

**Second Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature**  
**of the**  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
**and**  
**PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report**  
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**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, September 16, 2008**

**The House met at 10 a.m.**

*PRAYER*

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 203, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention).

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I suspect that there might be leave to go straight to Bill 225, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement of the House to deal with Bill 225, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets)? [*Agreed*]

**Bill 225—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act  
(Bicycle Helmets)**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 225, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I was looking forward to the debate on this particular bill because I think there are, at times, things that we can do inside this Legislature that can really have an impact, a positive impact in terms of health and safety. First off, I would like to acknowledge this morning that we have a couple of individuals, Erin Carter from Sport Manitoba, in the public gallery. We also have Craig Baker from Sports Medicine Council in the gallery. We very much appreciate your presence here this morning.

Mr. Speaker, mandatory bicycle helmets somewhat reminds me of the whole debate regarding seat belts. You know, back in the early '80s when government had the initiative of, let's make it mandatory for people to wear seat belts, they talked about the health benefits and how Manitoba, as a society, would benefit greatly if we brought in legislation that would make it mandatory for seat belts. Well, you may recall, back then there was a

great deal of opposition to having mandatory seat belts. Today, when we look at it, we see it as a very wise decision. The livelihoods and lifestyles of thousands of Manitobans, because they wore a seat belt in vehicle accidents years ago, is that much better. There have been hundreds, if not even thousands of lives, that have been saved as a direct result of mandatory seat belts.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that a good percentage of Manitobans see the value of having mandatory helmet laws in the province of Manitoba. Just like back then there was good solid support from a good percentage of individuals for seat belts, I would suggest to you that there is a good solid base of support for mandatory bicycle helmets.

If we look at other jurisdictions, we could talk about British Columbia since 1996, New Brunswick since 1995, Nova Scotia since 1997 and P.E.I. since 2003, all of which have mandatory bicycle helmet legislation. We could talk about Alberta and Ontario. Alberta since 2002, Ontario since 1995 also have mandatory helmet legislation for individuals under the age of 18.

Mr. Speaker, I'm suggesting to you, and all members of this Legislature, that the time has passed in the sense that Manitoba needs mandatory bicycle helmet legislation. It has an impact. The government, and I know the minister that will likely be speaking to this bill following me, is going to talk about her program where she is providing free helmets, and so forth. The reality is that her program is not working to the same degree where we have provinces that have mandatory bicycle helmets.

We can compare the numbers and look in terms of the difference between Manitoba and other provinces, and we will see that Manitoba pales in comparison. What we need to do is to acknowledge the benefits of having mandatory helmet legislation. What we're talking about is saving lives and saving very serious, severe brain injuries that are occurring every month in the province of Manitoba because we, as legislators, stand by and do nothing.

There was an interesting article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and I'll just quote from the very first paragraph, and it's dealing with Toronto's legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I quote from the *Free Press*:

Ontario bike helmet law for children under age 18 helps save one life every two months, an analysis of cycling deaths that occurred before and since the bill was enacted suggest.

Mr. Speaker, compliance is a very important issue. In British Columbia, where they've had it since 1996, under compliance with the legislation, every year more and more people are wearing the bicycle helmets, and it's because it's legislated, and people, as a general rule, will follow the laws of the province.

\* (10:10)

I would ask the minister responsible, in fact, the government, to recognize that by passing the legislation, we will be having a very real impact on preventing brain injuries and saving lives here in Manitoba. I've had the opportunity to have many discussions in regard to this bill that we're proposing. I know my leader has proposed this bill in an earlier session. I would suggest to you, had it been acted on back then, Manitoba's compliance in bicycle helmet rates would be far greater than what it is today.

The more, in particular kids, that we can get using helmets, the better it will be. I would hope that the government would recognize that fact. In the discussions that I have had, a majority of the individuals, when you sit down and you talk to them about the issue, are very supportive.

There is one amendment that I would see fit in terms of bringing forward to it. I think that we need to be culturally sensitive. The Sikh Society of Manitoba had approached me in regard to the legislation with concerns in regard to the turban issue. I think that we need to be sensitive to that, so that would be an amendment that I would be bringing forward.

Outside of that particular issue, the recognition has been very favourable. I would ask legislators to see the benefits. Not just settle for what the government is currently doing because what the government is currently doing is not having the desired impact that I believe is important for the province as a whole.

If we were to settle for what the government is advocating, we wouldn't have the type of seat belt compliance that we have today and the benefits of having people wearing seat belts.

I would look to the minister, and before she stands up and gets on the record of saying, well, we

have this wonderful helmet program, before she starts talking about her wonderful helmet program, I would ask her to address the issue. What would the difference have been had you had volunteer seat belt usage, and to comment on that issue. Comment as to why it is that the government of the day chose to bring in mandatory seat belts. Comment on why it is that the provinces of British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Alberta and Ontario have seen the merit of mandatory bicycle helmet legislation. Tell me why it is those provinces can do it and why it is that Manitoba can only hand out free bicycle helmets and promote the usage of bicycle helmets.

I believe there is a moral obligation on this government to protect our young people in particular, but Manitobans as a whole. One of the ways we can do that is to follow what other provinces in Canada are doing in bringing in, accepting and adopting mandatory legislation. Madam Minister, it's not good enough just to give out bicycle helmets. I've heard that line from you specifically, and the government in the past, and it's just not the same. We need to recognize what's needed today and that is mandatory bicycle helmets. I appeal to the government to allow this bill, at the very least, to go to committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living):** I will stand up today and I will applaud the Doer government for the work that we have done around injury prevention.

In 2004, Premier Doer announced the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When addressing another member in the House, it's by constituency or by their titles, not by the name.

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** In 2004, the Premier (Mr. Doer) announced the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures task force. When he announced that, Manitobans had the opportunity to come and to speak and talk about what is happening in the province and what their priorities were to have a healthy future for our children. When we heard them, they talked about the importance of injury prevention. Injury prevention, as a matter of ensuring that we are able to prevent accidents from happening with children and prevent those unnecessary injuries. They talked about the importance of providing education, and that's what we've done.

The member across talks about handing out helmets. Handing out helmets? Mr. Speaker, 14,000 low-cost helmets have been provided to Manitobans. We see the benefit of that. We also see the benefit of providing those helmets to individuals free of charge for low-income people through KidSport. By providing those opportunities, we're protecting them, but also giving information through our campaign Protect Your Noggin and ensuring that, through the school system, through the Healthy Schools initiatives, we're providing that information.

Education is valuable. We know that providing people with the information will give them the direction that they need to make the choices that are important. We know by those choices that they make that they will continue to support their children in a healthy way. We know that we have other initiatives in the province of Manitoba that we've also worked on as far as injury prevention around farm safety, and the farm safety has been very successful, where we're providing individuals and communities with grants to develop safe play areas within their homes and in their communities. We know that that has seen a reduction in injuries as well. As well as our water safety initiatives that we're doing, we know that by distributing low cost or for no charge at all life-support vests that we're able to reduce the incidence and make sure that people have that education.

We've seen a reduction in injuries for children in Manitoba. Many people have come out and applauded our initiatives around the low-cost bike helmets, and they continue to do that. We know that for healthy living it's important that people have access to physical activity and cycling is very important for part of that. As we promote physical activity we continue to ensure that people have the information they need to ensure that they protect themselves from injury. We'll continue to work with all of our community partners as we develop our injury prevention framework and do our action plans.

Right now what we're doing as a department is we're evaluating. How is the low-cost bike helmet program working? We're going to have that information very soon, and as we do that, we will evaluate the benefits of it. But I know as I meet with many Manitobans they refer to the bike helmets as beneficial and making a difference for them. So we'll continue to promote injury prevention through education by working with our partners, by providing the low-cost bike helmets, by providing grants, by providing that information that's needed so

people, so adults for children know how to protect themselves from injury.

