eating habits. So there are reasons for not making milk more accessible, and that is it may not actually be nutritionally appropriate for some northern residents.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to conclude with those few remarks so that other members can contribute to this debate and get their party positions and their concerns for their constituents, especially in northern Manitoba, on the record.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Just to stand and put a few words on the record, after having listened to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) put her views of how food, and nutritious food, should be provided to the children of the North and how complex she thought this issue was to ensure proper nutrition to the children of the North.

I find this whole matter of milk pricing to northern people or southern people very interesting. I believe that the farmers that produce the milk are quite willing to ensure that the price of milk should be similar to northerners or southerners. I believe that the supply management process that has been established in the province has worked well to ensure that producers, no matter where they are in the province, will be treated equally and fairly to ensure that they can actually maintain their industry.

Similarly, we have many other initiatives that are very similar. I want to specifically refer to how we deal with The Liquor Control Act, how we deal with the transportation of liquor and the costing of transportation in liquor and how we price beer and liquor in northern Manitoba compared to southern Manitoba. Why is it so difficult for this Minister of Agriculture to understand when you have a regulated pricing system to the producers, that will ensure equal prices paid for product produced and a very valuable and nutritious product that is essential to the development of children in this province, whether they are in northern Manitoba or southern Manitoba or indeed in central Manitoba.

I find it absolutely interesting when the minister said food and milk, the consumption of milk is a very complex issue in northern Manitoba. To me, nutrition for children to ensure that their bone structure will be well developed is not very complex. I would suspect that any nutritionist and/or physician, be they in northern Manitoba or in southern Manitoba, would recommend that proper

nutrition be applied and/or provided to all children in Manitoba.

I would suspect that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) would stand front and centre in support of her industry to ensure that the consumption of that product, such as milk, could in fact increase and that we would encourage increased consumption, instead of standing in this Legislature and telling us how complex an issue this was. The only thing complex about this is it is hard for us, at least for me, to understand the philosophy that the NDP party is prescribing to now, the philosophy of ensuring that liquor will be priced equally across this province through a process of the Liquor Control Board and yet the pricing of milk cannot be stabilized equally across this province. But this Minister of Agriculture will stand in this House and say the consumption of milk is very complex for our children in northern Manitoba.

I think it is imperative, and I would suggest that the NDP government stand with us today and support this resolution and then, in fact, take the action that is required to ensure that equalized pricing will be put in place to ensure that the children of northern Manitoba will have access to the same quantity and quality at the same price that people and the children of the rest of our province have.

* (10:40)

Mr. Speaker, I would truly hope that the resolution that the member from our caucus put before this House, I believe, some two years ago, would be supported. We now see the Liberal caucus bringing forward a bill that would support that resolution. I am asking, as a matter of fact I am pleading with the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province, with the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) of this province, the Minister of Agriculture and indeed the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) that they would stand in this House and support this bill to ensure that the equity that we are looking for for our children and the healthy provisions of proper, nutritious food such as milk be allowed to be transported at equalized rates across this province. If we can do it for beer and liquor for the adults of all of this whole province, then surely this government that has portrayed itself as the social conscience of the people of Manitoba, surely then they can use that social conscience to make the decision to support this piece of legislation.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for Flin Flon, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Killarney School 52 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Stephanie Outhwaite. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

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

* * *

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and pleasure indeed to be able to put a few words on record regarding the private member's Bill 213, one price for milk throughout the province bill I guess you would call it.

I cannot say I am not sympathetic to this bill. Certainly it strikes a chord. It makes sense at one level, but I do believe that it is a little bit superficial and I take some exception to the Member for Emerson saying there is nothing complex about it. It is, in fact, very, very complex. I know it is very complex, Mr. Speaker, because I, too, have talked with Raven Thundersky, and I do want to thank her for the immense effort she is putting into this initiative. I think she is doing a very good job, and so I want to certainly commend her. But it is a lot more complex than people think.

Milk also has a highly symbolic value. Milk means, for little kids, stronger bones and teeth and so on. Yes, who can be against that? Who can be against healthy children? Although it makes sense on that one level, like I said before, it is a lot more than just milk. We are talking about nutritious food in northern Manitoba. It is not just milk; there are other factors that we have to take into account, and we have done a lot as a government. We have, for example, increased the northern allowance for those receiving EIA payments. In February 2005, there is a 20 percent increase in that food component, so that was certainly a move in the right direction.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

As well, on February 26, 2006, EIA recipients in northern Manitoba received \$25 a month more to assist them with increases in the cost of living which resulted from higher gas and oil prices. There is also

our Healthy Baby nutritional benefits, which applies to all mothers in the province.

As well, in 2002 we had a Northern Food Prices Project Steering Committee, and it consisted of a lot of people from various walks of life all across the province: First Nations people, provincial people, federal people, all kinds of reps. I could read you some of those reps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I had a little bit more time, but let me just read a few of them to show you the depth of that particular committee.

We have Robert Allec, a senior negotiator and policy analyst from Manitoba Region Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; Jim Beardy, social development adviser, Keewatin Tribal Council; Jeff Betker and Anna Nault, policy analysts, Manitoba Métis Federation; Dr. Marion Campbell, private consultant and researcher; Louisa Constant, social services adviser; Laurel Gardiner, Building Sustainable Workforces Project, MKO; and so on and so on, pages of them. So we certainly consulted well.