We do not take this lightly. We meet with many individuals as they advocate for what they think, what's important to them and what we need to see happening. We listen to them. We talk. We try and come up with solutions that meet everybody's needs. The priority is to ensure that we're able to reduce injuries in Manitoba through education but also ensuring that people have an interest in healthy living and promoting health and wellness. So we will continue on that route in the departments of Health and Healthy Living as we work together with all of our partners, and the goal always is to ensure that the children of Manitoba enjoy a healthy quality of life. Thank you.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to put a few words on the record in regard to this bill, in regard to the mandatory use of bicycle helmets as well. I think that it's a concern of citizens across Canada, certainly an issue in Manitoba. There has been much, much promotion about the use of bicycle helmets and the acceptance of it in regard to the state of the bicycle groups and supporters of that across Manitoba.

\* (10:20)

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

I want to say that, of course, there's no question in my mind that the use of bicycle helmets has reduced injuries and perhaps even deaths in regard to Manitoba and in other areas of Canada, as well. I think we've seen the numbers across Canada. Many, many other provinces have brought some forms of laws into place in regard to the mandatory use of bicycle helmets and they have shown reductions in accidents, or not in accidents but in injuries, I should say, if I've been using the word accidents. It has perhaps not reduced the number of accidents but certainly has reduced injuries, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I know that there are a number of places in Canada that haven't got into the use of bicycle helmets yet, at least as far as making them mandatory, but I think most citizens feel strongly about the use of bicycle helmets. I know in our own family and my extended family there isn't a bicycle that hasn't got a helmet to go with it and for each individual that wants to ride bicycles, we always do.

I think that certainly the education process of moving towards the use of helmets is a great plus for every citizen that wants to participate in that activity and of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, we do promote bicycling much, much more than we have in the past. There are many forms of physical fitness in Manitoba or in Canada or for our citizens in any country in the world.

There are many areas of the world where bicycles are much, much more a means of transportation and getting around than even automobiles but here in Canada there is—and many people, you know, particularly in our more urban areas, use bicycles to get to work and way into the winters, Madam Deputy Speaker, as well see many of our citizens coming to work on bicycles. I think as we get into more slippery streets in the winter and that sort of thing helmets are a voluntary mandatory use, from my perspective. For anyone that thinks that they can take on the traffic that we have today without that as a safeguard is putting themselves in more danger than they need to.

There are other forms of safety around bicycling that could be used in these areas as well. There are other safety pads and that sort of thing that could be implemented. I see that that's not part of this type of legislation but I do see that the use of mandatory helmets applies in some provinces to those only 18 years and younger and yet, to me, while that is a minimum requirement, I would say that there are others in our society that want to wear bicycle helmets just on a voluntary, I guess is the word I'm looking for, basis.

While Ontario has made it mandatory to apply to bicyclists less than 18 years old, and some other areas have done it for children under 12, we need to make sure that we look at and foster the greater use of bicycle helmets in any role that we have, wherever bicycles are used and for whatever purpose, whether they're used for recreation, whether they're used for cycling to work. Of course, in today's price of gas—we haven't seen it come down the nine cents, I don't think, this morning. I haven't seen gas bowsers, I guess, this morning yet. I haven't had to fill up today, but that's one of the things that the papers have indicated. Whether or not it does, it's still expensive gasoline and I know that people are looking for other alternative forms of transport to get to work and back, as well. I think particularly if mandatory—if youth bicycle helmets were going to be used for mandatory use they would certainly be for the age

groups in the areas of under 18, Madam Deputy Speaker.

There are other provinces who have brought in bicycle helmets for all ages and of course British Columbia has done that as well. There are laws apply to all ages in provinces like New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and so Manitoba would certainly not be the first province to bring in mandatory use of these bicycle helmets. I think it's very alarming to see others who would not have that use, Madam Deputy Speaker. They will have their own reasons as to why they've decided to go to mandatory use in only certain age groups. We need to make sure that we're looking at all of the reasons why bicycle helmets would be used, but I know, having lived through circumstances this summer in my own constituency where there were two cyclists killed on No. 1 highway just east of Virden, Manitoba, it was very clear that there were other circumstances in play there, but two survivors of that four-cyclist collision as well, did attribute much of their livelihood today, I believe, from the support that they had from wearing these helmets.

So I want to say that if the provinces that have used bicycle helmets and brought them into law, when they're looking at mandatory use, for not wearing them, of course, there are fines that have been put in place. Those vary according to the jurisdiction that the laws have come from.

I find it interesting that the use from 1995 to 1997 in the areas of British Columbia, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, where they passed legislation during those periods, has had a responsive reduction of injuries, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think with that we need to take a very clear look at how bicycle helmets are used and whether or not they are made mandatory in the province of Manitoba or not. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** I am very pleased to rise and give a few words of my own understanding on this Bill 225. All I can say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that any law you make needs to be based on research studies and also applicability of the law without creating the law to fall and the act not to be really productive.

This particular case, I think the member has started bringing this mandatory which I don't see too much of a problem except the things that have not been looked into in detail and need to be addressed. I think I would like to say here, the minister said that

we have—if the notion is that we are really not caring about children's health is absolutely wrong because we have started the task for an all-party task force of Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures and ask Manitobans to help our children and young people enjoy the best possible health, safety and injury prevention as nobody can deny that's very important for all of us to have this.

Having said that, we need to see how it works. I think that to promote a particular prevention program through education first and educating children and trying to make them understand that wearing helmets is extremely important is really a very, very good point that I want to bring. A 2006 bicycle helmet use study indicates that continuing the steady rise in overall helmet wearing since 1996, we have come and done great progress. The largest reported increase occurred in almost the 16- to 19-year age group. This is traditionally the age group with the lowest helmet-wearing numbers. In 2006, the numbers nearly tripled to a rate of 19.6 percent.

\* (10:30)

Also, I must say there is a conflict in research as to the effect of mandatory helmet legislation on both the number of head injuries and on bicycle ridership. So we have to study a little carefully. We have to understand what are the pros and cons before we rush and try to make an act.

The Highway Traffic Act requires children under the age of six to wear a helmet when being transported in a child safety seat onto a bicycle. In June 2004 the requirement was added for helmet use by operators of a new vehicle clause commonly known as power-assisted bicycles. So we see in Manitoba the rate of childhood hospitalization due to injury has dropped by 42 percent. I would say that we need to really promote the wearing of helmets as opposed to make a law and impose this without seeing the effect of it in terms of its usability. As the Premier (Mr. Doer) stated, the ultimate goal isn't to pass the law, but the ultimate goal is to prevent the head injuries with more people wearing helmets and educating them.

So, I would say that the idea of low-cost helmet initiatives—and let's really face reality. In today's economic situations people who do bike ride are not usually the drivers of Cadillac cars. I mean, when you look at that population group, and trying to help them to distribute low-cost and, at times, even free helmets to children is a great effort that I am very proud to say we have done it. I think that as you'd

say, a low-cost helmet program was offered in the spring of 2006, 2007 and 2008. Order forms were available to 225,000 children in schools and day cares for the bulk purchasing of low-cost, certified helmets.

Since 2006 over 42,600 helmets have been purchased by and distributed to Manitoba families. In 2006, 1,000 free helmets were made available for distribution to low-income individuals identified by schools, day cares and community organizations. In 2007, 678 free helmets were available for distribution through schools, KidSport and community programs working with low-income children families. In 2008, 1,500 no-cost helmets have been provided, including 200 through KidSport, 300 to individuals identified by their teachers, and 1,000 are being provided to Manitoba First Nations Wellness Working Group to distribute to children living on reserves.

I think what I would emphasize, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the low-cost bike helmet program has been working. I think all we need to do is that continued education process of this particular aspect of safety to the families and help them to understand that wearing a helmet is very important before rushing it, making a law and then we need to really look back and amend and all that. So, I think I would rather have a promotional program of educating. I would rather have a very detailed study of the cause and the language and, perhaps, details of the act so that it does not fail.