Also the *Northern Food Prices Report* states on page 47—I would like to read that because I think it is a strategic passage and it reads as follows, and I quote: "Milk is an important and healthy food but is not the only nutritious food that is needed in the diet. . . . In fact, there are controversial issues related to lactose intolerance that make the consumption of fluid milk problematic for many northern citizens, especially those of Aboriginal origin. . . . In addition, many Aboriginal people do not see the consumption of milk as important to their traditional eating habits." That, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, comes from page 47 of the *Northern Food Prices Report*.

As I said before, it is a complex issue. I know that the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has his heart in the right place but we cannot simplify the issue either. We have to look at it in its broad implication. There are stumbling blocks to having one price for milk delivered in the North and there are some serious stumbling blocks. I have used the argument about why can you sell a bottle of whiskey for a set price but not a bottle of milk. It is a very tempting argument, but the reality is that it is false argument too because you may have a liquor board in Churchill and in The Pas and in Flin Flon but you do not have liquor boards in the places you want to reach in terms of milk and that is probably Tadoulet Lake, Shamattawa, Lac Brochet and Brochet. So he cannot use that comparison. It simply does not exist structurally right now.

I think the biggest stumbling block of all when I have looked at this subject is transportation. It costs a lot to move liquid milk, particularly in northern areas when there is no winter road, for whatever reason. You have to fly in the milk. You are flying in a lot of bulk, a lot of water in milk and it is expensive. The question that is up in the air is, although I know the Member for Inkster means well, who is going to pay for this cost. Who is going to pay for this tremendous cost because you are moving a lot of, I guess, excess baggage when you are talking about water and yet milk is composed largely of water.

So there have to be other methods and I would suggest that perhaps we have to look at powdered milk. I have looked around and talked with some people that are in the powdered milk industry in town here. In the city there is a company called Medallion, and they believe that they can ship milk in the North at a fraction of the cost of liquid milk. I think we should be really seriously looking at that because that would save us a lot of money. Also there is such a thing as UVD milk, obviously, which will keep much longer, but as well I think we have to be looking at other options, greenhouses and gardens and so on, fresh produce.

It always shakes me when I go and look into a northern store up North and I find racks and racks of junk food but not so much milk, and the milk that is there is very high priced. That has to change. So we have to look at things. In terms of gardens and greenhouses, with climate change this may become much more of a reality in the next century than we think.

I think the biggest problem, as I pointed out earlier though, is transportation, is geography. That is the enemy you are really fighting. Now, what have we done? Well, I can point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in northwestern Manitoba in years gone by under the benevolent rule of the Tories, we used to have toll roads there. The winter roads were toll roads, so any commodity that reached those small commodities over those winter roads, those toll roads, a component of that price would be the toll roads.

* (10:50)

I have seen the prices that some of the stores had to pay in terms of tolls. I remember visiting one store and they showed me the bill and it was well over \$100,000. Now we know that that cost is going to be passed on to the consumer. In fact it would be passed on to some of the poorest people in this province,

people in Tadoule Lake and Lac Brochet and Brochet, Shamattawa and so on, isolated communities. Now we got rid of those toll roads so in other words the savings can be passed on. Now it is another question and perhaps a moot question whether the stores out there actually do pass on that saving. I hope they do. I think they do but I cannot guarantee that. However, we made it possible. We got rid of the tolls. There no longer are winter toll roads to Brochet, Lac Brochet and Tadoule and that has made a significant difference to the cost of goods that people need to live in northern Manitoba.

What we need to continue to do is to work on better transportation and better roads and better railroads. In fact, I am very happy that last week, I think it was, or perhaps it was two weeks ago now, in The Pas at a ceremony where the federal and the provincial government turned over the Sherridon line to a consortium, a group of people, actually, a group of three bands; War Lake, Split Lake and Mathias Colomb. We signed over that railroad to those bands. So, on other words, those northern bands now control a railroad and, of course, they will control the freight coming in and out. They are now in a position of strength, a position where they control a major aspect of their lives, which is transportation, bringing in food, bringing in more trains. So, I think that is a very positive strengthening of Aboriginal people's ability not only to compete in the market, but to bring in cheaper food from the outside. So, I am very happy to see that.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I know, Mr. Speaker, that I have to wrap it up. But, I want to point out that the Member of Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is right. It would be wonderful if we could have one price for milk, but the complexity of the issue is such, we cannot do it right now. I think what we are doing, though, we are working at it not just for milk, but as a total food basket.

I am, also, somewhat surprised that the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) and the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) are talking about a monopoly. I thought these were the free enterprisers that want everything in terms of competition. Now, are they talking about a government monopoly that tells you what price you can sell milk? I found it a little bit strange coming from the Tories. From the Liberals, well, they are a little bit more progressive; I can understand that.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I think I have made my statement, and I hope that the Member for Inkster

realizes that although I have very much empathy for his idea, I cannot support it because I think the issue is much more complex than just milk. I think we will leave it at that.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for River Heights, I would like to draw the attention of the honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Westmount School, we have 18 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Al Deschambault. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

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

* * *

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to talk about the bill which deals with having affordable milk in northern Manitoba. Though I have respect for the MLA for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), in this instance he is just wrong. You know, there is an easy way to have a single price for milk up North; just help us pass this bill. You know, there you go. It is not complicated. We just need your votes on this bill and there we will be.

There may be some interesting challenges implementing it, but they are surmountable. They are not so high that they cannot be overcome. It has been done for, as we talked about it, liquor. We are not proposing to sell milk through liquor boards, so that the absence of a liquor board store in some of the northern communities should not be a problem. There, clearly, are solutions to this, but the first thing that we need all MLAs' help in, is passing this bill.

I would suggest that this bill is important not just for children, but for mothers and the health of mothers. Indeed, the health of mothers may be very important because it is while are carrying their children in the uterus for the first nine months that many important parts of the body are formed; for example, the teeth, the primary teeth, and the structure of the primary teeth may be significantly influenced by diets during pregnancy.

The availability of calcium and milk may be very important to preventing early childhood tooth decay. If we want to prevent the huge costs, both in terms of health care costs and the huge costs in terms of problems for children in their early years of life, with early childhood tooth decay, that we would be

well advised to pass this bill and have better nutrition for mothers.

This is important, not only for mothers while they have children in utero, but it also important for mothers after children are born. The fact of the matter is that it is smart. It is healthier when mothers are breast feeding, and having access to affordable milk can make it much easier for mothers to get the nutrients and to be able to breast feed and to give their children a good strong start in life.

I speak as one of the members of the Healthy Kids task force which visited northern communities and we heard from presenters. I presented a minority report because the report that you presented was not any good, but I was there at Gods River and Wabowden and Thompson and a lot of northern communities. What I heard time and time again: Give us an affordable price for milk in the North.

What has this government done? Nothing, for six and a half years. This government has failed the people of the North for six and a half years. Time to throw this government out and get on with making the changes that are needed for people in the North.

I stood in Gods River and went with the Chief of Gods River to the grocery store. He pointed out to me the price of milk, more than \$10 for four litres, compared with Winnipeg where it is around \$4. If you do your shopping, it is less. If you want to, you can spend a little more. It is around \$4 or a little less, much less than up north.

It is time to pass this bill. It is time to get on the job of helping people in northern Manitoba.

The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) is asking me to sit down so we can pass it. I will. Please pass this bill.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Here go the Liberals again, Mr. Speaker, especially a former Liberal Cabinet minister who talked northern Manitoba.

In the year 2000, we released a scoping study in terms of the east side road. We went to the federal government. We asked numerous federal Liberal Cabinet ministers to join with us to deal with the real challenge in terms of accessibility to affordable food, which is the transportation system. What did the federal Liberals do? Absolutely nothing. The cheque was not even in the mail, like they did on other issues.

So, Mr. Speaker, the member talked about Gods River. Perhaps he would have liked to have checked on the fact that we worked with communities throughout northern Manitoba and, indeed, when you have an all-weather road, you get not only more affordable prices for milk and other products, but for all products.

Perhaps he would like to check as well with many northern communities. I represent many northern communities where many people in the communities have pointed out, perhaps the members opposite have forgotten, that many people in northern Manitoba are lactose intolerant. So if you want to put all your energies into milk as the only commodity, what about—and I invite people to look at the explosion in terms of diabetes—what about getting fresh fruits, fresh vegetables into communities? You know what? We are doing that because we have launched a program working with northern communities to bring back something that has become a dying part of northern communities which is in terms of community gardens. Mr. Speaker, 30, 40 years ago, there were community gardens in every single community, and all the evidence points to the fact that the more we can promote gardens and traditional foods and traditional lifestyles, that is what is going to make the difference. No reference to that from members opposite.

I guess from the comfort of the city of Winnipeg, and I notice the Liberal Leader did not even bother to come to northern Manitoba in the election. It is now a big event for him when he shows up in northern Manitoba once in a while. You know what, though? The provincial Liberal Party is just like the federal Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker. They do not understand northern Manitoba and we are not taking any lectures from them.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship will have eight minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTION

Res. 15—Appreciation for Reverend Harry Lehotsky

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., we will move on to resolutions and we will deal with the resolution brought forward by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, Appreciation for Reverend Harry Lehotsky.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), the following resolution:

WHEREAS Rev. Harry Lehotsky moved to Winnipeg over 20 years ago and has been a tireless and faithful advocate for better social conditions for inner-city and West End residents since that time, as well as a loving husband to Virginia and father to three sons Matthew, Brandon and Jared; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky is a graduate of North American Baptist Seminary and the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education and was ordained by the North American Baptist Conference; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky has brought about many positive changes to his community through the work he has done through New Life Ministries; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to making communities safer, stronger and self-sustaining by fighting crime, providing support to local residents and by creating local employment opportunities such as the Ellice Café and Theatre; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky also founded Lazarus Housing which has successfully renovated over 100 units of housing in the inner-city area of Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky has personally touched many lives and given people much hope through his ministry; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky has received the City of Winnipeg's Community Service Award as well as the Queen's Jubilee Medal; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has recently created The Rev. Harry Lehotsky Award for Community Activism; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky is respected and admired by all people who know him for not only his ministry but also for his integrity and character.

THEREFORE NOW BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, on behalf of all Manitobans, thank Rev. Lehotsky for his faithful service, community activism and unwavering advocacy in making Manitoba a better place to live.

Mr. Speaker: Before moving the resolution, there were a few words that were added to the resolution. I

want to ask the honourable member if he is willing to have the resolution as printed. Is that okay?

Mr. McFadyen: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. We will have it as printed.

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky moved to Winnipeg over 20 years ago and has been a tireless and faithful advocate for better social conditions for inner-city and West End residents since that time, as well as a loving husband to Virginia and father to his three sons Matthew, Brandon and Jared; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky is a graduate of North American Baptist Seminary and the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education and was ordained by the North American Baptist Conference; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky has brought about many positive changes to his community through the work he has done through New Life Ministries; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to making communities safer, stronger and self-sustaining by fighting crime, providing support to local residents and by creating local employment opportunities such as the Ellice Café and Theatre; and

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WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba has recently created The Rev. Harry Lehotsky Award for Community Activism; and

WHEREAS Rev. Lehotsky is respected and admired by all people who know him for not only his ministry, but also for his integrity and character.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, on behalf of all Manitobans, thank Rev. Lehotsky for his faithful service, community activism and unwavering advocacy in making Manitoba a better place to live.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable minister for seconding this resolution. I think it appropriate and in the spirit of non-partisanship that all members of the House take this opportunity to support a resolution recognizing the contributions that Rev. Lehotsky has made to our city of Winnipeg and, more broadly, to our great province of Manitoba.