So I personally believe that it's very important. I am a father of five wonderful grandchildren and they all ride bikes, and they do wear helmets. But some of them, they are not living in Canada and there is no law in that state to make helmets, but they do wear. I think it's something that we need to look at very seriously. Let me not be misunderstood by saying that I am against any such law or act that protects and saves the lives. Absolutely not. Seat belts, as the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) said, yes, but there are people who don't wear seat belts. There are people who said that they were injured because of seat belts. So nothing is perfect. Scientifically, say two plus two is four. There are certain pros and cons of things. So I think this particular legislation needs to be looked at more carefully. I would say that we are already doing a great job in public safety and health for children. So I would say that I will continue this, and we'll see how the future comes along.

So thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me a few minutes. I just wanted to put these, my thoughts, on the record. Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me rise to speak to this bill and first recognize Ron Brown, the Executive Director of the Manitoba Cycling Association, Erin Carter, from Sport Manitoba and Craig Baker from the Sport Medicine Council. Thank you for coming.

Let me start by answering one of the issues raised by the MLA for Radisson. He said, we don't need to rush. Ontario has had bike helmet mandatory legislation starting in 1995. Here we are, 13 years later and we don't have it in Manitoba, and the MLA for Radisson says, we don't need to rush. We don't need to rush when children are dying, Madam Deputy Speaker. I suggest to you that it's important to put children first, instead of rhetoric first, instead of delays first. It's time to act on this legislation.

Let us look at some of the recent evidence. Study after study has reported that mandatory bike helmet legislation has a very substantial effect on increasing helmet use. Where it applies to adults and children, it increases helmet use in both where it applies only to children. It has much more of an effect on children than on the helmet use of adults, to whom the mandatory law does not apply. The fact is that making helmets mandatory under law has a dramatic effect on the use of helmets in the population and this has been shown time and time again in different jurisdictions.

There is a recent study by Dr. David Wesson, entitled *Trends in Pediatric and Adult Bicycling Deaths Before and After Passage of a Bicycle Helmet Law*. This study was done in Ontario. The study was conducted from 1991 to 2002. It looked at bicycle-related deaths before helmet legislation was passed in 1995 and after the legislation was passed in 1995.

What was found, Madam Deputy Speaker, was that in the five years, 1991 to '95, for children to whom this legislation applied, the number of deaths in Ontario was, by year: 17, 10, 14, 15, and 8, for a total of 66, an average of some 13 deaths each year in Ontario. From 1996 to 2002, the number of children who died dropped dramatically, and by year was: 3, 10, 10, 4, 6, 5 and 5, for an average of 6 children who died each year, a reduction of some

7 deaths a year in Ontario as a result of mandatory bike helmet use.

Interestingly, the Ontario law did not apply to adults, and there wasn't the same increase in helmet use in adults, and there was no decrease—in fact, there was a slight increase—in the number of deaths in adults. So this Ontario study, and what happened in Ontario, points out the importance of including both adults and children in this legislation, as we have done. This is important not only to protect adults, but because when you have adults wearing helmets, they are important role models for children and you also increase helmet use among children. So you have a dual effect from making it mandatory for adults as well as children.

\*(10:40)

So we can ask, in the years since 1995, how many children have died in Manitoba because consecutive governments have failed to act? How many children have died in Manitoba since the NDP came to power because the NDP failed to act? It's probably five to 10 children. We don't know the precise number. Those children could be alive today if the NDP government had acted when they came to power in 1999. The failure to act has led directly to children dying. The NDP must be held accountable for their failure to act, and we are going to hold this government accountable, as we are doing now for their failure to act.

Not only has this government failed to act in terms of having legislation, but this government has failed to act in collecting some of the critical information and statistics. We requested information on children and head injuries as a result of bicycles from the Manitoba Health and Healthy Living, and I will quote the result of that Freedom of Information request: Manitoba Health and Healthy Living does not maintain the statistics on whether or not pedal cycle injury victims were wearing bicycle helmets at the time of injury. Therefore, the information you have requested does not exist.

This government is not only not bringing in the law, it's not collecting the information which is so critical to Manitobans. They want to bury their heads in the sand, not know what's going on, be able to stand up here full of empty rhetoric and pretend that everything is fine, when, in fact, we have children dying in our streets in Manitoba because this government fails to act.



I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, that today when we are doing everything we can—certainly in the Liberal Party—to promote bicycle use, to promote better bicycle paths in Manitoba, to increase safety as well as to promote healthy living in bicycle use, that this legislation is more important than ever.

Last night I was talking with two keen bicyclists who love to bicycle to work. They were pointing out that Winnipeg streets are often designed so that it is quite unsafe for cyclists, and we need to have much safer bike paths and bike lanes in Manitoba. One of them pointed out to me the situation on the Disraeli Bridge where there's no bike lane. It's downright unsafe. This government has forgotten the people of Elmwood, sadly, and other areas in that part of Winnipeg. There needs to be much better attention to bike paths, to bike safety, to bicycling so that we are promoting bicycling, healthy living and better conditions for bicyclists in Winnipeg and, indeed, all over Manitoba.

I want also to say a word or two about, not just deaths as I've commented on from the Ontario study, but brain injuries. Brain injuries are sadly an important injury which results from bicycle crashes, bicycle-vehicle collisions, and this brain injury can be significantly protected. The number of brain injuries can be significantly reduced by wearing helmets, we know this. Brain injuries, when they happen, have often lifelong consequences, and we need, particularly, to be making every effort we can to reduce brain injuries.

They not only have lifelong consequences for the individual, for the family, for people around them, but they also have very substantial consequences for our health-care system. People who are in emergency rooms, who have to deal with brain injuries, they would much rather not have to deal with brain injuries. But it is not just the emergency rooms. There may be long, long periods of rehabilitation. People with brain injuries, sadly, as a result may be less productive, less able to work, less able to participate, to contribute to society. It is a tremendous loss from every perspective when we have a significant brain injury in Manitoba, and we need to do everything we can to reduce the number of brain injuries, to protect the heads as well as the bodies of our children and to make sure that we are mandating bike helmet use all over Manitoba.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East):** You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the holier-than-thou sanctimony expressed by the independent Liberal Member for River Heights is a little much to take in this House. I will remind members that the independent Liberal from River Heights sat at the Cabinet table in 1995 in Ottawa and delivered the most dramatic cuts to health and social funding that this country has ever seen. Hundreds of millions of dollars were removed from provinces like Manitoba, directly taking money out of our health care system, directly taking money out of our social service system, directly taking money out of our education system. So this member, this independent Member for River Heights, who stands in this House with great umbrage, with a sanctimonious holier-than-thou attitude toward members on this side of the Chamber does so with a degree of hypocrisy that is seldom seen in any Chamber in any Parliament in the Commonwealth.

This man, this individual, as I said, at the Cabinet table in 1995 was responsible for the largest cuts in Canadian history to the social welfare system, to the education system, to the health care system of this country, and that record underscores everything that he speaks to in this House.

So, on the question at hand, Madam Deputy Speaker, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act proposed by the other independent Liberal that sits in this Chamber—there are two independent Liberals, the other one—well, it does have merit, and I think that that's important to note. It's also important to note that since coming to office—and I'm a bike rider myself. I enjoy riding my bike. I didn't wear a helmet until a couple of years ago, about three years ago, I think, and I—[interjection] No, there was a comment there about something about that's what happened.

Yes, it's from the members of the Tory party, Madam Deputy Speaker, yes, which also indicates the degree of partisanship and low-level debate and how seriously they take this issue. I didn't hear who uttered it, but I know it was a female voice over there.

**An Honourable Member:** Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

**Mr. Caldwell:** Member for Morris? Thank you very much.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, the issue of having helmets for bicycle riders I think is an important one, and the educational factor that goes around

encouraging people to wear helmets is in fact what got to me as a bike rider to move from not wearing a bicycle helmet to wearing a bicycle helmet, because it doesn't take all that much convincing to understand that if you take a tumble on your bicycle from six inches or six feet and land on your noggin you're going to have the potential for some very severe injury if not death. But, certainly, the issue of acquired brain injury, which is an important one for all of us here I believe, is something that should be worked at to be prevented in the greatest degree possible, and that's why I say that there does appear to be some merit in further debating this issue at this time.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

I think it's also important to note, as we're debating this particular amendment to The Highway Traffic Act, as some of my colleagues have mentioned earlier in this debate, our government has undertaken a very significant educational campaign, but also a very significant campaign to provide low-cost helmets to Manitoba children.

\* (10:50)

In 2005, we implemented the Protect Your Noggin television and transit shelter campaign which was rerun again in 2006. I don't recall, but this may be the campaign that moved me to start wearing a helmet. The campaign included 37 bus shelter posters in Brandon and Winnipeg so it would make sense that this was the campaign that got to me, and 528 media plays over five TV stations. Healthy Living continues to maintain a Protect Your Noggin Web site with bicycle safety information and link resources for those using the Internet.

The low-cost helmet program was offered in the spring of 2006, 2007 and again this past spring. Order forms were made available to 225,000 children in Manitoba schools and day cares for the bulk purchasing of low-cost certified bicycle helmets. Since 2006, over 42,600 helmets have been purchased and distributed to Manitoba families through this initiative.

In 2006, 1,000 free helmets were made available for distribution to low-income individuals identified by schools, day cares and community organizations. In 2007, a further 678 free helmets were available for distribution through schools, KidSport and community programs. In this past year, 1,500 no-cost helmets have been provided, including 200 through

KidSport and 300 to individuals identified by their teachers.

In 2006, a joint campaign between CTV, Canadian Tire and the Province of Manitoba produced three 30-second messages about safe bicycle riding, safely wearing of a helmet and choosing a properly fitted bicycle. The campaign included a daily on-air draw for free helmets and over 90 helmets were given away during this campaign. In 2007, an additional 30-second message was produced on riding in low light conditions. In addition, the Winnipeg Police Service bicycle patrol officer stopped and rewarded bicyclists who displayed good cycling behaviour with \$25 in Canadian Tire money. In 2008, the messages again began running in May and indeed, continue to date. The campaign has included a daily on-air draw for free helmets and the rewarding of Canadian Tire cash for safe cycling behaviour.

The current status of the low-cost bicycle helmet program is a positive one. The low-cost program has made a variety of certified bicycle helmets at bulk purchasing prices available to children and their families at schools and early learning centres. The program, in its third year, complements ongoing bicycle safety education within the Manitoba education curriculum. The public awareness component of the program was also developed in 2006 and 2007 to promote increased awareness about safer cycling behaviour.

In 2006, 18,213 helmets were purchased and distributed. In 2007, 12,884 helmets were provided. Free helmets were provided as part of the campaign to children identified, as I said earlier, by their teachers and community groups that work with low-income families. This is particularly important because, you know, there is a cost associated with helmets. That cost is generally borne by the families or parents of the children who require the helmets. So I'm very, very pleased that our government is recognizing that, particularly for low-income families and children, that it's important to provide those children with the safety equipment necessary for safe cycling.

Just in conclusion, I see my lights flashing here, I want to thank the member for allowing for this debate to occur again. I know that this is not the last that we've heard about the helmet issue. We on this side of the House have proven our steadfastness in addressing this issue by providing both information campaigns and free helmets to Manitoba children,

approaching 50,000 helmets. I think that good work will continue in future years.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat again. Thank you.

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** It's an opportunity now that I really look forward to in getting the chance here to put a few words on the record about this proposal, this particular amendment.

Again, it shows an obvious concern for the well-being of children but, as a mother, I have to say that, again, the key aspect of anything related to children's safety really comes down to education. Coming from a family of cyclists, someone who has raised my children cycling both here and in Toronto and knowing the various dangers that they would face in both environments, I know that the first thing that you do when you put a child on a bike is you put the helmet on first and that you really raise your kids around that awareness.

Now, because of the environments that I have had my children cycling in, we've always worn helmets and those helmets have actually saved lives. But the thing is, we were never compelled to wear them. Children need to be educated about the reasons why. More importantly than even being educated about them, that sometimes the compulsion, being forced by law to wear a helmet can actually have a negative impact that will deny children the opportunity to ride their bikes. Because I've been lucky enough that I have always been able to afford to put a helmet on my children's heads, to keep them safe, to keep their bikes well maintained, but I know that that is a privilege that is not experienced by every other parent in this province. That's why I applaud this government for making helmets accessible. What I know too that is most important is that when parents put their children on bikes, even if they can't afford to put a helmet on them, they're usually quite mindful of the safety issues. I would much rather see a mother putting her child on a bicycle inside an enclosed area, a park area, and he might not have a helmet on, but at least giving them the opportunity to cycle rather than saying, sorry, dear, there's a law against it and Mommy could face a fine. That means that I can't even afford to put you on a bike or the fine costs more than the helmet that I already can't afford.

So, you have to educate people about the reasons. You have to make the helmets affordable. Again, we've had a lot of people talk about the idea

that in the case, especially, of teenagers or others that put up a fight, well, I can tell you, having a 16-year-old, the last thing that works when you're negotiating with a child in that age range is telling them, because I said so, or because there's a law. You want to have a fight about an issue, force them to do something. On the other hand, if you can have an intelligent conversation with them that explains the benefits of something and why it's in their own best interests, I'm not saying it's going to be an easy discussion and that you'll win the debate quickly and hands down, but the point is that if you can engage them at their level and at their interest and what matters to them, that's what will get them on board.

I have a 16-year-old who is an avid cyclist and you want to know one of the reasons why he is so militant about always wearing a helmet? Because a helmet did save his life in Toronto when he was five or six and I hope to God no other child has to go through the kind of near miss that he had. But the point is that it was that hands-on experience that then filtered around to all of his friends. So all the laws in the world, all the compulsions in the world, all the moms getting on their kids backs about that was not going to convert this handful of kids. It was lived experience and it was intelligent discussion with those children, Mr. Speaker, that did the job.

So I can see where the members opposite are coming from, from this, but this doesn't really change a lot in the sense that you could actually be robbing children of the opportunity to cycle if their parents can't afford to put helmets on their heads, that their parents are going to end up saying, sorry, as much as I would like you to ride a bike, and as much as I know that that's part of a healthy, active lifestyle, sorry, we can't afford the extra X number of dollars to get a helmet, so we have the choice of either breaking the law or you being healthy.

I would much rather that we educate parents and make these helmets affordable for them, be able to, through the Protect Your Noggin program, get those in there. That's what's really important is educating people. You can compel people to do things, but you're not going to get the same kind of levels of cooperation if people really understand and are educated about the importance of it. You'll get greater compliance from people who understand the benefits.

Again, like I said, with my own children, the reason why they wear bicycle helmets is not because Mommy said so, is not because there's a law, it's

because they've been educated in a way that explains to them that it is in their own best interest. So that's what we need to do to get compliance up because, again, for every helmet that a law like this might put on the head of one child, it could also be preventing cycling by other children.

\* (11:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Is that better? Can you hear?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. When this matter is again before the House the honourable member will have four minutes remaining.

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 20—Affordable Seniors Housing

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m., we will now deal with resolutions. We'll deal with resolution, Affordable Seniors Housing.

**Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere):** Mr. Speaker, moved by myself, seconded by the Member for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino), the private member's resolution Affordable Seniors Housing:

WHEREAS seniors and elders deserve quality affordable housing;

WHEREAS it is important that seniors and elders have access to housing in locations that keep them connected to their community and their families and close to places where they receive the services vital to their health and well-being; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has invested \$98 million in the first phase of its long-term care and housing strategies for senior, Aging in Place; and

WHEREAS the Aging in Place strategy includes: expanded capacity for long-term care options such as supportive housing, specialized supports and supports for seniors in group living, replacement of three- and four-bed rooms with one- and two-bed rooms to help improve quality of life in personal care homes; and

WHEREAS Assisted Living programs have been expanded with an additional five units expected to be completed in 2006-2007 with the goal of providing different types of living accommodations for seniors and elders with different needs; and

WHEREAS the provincial government recognizes that one housing method does not work

for all seniors and elders which has led to alternatives to personal care home placements that are affordable and linked to the community; and

WHEREAS provincial government is committed to making sure that seniors and elders have a range of services that fit their particular life and social needs; and

WHEREAS seniors and elders are often more vulnerable when in care and making sure they are not exploited is essential to protecting the integrity of older persons; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has mandated the Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation to monitor private seniors' homes to make sure that operating agreements are fair and equitable for all seniors and elders; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba must continue to support seniors and elders to ensure that they continue to be well cared for and have a range of services that continue to meet their personal needs.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the efforts of the provincial government in continuing to support the development of seniors' and elders' affordable housing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the efforts of the provincial government in continuing to support seniors' and elders' ability to live close to their communities, families and support services.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable Member for Rossmere, seconded by the honourable Member for Wellington,

WHEREAS seniors—dispense?