Speaking personally, Mr. Speaker, I first came to know Rev. Lehotsky around 1998 at the time I was working in government. He was well known at that time in our community for being somebody who set aside personal considerations in order to make great contributions to his own community. Motivated by faith and motivated by optimism and a dedication to the betterment of human beings regardless of their status in life, Rev. Lehotsky spent many hours of his time within his own community serving those who were suffering in their own right. Many of those were people who suffered from addiction, those who lived in poverty and lived in social conditions that were and are difficult conditions for any human being.

His compassion, Mr. Speaker, transcends political considerations and other considerations. I have always personally been impressed with his integrity, his willingness to take personal risks and one of those risks was his brief foray into elected politics as a candidate for our party in 1999. He did so at some risk and in the face of some criticism by those who felt that his entry into partisan politics was, some might say, controversial. I think that his contributions to our city and his principles, which were really about voluntary service and service driven by faith, not necessarily a philosophy that preached that government had the solution to all problems. It was a philosophy of self-help but also a philosophy of those who had the ability to help taking the initiative on their own to help those who they saw in their own communities who were suffering.

Reverend Lehotsky also made the choice to live within the community that he served. It is an area of our city that is known for its social challenges and problems, an area of the city where many are afflicted by poverty and addiction and other difficulties. It was an area of the city where he continues to live, that is an area that many, including most of us who come to work here every day in this Legislature, would have a difficult time imagining ourselves living in, and he chose to live there because of his abiding commitment to service, to

public service, to the well-being of his fellow human beings.

I think in light of the very sad recent diagnosis that he has received in terms of his health condition, that it is time for all members to set aside partisanship, and I note that the government has certainly done that, and I commend the Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) for the award which he established. The Attorney General took the initiative of establishing an award in the name of Reverend Lehotsky. I think that demonstrates a genuine recognition for a member of our community who is unique and absolutely valuable, beyond description. And so, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Attorney General for his step toward acknowledging Reverend Lehotsky's commitment to our community, the principles that were enshrined in that award, which were principles that were very personally important to, and are personally important to, Reverend Lehotsky. It is a very fitting tribute to him.

I also thank the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk) for seconding today's resolution as a further indication of the fact that although, from time to time, we who engage in this political process do not see eye to eye and the partisanship sometimes seems to be the order of the day and seems to be the dynamic that motivates much of what we do, there are circumstances and individuals that are above politics who merit the commendation of this entire Legislature.

So I thank all members for their support of this resolution. I think it is appropriate, and I look forward to hearing the comments of other members on Reverend Lehotsky and the great contributions he has made, the great character that he displays day in and day out, and I will stop at this point, Mr. Speaker, but just encourage all members to give their support to this important resolution. Thank you.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, we are indeed very proud to support a resolution that recognizes Reverend Lehotsky for his hard work and courageous advocacy work that he put forward and continues to put forward in Winnipeg's inner city.

Reverend Harry Lehotsky is an inner-city pastor, a community leader, who has tirelessly promoted the West End neighbourhood and courageously advocated on behalf of low-income citizens for over 20 years.

I regret that Mr. Lehotsky has come to a point in his life where he is facing very serious medical challenges, but I think it is important that we recognize the work that he has done unanimously here in this House.

Many times, Mr. Speaker, people talk the talk, but they do not always walk the walk, and Harry Lehotsky has been one of those people who has, indeed, made a difference and has, indeed, walked the walk. He moved into the inner city because he believed in this community, and he wanted to be completely immersed and, indeed, has made a difference. He has made a difference in the lives of many. He has worked to fight crime, provide support for creating local employment opportunities such as the Ellice Café and Theatre. He also founded the Lazarus House, which has successfully completed a hundred units of housing for inner-city Winnipeg and, indeed, he has touched many, many people.

* (11:10)

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Lehotsky in the Spence Street neighbourhood when we were doing a tour of some of the facilities that had been improved because of the homeless initiative and met some of the people who have been influenced by him. Although I do not know him on a personal basis, I respect him for the work that he has done. I know that our Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) knows him personally.

Mr. Speaker, our government was pleased to recently announce a new award named in honour of Reverend Lehotsky, The Reverend Harry Lehotsky Award for Community Activism will be awarded annually to a citizen whose consistent and sustained activism over time has resulted in practical and tangible community improvements. Candidates for this award must live in the area they serve and their efforts must not be solely sustained by government funding. The award is valued at \$2,000, to be donated to a registered safety-related charity of the recipient's choice. This award really does pay tribute and over time will continue to pay tribute and show recognition for the kind of leadership that Reverend Lehotsky has had throughout his life here.

Through his work with New Life Ministries and the Lazarus Housing, Reverend Lehotsky has made a significant contribution to the inner city of Winnipeg. His work has resulted in many units of safe and secure housing for low income and less advantaged citizens.

In 2001, our government was very, very pleased to partner with the federal government and the city to support the efforts of Reverend Lehotsky and his ministry through a grant from the Winnipeg Housing and Homeless Initiative. The funds supported the efforts of the New Life Ministry and Lazarus Housing in renovating three buildings in the Spence Street neighbourhood, and these homes were converted into transitional and permanent housing for individuals and families at risk of homelessness. It was in the tour of those homes that I had a chance to meet Mr. Lehotsky.