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense.

**Ms. Braun:** Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Rossmere I am very pleased to present my private member's resolution on affordable seniors' housing. We all know that seniors make up the fastest-growing demographic of our province.

As an MLA from the northeast corner of Winnipeg I am very well aware of this group. The Good Neighbours Senior Centre, which is located in this area, is the largest seniors organization in Manitoba. It has nearly 1,000 members, and just as

an aside, they are celebrating their 15th anniversary this week, actually. I also understand that we have the highest concentration of seniors in this northeast corner of Winnipeg; however, we are not the only community with seniors.

Seniors bring richness to all the communities in which they reside, whether it's Rossmere, whether it's Wellington, whether it's Pembina or Russell—

**An Honourable Member:** Assiniboia.

**Ms. Braun:** Or Assiniboia for that fact.

Seniors are vital members of our community. They hold valuable knowledge and offer wisdom acquired through their many experiences and years of contribution to our province's society and culture.

I know that in my community, when I have my conversations with our seniors, I can tell you that it always turns back to talking about being able to continue to live in their community. They have a strong desire to remain in the community in which they have lived for many, many years.

As someone who moved to Rossmere as a child with my parents and along with many other family members and many friends of the family, I know that their desire and their express wishes would be to continue living in Rossmere in a neighbourhood that is familiar to them where the supports are there. Someone once told me that growing old is a series of losses, which was not a very pleasant thing to hear, but it certainly is true, especially as you reach your senior years.

So it's really important to us to minimize these losses, especially loss of community, network of friends and network of supports that are there. We really want to make sure that our seniors have an opportunity to continue to contribute to their neighbourhoods, to their community, and to their families, and we can certainly do that by assuring that they can continue to live in their neighbourhoods.

The provincial government believes that seniors deserve the best care we can offer, and we are working hard to ensure that our seniors receive the support they need in their home communities so they can continue to participate in these communities and enjoy their neighbourhoods close to their family and friends. We believe that seniors are entitled to live as independently as they can so they can continue to be respected, active, and vibrant members of our community.

Certainly, in Rossmere, there are a lot of seniors groups, and they're doing a variety of things in order to continue to be part of the community and to be contributing members to that community, whether it's my seniors in Bergen Hall [*phonetic*], whether it's the Good Neighbour Senior Centre, there is certainly, when you look at the northeast corner of Winnipeg, an abundance of volunteer groups that are volunteered by seniors.

Through our Aging in Place strategy, we are working to help seniors live with pride in their own communities while offering the supports they may need to feel safe. Through this initiative, three models of housing with services and supports for our aging seniors will be implemented in locations throughout the province. Health and Healthy Living provide the funding for the services and supports and Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation's focus will be on the provision of the models and public housing to enable the elderly, low-income seniors access to services and supports they require to age in place.

Through this program, the regional health authorities work in collaboration with the department of Health and Healthy Living and Family Services and Housing and communities to offer the supports needed in a particular location, whether that's basic home care, group living arrangements, or more involved care with around-the-clock support.

I know that recently a family member who is in her late 80s who enjoyed the opportunity to stay in her house as long as she could, and actually in the riding of Minto, many times indicated the appreciation she had to be able to stay in her home as long as possible and has now moved into a supportive housing situation that is also in her community. I know that she really appreciates the opportunity to stay in her community and continue to live there close to her friends and family.

In 2007, as the first stage of our rural and northern strategy, the provincial government pledged another \$21 million for a new personal care home in Neepawa, and the expansion of rural and northern community support programs. We then contributed \$1.5 million to the second stage. Our third stage of the rural and northern strategy sees an investment of more than \$4 million which will allow seniors to enjoy the benefits of supportive housing in Neepawa, Dauphin, and The Pas. These sites which are Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation owned will continue to offer the same secure apartment

setting but will also offer 24-hour support and supervision for the individuals who reside in the supportive housing units.

\*(11:10)

Supportive housing offers additional supports like a meal program, light housekeeping, laundry and the assistance of an attendant companion for these residents. These are often the kinds of things that make a difference and allow seniors to continue living independently and in the same community. I know this is certainly what my aunt is experiencing as she has made the transition from her own home on Lipton to the supportive housing on Arlington. She comments continually about how wonderful it is to have the kind of companion support that allows her to take part in the activities in the housing unit and also to continue to visit with friends and family.

In addition to the rural and northern stages, MHRC is currently investing over \$4 million in capital renovations to develop 48 affordable, supportive housing units in Winnipeg. In total, through the Aging in Place strategy, more than 3,300 individuals have been supported across the province to date.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to bring this forward and to be part of a government that is making sure that our seniors are continued to be valued and appreciated in our community and provided with the kinds of housing supports that are necessary to do so. Thank you.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, am pleased to be able to rise and put a few comments on the record.

Where I do agree with the Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) is about the fact that we need to respect and we need to allow our seniors to live in dignity within the last years of their lives. I really think that's something that is very important. These are the people who have contributed so much to our way of life: raising their families, building our communities and, yes, Mr. Speaker, they do deserve the best in their later years. For some of the seniors this means access to a personal care home, and that's where I would like to spend a little bit of time just indicating what is happening within the constituency that I represent.

It's unfortunate that this government has seen the growth within the area over the last nine years, and it's been a consistent growth. As I indicated to the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) yesterday, we

had the stats there regarding the growth that we've seen within our schools. But this growth is taking place within the senior sections as well. So, today, if we would look, for instance, at Boundary Trails Health Centre, which is a beautiful facility and which, incidentally, was built under the Conservative government, it has 80 beds, however, 26 of those beds are occupied by people who should be in a personal care home. Okay, that is just wrong, wrong use of beds in a hospital.

But let's backtrack a little bit. So why are these 26 people occupying beds at Boundary Trails? Well, it's because the Salem Home, which is a personal care home in Winkler, has 40 people waiting placement. So they are—I'm not sure where, but they're at home, they are being looked after in accommodations that are not suitable for personal care. So there are 40 people waiting placement there. Then go to Tabor Home, which is in Morden, here you have 30 people that are on a waiting list, waiting to get into a personal care home. Now, some would indicate and say, well, maybe they're just staying too long in the personal care home. Now, let me assure you, that's not the case, because the average stay of someone that's in the personal care home in Winkler is less than two years. It's less than two years. So these people are not occupying a bed for a long time.

So my mother, when she got into her personal care home last year, I mean, I did not give her these statistics because they're not particularly friendly, but anyone who does the numbers knows that my stay here is not very long. So, consequently, we have a real problem, and when the member gets up and says how they have been supplying dollars, maybe they've been supplying the dollars in Winnipeg or some other areas, but I assure you they are not in southern Manitoba. Maybe, then, this is also as a directive from the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province who just about a month ago indicated that he wasn't really too anxious to spend infrastructure dollars in southern Manitoba—prepared to spend them in Winnipeg, maybe up north, but no, not in southern Manitoba. Now, I don't understand this. I don't understand this. The member got up, she indicated that seniors are valuable people within our society, that we need to respect them, we need to respect their wishes and yet, though, this is what we are doing. We are not allowing them to live in good accommodations, you know, the latter part of their years. So we have huge needs.

Now, I would hope that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) or any minister is listening and just

observing or listening to some of the data that's out there. Like I say, we had the numbers to prove that we've had this kind of a situation for a number of years. This is not something that has just happened to us overnight.