But, Mr. Speaker, I also want to pay tribute to Mr. Lehotsky's family, his wife Virginia and his sons Matthew, Brandon, and Jared. Many times when people give of their lives to improve the quality of lives of others and make huge sacrifices, many times it is at the expense of their families, because time has to be taken away from your family. I want to recognize that in this resolution we are paying tribute and appreciation to the Reverend, but I also want to pay tribute to his wife and to his family who have indeed stood by him. Sometimes it is very difficult to do the kind of work that you believe in such as missionary work or inner-city work, fighting crime, creating employment, working for the betterment of community if you do not have the support of your family. I want to recognize that his family must have—I know have been very supportive to him in order for him to carry on this work.

It is probably not easy, I should say it is not easy sometimes moving your family into an area where there are challenges, where it is difficult to raise children. But because of his strong belief, his family has been successful and he has raised them in the area where he had wanted to do and continues to do his work.

This is not the first recognition, the award that was presented last week, but certainly the other awards he has received from the City of Winnipeg and the Queen's Jubilee Medal also show that there are many other people that recognize the work that he does. The member opposite talked about his political involvement, but on an occasion like this I think that it is important that we look far beyond politics and look at what the impact on the community has been, the number of people whose lives have been affected by the hard work and courageous advocacy that he has been doing.

There are many, many challenges in the inner cities and our government has worked to improve the

living conditions, changing legislation, making amendments so that we could see drug dens, prostitution and sniff houses reduced. We continue to work to ensure that there is a safer community to live in. But to have these safer communities you also need community leaders, and Mr. Lehotsky is one of those leaders. He continues in his work, we commend him for what he has done, and I encourage all members of the House to support this resolution. I am pleased that we have been able to support it jointly to show an appreciation for the work that has been done. We will build the basis, I am sure, for much more work.

As a government, we have recognized the many challenges that are in the inner city. That is why we have made changes to legislation. That is why we have brought forward The Safer Communities and Neighbourhood Act which was implemented in 2002. It permits application for court orders to protect communities or neighbourhoods where buildings are being used for purposes of processing or selling illegal drugs.

So, Mr. Speaker, we worked along with them, but I just want to complete my comments by saying that we also very much appreciate the work that Reverend Harry Lehotsky has done and continues to do in the best interest of the inner city. May we have many more people who are that committed to improving the quality of life of those who need support the most. Thank you.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to put a few words on the record in regard to the resolution brought forth by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

When you get involved with politics, you start to meet a lot of people. There are a lot of people who come through your life. There are a lot of people who come to your office. There are a lot of people you meet through functions, social events, official events and things like that. A lot of people really just come through your life and you meet them, you greet them and then there are certain things that stand out and individuals that you remember.

I can remember one of the first times that I met Reverend Lehotsky. It goes back a few years. In fact, I believe it was around when I was the Minister of Housing. Naturally, his advocacy was something that he was very much involved with, which was the housing initiatives for people in the inner city area, and he made a point of making contact with me. I remember the meeting, in which this gentleman

came in with this big hairy beard, long hair, but very, very passionate in his commitment to the neighbourhood. It was just a remembrance that I still have in my mind in regard to my impression of this younger fellow.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

But he was very, very dedicated, very committed to what he was wanting and how he wanted to go about it. He has worked very, very tirelessly and very endlessly in the inner city area and the West End in trying to bring better social housing, better social relationships, a safer community, things that we sort of, in certain areas of the city, we take for granted.

I do not represent that particular area that he has a ministry in. I represent an area, which you might call a little bit more affluent area of the city of Winnipeg. I do not get exposed exactly to all the things that he gets exposed to. But I had the opportunity, as I mentioned earlier, as Minister of Housing to be involved with some of the programs that were initiated by Reverend Lehotsky, and things of that nature that really started to make a difference in the city. There have been additional programs. There is additional funding that has happened in the area.

* (11:20)

Reverend Lehotsky has been involved with a lot of the initiatives, and his name is there, synonymous with change in the community. It is something, I think, a lot of times that I know he is very, very humble in his attitude toward accolades. I refer back to just last week where I had the opportunity to be at the awards ceremony that the Justice Minister initiated for volunteerism and the recognition of individuals that contributed to the community. It was a full house. The place was packed. In fact, the minister made arrangements for chairs for a few of us that came, and we sat along the wall because the place was full. One of the reasons was because there was a recognition that there was going to be an award made in recognition for Reverend Lehotsky.

I must commend the Minister of Justice. His handling of the situation, if you want to call it, and the delicacy of the situation, because everybody knew that Harry has this terrible disease that possibly is working toward a final end for him, but the minister was very cognizant of the fact that we were there to celebrate an achievement in a situation

where people would recognize and give forth their thanks for something that he has done.

At the end of the minister's talk, he invited Reverend Lehotsky to come up. One of the first things Harry said was, I do not feel comfortable being here getting an award, because he was of the opinion that being in the community and working for the community is where he felt more comfortable. He alluded to the fact that he had many awards and he had had many accolades in the last little while, but toward the end of his little speech that he made in front of all the people, he pulled out a letter and in the letter, he says, this is the greatest thing that I can say has been a reward for me, and that was a letter that he had received from a young lady, I guess a young lady that had some very serious problems and had come to him for counselling and for advice. He had worked with her and tried to straighten out her life.

Harry mentioned that he came out of his—I believe he said he came out of his home and there was a bouquet of flowers there with this little card in it. He read the card to the audience, and it was very, very heartfelt because it was a card and it was an expression by this young lady of how she was so thankful that he was there to help her and that she had now turned her life around, and she was on a path that she felt comfortable with and a rewarding path that she was involved with now. She just wanted to say thank you to Harry. So he held up that little card there and he said this is my greatest reward, working with the community, the community realizing that he had made a difference, he had made a change in the community.

He talked about so-called social problems in the community, but he said you look for solutions, you work through love. He used the word "love" a lot in his speech. He looked toward love in trying to help things and help people get around emotional and difficult situations and you just work with it. It was a very humbling speech in the sense that he was not wanting to be the centre of attention, but he was there to help people.

So the award that was announced by the minister, and as was mentioned by the Deputy Premier, is going to be an annual award. It is a cash award and Harry was saying that when he was coming down to the awards ceremony with his family, because all his family was there—his sons were there, his wife was there, in fact, his mother and father flew in from New York, and they were there

also for the award ceremony—and I guess one of his sons in sort of an offhanded moment said that, how come you are not getting the money? It is an award for \$2,000 and you are not getting the money, but it was done in jest. It was not done that he wanted the money, but it just seemed that this was an award for Harry Lehotsky but Harry was not going to get the money.

But I just wanted to say that I have had the opportunity, I have had the pleasure of working with Reverend Harry Lehotsky. He is a tremendous advocate for Winnipeg, a type of person that I think Winnipeg is going to be better for. Because of his involvement, his activism, his ability to bring change, his tireless effort in certain aspects, he wants to have something different in his area through his work, through the church, through his work with the business that he set up or he was involved with, the Ellice Café and Theatre, it is those types of things that build communities. As was pointed out by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), it is like bricklaying, build one brick at a time, and that was what Harry was doing. He was building one brick at a time to make change.

So I just wanted to say that it was a pleasure, it was an honour, and I am glad that we are doing this at this time in the House. So thank you very, very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I am pleased to be able to add a few remarks on this resolution on appreciation for Reverend Harry Lehotsky, and I would like to commend the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) for introducing it and for getting all-party support to proceed with it today.

Reverend Harry Lehotsky—and I think I will refer to him hereafter as Harry; that is the kind of person he is, and I do not think he would mind—we have several things in common. Harry is a graduate of the North American Baptist Seminary. I am a graduate of Victoria University and Toronto School of Theology. Harry is an ordained pastor. I am an ordained United Church minister. Harry has been involved in the community for many years, and I was involved while working at North End Community Ministry for 10 years from 1980 to 1990.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Harry has been a critic of both society and governments during his time in the inner-city, and I was also a critic of governments when I was working for the United Church. In fact, I probably drove the

government of the day crazy because they knew I was an activist in the New Democratic Party, but I felt that my ministry came first, and so when the media came to me for comments I was always ready and willing to critique the government of the day, which, for most of the 1980s, was the Howard Pawley government. And Harry has certainly been both willing to critique and has been fair. When there were government pieces of legislation that he thought should be supported, he supported it, and when he thought that there was need for improvement he would say so as well. Harry has been a kind of a go-to guy for the media for both poverty issues and housing issues, and for 10 years I was the go-to guy in the 1980s. I can remember saying things then that I probably would not say now, but things change and perspectives change, although I think that being consistent is a good virtue to have.

I would be very interested, and I really need to meet with Harry because I owe him a review that I did of a play that he was a consultant for. I saw him a couple of weeks ago, and I promised to get that review to him. He was a consultant on a very interesting play. I think it was called *Tent Meeting* at the Prairie Theatre Exchange, and it was very well done and very interesting and an excellent play with lots of theological insights. I had a chance to talk to him after the play, but I have not shared my written comments about it which I am going to do. One of the things that I should talk to Harry about, probably at the Ellice Café, which I have not been to yet but I would like to, is about his theology and what inspired him because I do not really know. Perhaps it is the social gospel or a social interpretation of the Scripture. That is certainly something that influenced me. I was also influenced by liberation theology, which says that God has a preferential option for the poor. I do not know if Harry was influenced by that or not. We studied theology approximately in the same era, so perhaps he was.

You know, I am old enough to remember a time when there were churches who were involved in social issues, like the United Church and the Presbyterian Church and others, and yet the more conservative churches were not involved in society and in social issues. Their criticism of us was that we were not adhering to the full gospel, and what they meant by the full gospel was only preaching conversion, preaching the gospel, and that there was no role or no room to be involved in society or societal issues.

I think that that has changed totally in the last 50 years. I cannot think of any denominations in Canada that are not involved in social ministry in one kind or another, and all you have to do is look at the inner-city and organizations like Siloam Mission that gets a lot of support from the Mennonite community. Union Gospel Mission is another one. There are a couple more further north on Main Street. I am trying to think of their names, and I cannot offhand, but I think we are familiar with these organizations.

One on the border of Burrows constituency would be the former Restoration House, and now the sign says Springs of Living Water. So here we have a large suburban congregation that is sending a lot of volunteers, a lot of support, a lot of money probably to the inner city, to Burrows Avenue in the North End, and involved in many, many different kinds of ministry, much like New Life Ministry that got very involved in housing. I can remember being at a committee meeting and hearing civil servants say that they commended Reverend Lehotsky because he was renovating housing at a very low per unit cost, and they thought that he was doing an excellent job.