So, just to qualify that, if we look at the boundaries and the revision of the boundaries as they have been indicated, I have been referred to now, in the southern part of the province, as a little postage-sized stamp, as a constituency which is great. I can use my bicycle and drive from one end to the other and probably do it all on my bicycle.

Now, would I wear a helmet? I would indicate to you that that should be voluntary. If I want to wear a helmet, I can. If not, I will so choose what I want to do, my point being that it's not only me who's out there indicating that we've got exceptional growth within that region. The numbers are there. The stats are there. Fifteen years ago, some of the corporate giants of the world came out there, whether it was a GM or a Ford or whether it was the Wal-Mart, or so on. They did the numbers out there, and they indicated very clearly that this is a region that is growing and will continue to grow. That is substantiated today by the population that we have out there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would indicate to you, very clearly, that we have exceptional needs out there, and we need to meet them. I've had a petition in the House here every day last session, this session, imploring the government to please, please look at southern Manitoba, give us some of the personal care beds that we need.

I do have a question, though, when I look at the resolution here, and that is that they're priding themselves on the fact of having spent \$98 million in the first phase of long-term care. That's in the one resolution. Then, on the next one, it's saying that this is providing five additional units. Now, when I look at a unit, I am saying to myself: Wow. I think I'd like to live in one of those. That must be a Taj Mahal. Of course, this was done in '06 and '07. I would like to indicate that we are in '08-09, now. So maybe this resolution was put forward years ago and now is a little outdated.

However, Mr. Speaker, I do need to move on, but I do want to indicate to you that I have some dramatic and some real concerns regarding the whole area of assisted living and the supports that we get within our area. Again, I need to indicate that the area that I represent, we have had groups getting

together—and these are not groups that are just ad hoc groups—these are groups that have a good, good plan as to how they would like to be able to put in facilities for assisted living because, again, this is an area that we need to fill before they get to the personal care home.

As someone who's aging, and I'm getting older as well. I'm looking ahead and saying, do I want to move into a personal care home before I absolutely have to? The answer is no, and I think the majority of the people would agree with that. But there is that element, that space, as you're getting older, that needs to be filled, and we don't get that in southern Manitoba, for whatever reason.

Again, I go back to what the Premier (Mr. Doer) said. He said, we would rather not spend—I think he used a more definitive word than that. He said, we don't spend infrastructure dollars in southern Manitoba. Now, I'm not sure whether that is discrimination. *[interjection]* Whatever it is. Somehow they don't want to spend the dollars there.

So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that this resolution pays a lot of lip service. There's a lot of things in the resolution that I think are good, but they're not working. Somehow there is no action in what's taking place here. So we do have to look after those people who are seniors, those people who have contributed so much to our province, to our economy, to our own individual lives. I really, really feel that we need to respect them and that we need to do everything that is possible in order to provide them with the accommodation that they need, whether that is in northern Manitoba, whether that is in central, whether it is in southern Manitoba. As the Premier said, when he was elected in 1999, he says, I am now the Premier of the whole province. I really, really wish that his actions would be consistent with the words that he used, and I regret to say I don't see that happening. Thank you very much.

\* (11:20)

#### House Business

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, on House business.

**Mr. Speaker:** On House business.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, pursuant to Rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on Tuesday, September 23, will be the one put forward by the honourable Member for

Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen). The title of the resolution is Northern Transportation.

**Mr. Speaker:** Pursuant to Rule 31(8), it's been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on Tuesday, September 23, will be one put forward by the honourable Member for Flin Flon. The title of the resolution is Northern Transportation.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** We will now resume debate.

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington):** I thank my colleague, the Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), for introducing this private member's bill, affordable seniors' housing, to this Chamber. I also thank our honourable member from the opposite side for the few words he mentioned regarding this private member's bill.

*Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

I represent the Wellington constituency with a sizable number of seniors. I have visited a good number of seniors in my area. I visited them, by the way, in their apartments and some in their houses, and the feeling that I gather from these visits is that the seniors who are still in their homes and who, as years pass by, will be needing assistance into some sort of different kind of housing arrangement would definitely want to stay in the same area. This affordable seniors' housing private member's bill would make this possible.

So I urge the members of this House to consider this resolution for adoption today, because this would benefit not just seniors living in Winnipeg but seniors all over the province. As we all know, seniors are vital members of our community. They hold valuable knowledge and offer wisdom accumulated through many years of contribution to our province's society and culture.

The seniors topic is very much close to my heart, being in that age group that I will very soon be a senior. So I look forward to staying in affordable seniors housing when my time comes, and that's not very long from now.

Speaking of value of seniors, in our culture especially grandparents hold a very important position in the family. Grandparents are a source of wisdom. They offer sound advice. They have so much love to offer to their children, their grandchildren, friends and the community. If seniors, for example, the seniors in Wellington constituency, who would soon be unable to mow their lawns

during summer or do the snow removal in the winter, they have expressed their deep desire to stay in that area because they have lived most of their life in that area. They have friends in that area. They attend a local church there and are members of some local community organizations there. So if there is no affordable housing in the area where they are living, they have to move to somewhere else, and it's a totally different environment for them. Being separated from a place you have known and loved for a long time could be traumatic, and it could cause a lot of grief and sadness to these seniors. So if this affordable seniors housing member's bill is enacted, our government will be emboldened to pursue this.

As the members opposite have mentioned, our Premier (Mr. Doer) is governing not just for the city of Winnipeg but for the whole of Manitoba, so we would see a lot of movement and action towards this once this is enacted. Our government believes that seniors deserve the best care we can offer them, and we are working hard to ensure that our seniors receive the care they need in their home communities so they can continue to share good times with their loved ones in their neighbourhoods.

I have seen this happening in the western Brooklands area, specifically the Brooklands seniors association. They have several projects in the community. They hold socials in their community centre, and these are a happy bunch of seniors. They have valuable contributions to make to the community if they stay in that area.

We believe that seniors are entitled to live as independently as they can so that they can continue to be respected, active, and be active and vibrant members of our community. I agree with our esteemed colleague opposite that if we had to leave our homes because of age, we would prefer living in a place where we could consider it next to home and where we were close to friends and family. That would be affordable seniors housing. If we are still capable of being in that seniors housing, we should stay there, although there are cases when we have to move to personal care homes. But if we are still able to stay in affordable seniors housing, we should. That's why this resolution is very important for everyone to support.

Through our Aging in Place strategy, we are working to help seniors live with pride in their own communities while offering the supports they may need to feel safe. With affordable seniors housing in place, this strategy would be strengthened and the



seniors would definitely benefit from this strategy. When seniors are happy, when seniors feel safe, that's a way of giving them the utmost respect for the value, the work, the sacrifice, the love they have shown to their children, to their community, to their friends.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I urge our esteemed members to support this affordable seniors housing private member's bill. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** I do want to put a few words on the record in regard to the resolution brought forward by the Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) on affordable seniors housing.

But, before I do that, I would just like to say that when the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) was speaking in regard to the wearing of bicycle helmets, I did make a comment to him. I made that comment in jest, but I do feel that he took exception to that, so I do want to offer an apology to him recognizing certainly that there are devastating effects that can happen from injuries when people would sustain an injury from a bicycle fall. So I do want to make that apology.

\* (11:30)

I would like to, though, speak about the resolution on affordable seniors housing. The first clause in the resolution says: WHEREAS seniors and elders deserve quality affordable housing. That is certainly something that all seniors do deserve whether that's in Winnipeg or rural Manitoba. That's what we would strive for because our seniors in our communities are the people that built the communities. They're the ones that, if they become a senior in the community, they're the ones that raised their families in the community, were children in the community, supported the community club, supported the churches, supported all of the sporting activities with their children and just built that community. To lose them from a community, if they have to go someplace else, we lose, in our communities, those people that sustained the history of the community, that know how the communities were built. I think this is very, very important in rural Manitoba in small communities because that is what community is.

I think, when I hear the members on the opposite side speaking about the ability for people to remain in their communities where they've lived, where their family is, where their friends are, where their social connections are, where their support systems and

networks are, and that closeness that they would like to maintain, I just feel that some of the members on the opposite side really have a disconnect with what happens in rural Manitoba because in many areas of rural Manitoba, people do have to leave their communities to go to get affordable seniors housing or to get any kind of housing.

I'll give an example. I was just at a—had a coffee meeting at the seniors manor in Morris and—  
[interjection]

#### Point of Order

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Mr. Acting Speaker, I'd like to ask you to close the doors and call a quorum, please.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Martindale):** There has been a request for a quorum call. [interjection]

There has been a request for a quorum count. However, rule 5(1) says, except during Tuesday morning sittings for private members' business, the presence of at least 10 members of the House, including the Speaker, is necessary to constitute a meeting of the House.

So, there is no quorum requirement on Tuesday mornings.

\* \* \*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Martindale):** We will resume with the speech of the Member for Morris.

**Mrs. Taillieu:** Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker. That was an error, sorry.

I do want to resume my discussion on the resolutions on affordable seniors housing. I want to talk about a coffee party that I had for seniors in the Morris Manor.

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

I noticed that one elderly lady was sitting off in the corner by herself. So I went to speak with her and asked her how long had she been in the manor in Morris and she said to me, well, I just got here last week. I said, oh, well, where did you come from before you came here? And she said, well, I came from Austin, Manitoba.

That Austin happens to be my hometown, so we had a bit of a conversation about that. But the point is, she had to move from Austin to Morris, which is quite a long way to move away. I can imagine a person in her 80s moving from one community that she lived in all her life, having to move that far away

to another community, and here she was, sitting in a seniors manor and not knowing anyone in the manor and not knowing the community.

So, when you talk about affordable seniors housing and maintaining people in their communities, I think there's a bit of a disconnect as to what happens in Winnipeg and what might happen in rural Manitoba because these things do happen. People are not always able to live in the communities that they grew up in and nurtured their families and in fact built those communities. So I don't think that this government really understands things that happen in rural Manitoba.

They also talk about the amount of money that's being put into Aging in Place strategies, and, again, I think there's probably a selective designation of where the monies go because certainly there are inadequacies in some of our communities in rural Manitoba that we do not have affordable seniors housing and there's no plan for that to occur. Again, when you're investing this kind of money, it's quite curious that the NDP on one hand have their hand out to Ottawa with unprecedented federal transfer payments into its coffers and then, when the money comes in, they claim it's their money being spent with no credit where credit is due. I think that that's a very unfortunate way to manage.

I notice that one of the WHEREASes in the resolution says, recognizing that one housing method does not work for all, and certainly we recognize that the housing that's been provided for many seniors doesn't work for everybody. There are seniors that we've spoken to here in Winnipeg that, as seniors, live in Manitoba Housing units that they must share with people that are dealing in illegal drugs, dealing with things such as prostitution and those kinds of issues right in the same building. So, again, those kinds of things are failures. They're failing to address what is necessary for seniors in our province. Recognizing, as I think the Member for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino) said, we'll all be seniors and we'll all need affordable housing at some point, and we'll all need assisted living or personal care homes. Well, you know, having said that, I hope that we won't, but there'll be many people that will be in need of personal care homes and assisted living. I don't think that we're doing enough to go there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Certainly, I did have a meeting with a group of people in the—I think it was Carrigan Greencrest complex in St. Norbert and also the issues that they

have there with mould were just incredible. They have been trying for a long time to get this addressed by Manitoba Housing. Manitoba Housing through this government has not been able to address issues of mould and bed bugs and those kinds of issues in the complexes that are provided. I know my time is running short here, but I do want to say I believe in the idea of affordable seniors housing, but I think that the government is basically just paying lip service to the words on the page here rather than doing something about it because we certainly see a lack of these initiatives in rural Manitoba. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** It's a pleasure to speak on this resolution, and I'd like to begin by commending the Member for Rossmere on an excellent resolution and also her commitment and compassion toward seniors. This is a topic that I know a little bit about, partly because I'm on the board of Fred Douglas Foundation in my constituency. The Fred Douglas Society runs the Fred Douglas personal care home on Burrows Avenue and also a heritage house in downtown Winnipeg, and also Aberdeen apartments which are on Aberdeen Avenue and provide independent living accommodation. Fred Douglas Society is very concerned about, not only housing for seniors, but the changing needs of seniors and the changing demographics and the need to respond to those, and so they're actually renovating part of the facility on Burrows Avenue to provide a new kind of configuration for seniors housing. I certainly wish them well in that. Of course they're looking at provincial government support which I think will probably be forthcoming, but it really hinges on the financing. They've gone to the bank, and they know they can get a loan from the bank, but then there's always the difference between what is marketable rent and what is the mortgage financing cost. There's a bit of a difference there but they're working on it. I'm sure they'll be successful and I look forward to seeing those renovated units open. They've also hired an excellent architect, Dudley Thompson, who has a great reputation for designing green buildings. I hope that some of their renovations will include some green standards as well.

\* (11:40)

I also know and I would certainly agree—I don't agree very often with the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), but on this one occasion I agree with the Member for Morris about the importance of people

staying in their own community and how important that is to seniors who have lived there all their lives.

That's true not only in Burrows but also in Wellington because I organized a public meeting at which about 40 people came out who were looking for seniors apartments to be constructed in their area because there are almost none in Weston, Brooklands or the Shaughnessy area. There are subsidized apartments. Bluebird Lodge is subsidized, Willow Centre is subsidized and Aberdeen Apartments are affordable. They're not governed by rent regulation but the Fred Douglas Society keeps the rent very affordable there, maybe even too affordable, but that's the way it is.

So there's almost nothing for people to rent in the private market, so people are moving. They're going to Leila, they're going to St. Vital, but they don't want to. They've lived there all their lives. Just as the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) pointed out, people do, in small rural towns. They want to stay in that area where their friends are, maybe where their doctor is and their bank is and other financial institutions, so there is great interest in seeing new construction.

Now I think we should really start with the big picture here, which is that we know that there are people on waiting lists to get into personal care homes and what are we doing about that. Well, that's a bit of a problem because in other provinces there are actually fewer people per capita in personal care homes than in Manitoba. We want to address that, but we also want to make it accessible when people need it because we have a panelling system and it's not easy to get into a personal care home.

Things have changed. For example, there used to be level 1, 2, 3 and 4. Now it's almost all level 3 and level 4. In order to get into a personal care home you have to be pretty frail or ill. So how are we going to do this? How are we going to deal with the accessibility to personal care homes? The Aging in Place strategy says that basically we want to support people living, first of all, independently and, secondly, support people living in the community by providing more alternatives such as assisted living and supportive housing.

There are organizations that are doing this already and they're doing an excellent job. For example, Bethania, which is in East Kildonan, probably in either Rossmere or River East, I'm not sure. Maybe even Concordia. They are in Concordia and they have an excellent executive director who is

running a big operation, Anita Kampen. I've met her a number of times. In fact she gave me a tour of ArlingtonHaus on Arlington Street near Notre Dame adjacent to the First Mennonite Church. That building, I believe, is actually owned by Manitoba Housing Authority. What they are doing is they are providing meals for people who are living more or less independently in their apartments so that they can stay there longer.

They're also managing the former Centre for the Deaf on Pembina Highway. This is actually a good model that the government wants other organizations to look at. It really is keeping people in the community longer as do things like providing home care to people and Meals on Wheels to people, providing services to people in their own homes so they can live independently longer. We certainly support this. Not only that but we're putting money behind it, so we're increasing the amount of supportive housing in the amount of assisted living in the community so that people can live there longer before they have to go to a personal care home.

Now I was intrigued by the speech from the Member for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino) because she was talking about her culture, about Filipino culture. What she said I've certainly observed about three generations living under one roof.

In fact, I had constituents, the Iguries [*phonetic*] who lived on Flora Avenue, senior citizens, and they moved to Brampton, Ontario, to live with their son and daughter-in-law and grandchildren. So this is a very common practice, and I think there are some benefits to it.