* (11:30)

I do not know why that is. I do not know a lot about it. My guess is that there was sweat equity involved and that kept their construction costs down. That is commendable because you do not want to just be a leader in the community and have all the good ideas. You want to involve people at the grass roots and get them supporting projects, including directly if you possibly can. And, of course, probably the best model around for that is Habitat for Humanity who not only builds houses with volunteer labour but requires 500 hours of sweat equity from the purchasers of these houses, and so they are very involved with their houses.

I know that a number of other people want to speak on this resolution, so I am going to be brief, but one of the things that I wanted to suggest was that perhaps there are some passages from Scripture that inspired Harry Lehotsky, and I am thinking of James 2:14-17, or Matthew 25, especially the concluding verses, 44-46, and Amos 5:24, and since I am quoting Scripture, this would be a good time to apologize to the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) because I contradicted him one day and said he was misquoting Scripture. In fact, he was right and I was wrong and I apologize for that.

I should probably let my colleague from Wellington do this. He is actually much more

familiar with Scripture than I am and often loans me his Bible so I can look things up. But the Member for River Heights was right in the source of his original quote. I was familiar with the quote but not the source, so I apologize to the member.

One of the things I look forward to is meeting with Harry and passing on the review of the play that he was consulted on and talking to him about his theology and what it was that inspired him because I am interested in people's motivations. I know today we are commending him for all of the good things that he has done in the community and the awards that he has been given. All of this is well deserved, but I look forward to having a conversation about what it is about his Christian faith that has inspired him.

In conclusion, I would like to commend Harry for his commitment to the community, for his enthusiasm, for his projects, for his ability to inspire people and to thank him on behalf of members of the Legislature for all that he has done. There was a very interesting quote by him in the newspaper story by Alexandra Paul where he said that he hopes when he meets his Maker that his Maker is going to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I think that that will happen given all that we know about him.

In conclusion, I just want to say that our prayers are with you, Harry.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have the opportunity to put a few words on the record about my friend Harry Lehotsky. I came to know Harry as a friend and as an outstanding member of our Winnipeg community when I was the Minister of Family Services and heard of and had the opportunity to meet with Harry around issues impacting and affecting some of the more disadvantaged in our community.

I quickly came to know and understand Harry certainly as a man of action with no hidden agenda. His agenda, I believe, was inspired by some of the issues he faced as a youth growing up in New York City, and his life was not always easy. He went through some very troubling times as a young man and got into a significant amount of trouble, ended up almost dead on the roadside when friends picked him up and ensured that he was safe. At that point in time, I know he knows it was a power beyond human power that helped to save Harry Lehotsky, brought him to the place where he became ordained as a Baptist minister and knew exactly what his role would be.

He moved up to Winnipeg, to Manitoba, and I have heard others say today that he is a man that does not just talk the talk, he walks the walk. He was committed to trying to impact the lives of others within our community, people that needed our help and our support. But, Harry was not one that looked to government to do what needed to be done. As a matter of fact, Harry sometimes said that government got in the way of the community helping or attempting to help people improve their lives. Harry believed very much in social justice issues and working for those that needed help, trying to rid the community of some of the evils that preyed on individuals and communities—drug dealers, johns, people that had negative impacts on members of our community—and wanting to help people better themselves. He had very much a focussed social justice agenda.

But he also believes, Mr. Speaker, that people have to accept some personal responsibility for their situation and have to accept taking on the challenge of bettering themselves. That it is not government's role, but it is a personal responsibility role, along with community support, that can improve people's lives.

So he worked tirelessly. As many have said, he moved his family into the community that he wanted to serve. He founded New Life Ministries and has not always been able to achieve or receive the kinds of accolades that he is receiving today. It is unfortunate that we are in the situation where he has found himself in some very personal health circumstances that the community is coming to recognize how very important Harry's work has been on the lives of many within our community.

New Life Ministries grew and expanded. I know that Harry really believes that it is not a matter of saving the whole community all at once, but it is a matter of working individual by individual, person by person, to try to work with them to help them understand and believe in the God that he believes in and know that sometimes alone it is not easy to make those kinds of improvements. But there is a higher power and a being there that his faith certainly has shown many in the community the way to a better life. He has impacted very much.

I have heard him speak of personal stories where, person by person, Harry has been an inspiration and has helped lead them to a better way of life, people with addictions, people living in poverty, prostitutes that have had an opportunity to

turn their lives around. From time to time, even when I have personal issues or family issues to deal with, Harry has always been there and has been a solid support for me in my times of need. We have had issues within our family, not unlike many others have had, and Harry has always been there with good, solid advice, and has always indicated that he would keep our family in his prayers as he has done for many, many families throughout the community.

* (11:40)

Mr. Speaker, I know that Harry and his family, his wife Virginia and his three boys Matthew, Brandon and Jared, as well as his parents—I had the opportunity to speak to his mother, Hildegard, just the other day—I know that they are up to support him and his family through this very difficult time. I know throughout the spiritual community in our province and far beyond, there are many that are praying for Harry. There are many that are praying for a miracle in his life. I know that he has done a lot of really good work for many and with many. I know there is much, much more Harry could and would be able to do, God willing, and I continue to pray for a miracle in his life.

But I know that he is the kind of man who is putting his life in order, ensuring that his family is well taken care of, and I just know and believe that Harry takes every day in his stride and that the legacy that he has brought and will continue to bring to our community and to our province will be second to none.

I have the utmost respect for Harry Lehotsky, and I just want him to know through these few words that he has been someone who has touched many, many lives in many ways, and I know that through his words today and his actions today will continue to have an impact on our community for many, many years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) for introducing the resolution, and I think it is important to recognize how special it is when this Legislature recognizes individuals. We do not do that very often, and when we do, it, I think, sends a very strong message about the importance of the individual being recognized by way of resolution. I am just pleased, and I think it is certainly fitting, that Rev. Harry Lehotsky be recognized in the House here today.

I came to know Harry after we started work on our Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. At that time, I asked the department to specifically consult with him and get advice, and he most willingly did that. Indeed, as that act evolved into what it is today, he has been a promoter of it. He has also, of course, been critical when he thought it was important to be critical, and he has been there to provide acknowledgement of its successes when he perceived that was in order. I have always respected that, and I have respected his insights into how that legislation can work. Indeed, in October, when we announced enhancements to the staffing of the Public Safety Investigation Unit which backs up the legislation, and walking into the press conference, I looked at Harry, and I said, this one is for you, I said to him.

I think, Mr. Speaker, over the years I got to know him, of course, and members of my family got to know members of his. It was a few months ago when I phoned him and I said, why do you not give me a little tour of the neighbourhood, some of the challenges and some of the successes? So we met and got in the van and went for a ride up and down the streets and the alleys, and it was fascinating to see how he knew the who, what, when, where and why of almost everything that was going on. He knew who the actors were, and he knew the locations of disruptive activities and where the graffiti was re-occurring. I thought to myself, there is a kind of *King of Kensington* thing going on here. It was obviously strong evidence of a person's love for a community and for the people of that community.

So I was very pleased then that we were able to recognize Harry by way of an award, and the criteria has been described by the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk). What the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) said, I think, was something I will never forget. When he was being recognized the night of the Safer Communities Awards, he said the biggest reward that he ever could hope for was being able to change someone's life for the good, and having then received the acknowledgment by way of the flowers and the card from this woman who, I believe, had been involved in the sex trade. But what he said was this: You know, that kind of reward is available to all.

See, this was what Harry was about, and this is what we hope his legacy will always be, and what I hope our Safer Communities Award will back up. That is that those who do not judge others but love

and provide help can make a difference, that anyone can make a difference.

You see, driving around the neighbourhood with him made it clear that here is one person who lives in the community, and yes, he was a pastor in the community, but it was not because of his position but rather because of his faith in his community, his background, that he decided that he was going to make a difference. One person could make a difference. That is what the message is to all of us, and that is what he wants the message to be. Do not wait for others to solve the challenges of a community. Do not think that someone else is just going to step in and have a magic bullet to solve all of the issues that we deal with.

We all have a role to play. More than anything else, it always does not take the big, systemic changes. It always does not take whether it is the police or the housing authorities or a lot of government funding, it takes one person often to make the difference. In Harry's case, it has been a big difference.

In conclusion, I wish him strength. As well, I wish the family strength, Virginia and Brandon and Jared and Matthew. I know that what Harry has done will live on, and I know our prayers are with him, all of us. It is indeed our hope that he will be at the Safer Communities Award next year to present the Reverend Harry Lehotsky Award for Community Activism. Thank you.

* (11:50)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the work of Harry Lehotsky and to pay tribute to Harry Lehotsky himself and his family for the efforts they have done to help people in Winnipeg and, in particular, in the area of Winnipeg with which Harry Lehotsky has been most closely concerned.

I have been fortunate enough to visit with Harry Lehotsky, to spend a little bit of time visiting some of the buildings, the community people in the neighbourhood and to get to know of Harry Lehotsky's work, as well, through a good friend of mine, Fred Curry, who has worked closely with Harry.

I have a great deal of respect and admiration for Harry Lehotsky and the work that he has done on a very human scale, very local and important scale in the community. His efforts to refurbish buildings, to find tenants, people, his efforts to build through a

restaurant on Ellice compassionate and outreach efforts, his efforts to speak out and stand up where he was concerned about crimes and gangs and violence and so on. There is no doubt that over quite a number of years Harry Lehotsky has made a very significant difference working away steadily with a lot of persistence, a lot of tenacity and clearly doing what he can day in and day out to help people, one person at a time.

It is sad, tragic for all of us that Harry has been stricken recently with a form of cancer which is not readily treatable. We hope that against all odds, as sometimes happens, the cancer can in some fashion be defeated and that Harry may come through this and surprise those in the medical establishment and the conventional wisdom and in the experience of many other circumstances with this type of cancer, but certainly I want, on behalf of the Liberal Party, to wish Harry Lehotsky well.

I admire tremendously the work that he has done, the recognition that crime in the community can be addressed not only by individuals but by structural changes in the community, renovating homes, by legislation which will allow approaches to get at people who are dealing drugs, who are causing problems in the community. Certainly, I would hope that the legacy of Harry is not only honours like we are giving today, but the legacy that Harry, I believe, will have left behind with a much stronger community in the neighbourhood in which he has been so concerned.

I think that, to the extent that any and all of us can contribute to that, that clearly must be the legacy that we want to leave behind is a much stronger community. I am sure that there will be many who have been affected by Harry who will want to and will continue on the work that he has done, and certainly it is amazing the extent that Harry has continued, even with his cancer, to be active, to speak out and to participate.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that we want to vote on this resolution. I will bring my remarks to a close and just say: Harry, we wish you all the very best. We want all the very best for your community.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the resolution, Appreciation for Reverend Harry Lehotsky.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution?

Resolution agreed to.

Is it the will of the House to call it twelve o'clock?

Some Honourable Members: Twelve o'clock.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: I heard a no.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I would like it to be shown on the record that the resolution was passed unanimously by the House.

Mr. Speaker: The resolution has been passed unanimously by the House.

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

We will now recess because it is twelve o'clock and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 8, 2006

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