In our society, the norm is to institutionalize people, and that's kind of sad when you think about it. There are advantages and disadvantages, and, sometimes, when people are frail, they need to be institutionalized and live in a personal care home. But in Filipino culture and other cultures, it's not uncommon for three generations to live under one roof. I think there are advantages and disadvantages. There are certainly a lot of advantages. The grandparents get to see their grandchildren every day. From the parents' point of view, the grandparents are there to provide babysitting and to spend more time with their grandchildren. When two parents are working one or two jobs each, it certainly provides onsite child care from loving and caring grandparents. It's also good for the grandchildren to spend so much time with their grandparents because they live in the same home.

On the other hand, you know, if you were the parents, do you really want to live with your in-laws or your parents under the same roof? I remember talking to one of my neighbours when I lived on St. John's Avenue, and he was telling me that when he first got married, he lived with his in-laws. He said he did that for a number of years and he said, I wouldn't recommend it, Doug; don't ever do that. That was based on his personal experience. So, you know, I suppose it might depend on the size of the house. If you have a granny flat, it might work better than sharing the same living space.

But, certainly, in Filipino culture and other cultures, it's very common for three generations to live under one roof. I see examples of that in my constituency all the time, but not everybody is comfortable doing that. Not everybody wants to do that and, of course, we believe in choice, right? So if people don't want to choose that option, then we need to put in place other options that are subsidized or funded by government or that people pay for themselves.

In fact, we have many of these senior homes and I would say they're a little on the expensive side, but there are people who can afford it so they have very nice suites. They get all their meals in the dining room, and they pay for it. They pay \$2,000, \$3,000, \$4,000 a month for these services. These are high-income seniors that can afford to pay for that. I've been to Amber Meadows in The Maples a number of times. I know some people that live there. I've visited them in their suites, and they are very well looked after, I would have to say. In fact, my own mother is considering moving to a place like that, and depending on the number of square feet you have, it could cost you \$4,000 a month. That's a lot of money, \$48,000 a year.

How many seniors can afford to live in that kind of accommodation? Not very many, so we do need supportive housing and we need assisted living and we're expanding that, so that there is room for people to live in personal care homes if and when the time comes. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** I really truly appreciate the opportunity to rise this morning and participate in debate of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun). I want to also recognize and thank the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) for bringing to the attention of all members present in the House this morning the numbers that

are currently engaged in debate of this particular resolution.

I recognize that there has been a rule that has been brought into place to protect the government in circumstances such as this, but the point remains that the rules of the Chamber on a normal course is that 10 members must be present in the Chamber in order for debate to take place. *[interjection]* I know that I'm being heckled from the government side of the House because they are embarrassed, sincerely embarrassed, that of the 35 members of the government side of the House, they cannot even muster one-third of their force in order to support a member of their own government side of the House in order to continue to debate their resolution. I'd be terribly embarrassed, too.

\* (11:50)

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that the resolution on the Order Paper is the subject matter of debate, and I'm suggesting that not only has the Chair made a ruling on the matter that the member's referring to, but for the benefit of all members of the House that you call the member to order to perhaps deal with the subject matter of the resolution so that we can get on with the debate in the interest of all Manitobans. The issue that the member is taking some umbrage with, I think, has and can be dealt with and let's get on with the business of Manitobans.

So I suggest, based on the ruling and based on, in fact, the substance of the resolution, that the member perhaps be advised—that you might suggest that perhaps the member be brought to order.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I thank the honourable minister and I'm sure the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie was just about to begin speaking to the resolution.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Faurshou:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this resolution and I'm indeed—the content I was referring more to the opportunity, and I will speak now to the content and that is a point of embarrassment from the government's side of the House as well because within the resolution it refers to—that units are expected to be completed in the year 2007, and others have referred to, and I'm sure are well aware that this is 2008. So this resolution

obviously was not high on the government's agenda and obviously has laid in wait and collected dust for many, many years, to come forward today. So obviously the government just dusted it off in order to be able to fill the space for a government that really has no good ideas about long-term care and also to seniors housing.

I will say that members opposite—I would like to see them out in long-term care and assisted living facilities here in Manitoba and really ask the seniors how they feel in those facilities, if they've been there more than a few years because they will know what it was like before the changes that this government has made in policy regarding assisted living and long-term care facilities here in the province of Manitoba.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

In the assisted living and public housing before one was accepted as a resident of those facilities, they had to have a relatively common age, relatively common living arrangements, as I refer to perhaps being single and being 65 years in age or more, but this government dispensed with all that. They then opened, when a vacancy came available—anyone could enter into that assisted living facility regardless of age, regardless of living situation, could be an individual with a number of children. It could be an individual that had, unfortunately, mental dysfunction and these individuals are now residing in assisted living, in long-term care facilities that are causing significant apprehensive, very unnerving to long-term care and assisted living seniors here in the province of Manitoba.

In fact, my daughter had a personal experience while on practical care for occupational therapy going into what was previously recognized as seniors living accommodations. The seniors now residing there were fearful of their safety and refused to come out of their suites because that facility then was occupied by individuals that had addictions of some description, persons that had, well, shall we say rather shady undertakings, whether it be in illicit dealings of some description. But those individuals are now residing in a previously recognized seniors block, and this government doesn't seem to care. They spend a lot of time with lip service saying they care about seniors. I've just given you a perfect example of the callous outlook that this government has towards seniors in the province of Manitoba.

I will also give another example about, just say, in this resolution, that you want to make it

affordable. Well, here is a perfect example: A gentleman and his wife. She, afflicted with Alzheimer's, had to be placed in long-term care. It was recognized by officials of the government that he should divorce his wife because if he did not, then he was responsible for paying for all of her expenses in that long-term care facility. He refused to divorce her. He said, she is my lifelong partner. He went bankrupt. He went bankrupt because of this government's policy saying that he as a husband had to be responsible for all of the cost of her in that long-term care facility. He lost his home. He lost his car. He lost his savings and now is destitute because of this government's policy. It is true, factual, documented and in the hands of this government's minister.

**An Honourable Member:** I don't believe it.

**Mr. Faurshou:** And the ministers are saying that they do not believe me. All they have to do is go and check it out because this is this government's policy, and, it is today, right now. I could give you another example where persons are encouraged to at least separate. Therefore, then, there can be a division of marital assets so that's all this government will take. But, for religious reasons, persons are committed to their vows as lifelong partners, and this government doesn't believe in that because their policy is to say to divorce or separate. Otherwise we're going to break you. We're going to take every cent you've got. That's this government's policy right now, and let it be known for the record that the government on that side are so naive, they don't even know their own policy, and they are starting to chuckle and laugh and attempt to deflect their actual responsibility. There is the Minister of Science (Mr. Rondeau) saying that I am wrong. Well, I suggest that all he need to do to verify this exact example is to go to the Minister of Health's (Ms. Oswald) office and I will give you the file number, the gentleman's name and the exact occurrence. That way then you can see for yourself your government's policy and how you really believe in seniors.

Another seniors program to try and keep seniors in their house because this government is irresponsible in enforcing the law in the province of Manitoba is to make available deadbolts and bars for seniors wanting to live in their residence. That's this government's idea of providing safety and security for seniors here in the province. Instead of putting the criminals behind bars, they want to put seniors behind bars, and it's a well-noted program of this government which they herald as one of their more

innovative programs. My goodness. I'm telling you, to try and be proud of putting that type of a program in place and then heralding it as one that they will be proud of and being innovative is to what this government truly stands for.

No, it is a real shame as to how this government does treat seniors here in the province of Manitoba because it has, indeed, been a discredit to all legislative members of this Chamber as to how the policies under this government have made our seniors scared to be in their own homes, scared to be

in public housing, scared to be in assisted living facilities and yes, even scared to go into long-term care facilities because, in our long-term care facilities right now, if you want to examine the level of staffing available to seniors in care—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable member's time has expired. When this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open.

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, September 16, 2008**

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