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of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, July 8, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m.

### PRAYERS

#### House Business

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I would ask for the first hour this morning if you could carry on with the work that we did not complete yesterday afternoon, and that would be continuation, I believe, of debate on second reading. I believe we have a number of bills—[interjection] Pardon me, for introduction. If we could carry on with the debate on second reading on Bills 35 and 43, then followed with the introduction for second reading of Bill 44.

At eleven o'clock, if we could then call, with leave, a private member's resolution moved by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), which I believe has been filed, with which we could deal later on this morning.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

##### Bill 35—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2)

**Madam Speaker:** To resume adjourned debate on second reading, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), Bill 35, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2) (Loi no 2 modifiant le Code de la route), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona.

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to Bill 35 to indicate that I am prepared to yield the floor to my colleague the member for St. Johns, who will put our comments on the record with respect to this piece of legislation.

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** The main purpose, apparently, of this bill is to give peace officers the ability to seize motor vehicles of

motorists who have been driving while disqualified or prohibited, been driving with a blood alcohol level above .08 or have refused a breathalyzer test, and there are some provisions to deal with cases where the driver of the vehicle was not its owner. The bill also increases sanctions for those who refuse breathalyzers by increasing the licence suspension period to two years from one year on the first offence and to seven from five years for subsequent offences.

It is commonplace to hear the government touting its record on how it deals with impaired drivers in this province. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), in particular, are often heard to say that Manitoba has the toughest drinking and driving laws. I think they say that at every opportunity. Well, it is not true. I wish it were true, but, again, the government's puffery and their rhetoric does not match the reality. It may be that a number of years ago, perhaps 10 years ago, Manitoba may have had the toughest drinking and driving laws, but since then other provinces have surpassed Manitoba in many ways. We can find longer suspension periods elsewhere. We find legislation in British Columbia and Ontario of indefinite suspensions on the third offence. We find a zero tolerance elsewhere dealing with new drivers.

Indeed, if we are going to get tough on impaired driving that is truly effective, we have to deal with the hard-core repeat drunk drivers. Impaired driving has generally decreased relatively significantly across the western world. There has been a newfound stigma attached to impaired driving. Social attitudes have certainly changed. That decrease is noticeable in Manitoba. Unfortunately, it does not appear to be more noticeable here as in some other jurisdictions. We are not doing as well as many other jurisdictions, and that belies the government's talk as well.

But it is the hard-core driver that comprises the 1 percent of drunk drivers that continues to

be a very, very serious threat. That kind of driver, while only comprising about 1 percent of the drunken drivers, is responsible for over 50 percent, perhaps as high as 60 percent, 65 percent of injuries, I understand. So while there have been changes to the attitudes and behaviour of many social drinkers, the hard-core repeat drunk driver continues, and that is where there must be abatement. That is where there must be the focus. If this government wants to talk tough, it should have acted tough against those repeat drunk drivers, but it has chosen not to. It has failed in this regard over the last 11 years.

Indeed, I do not think the statistics of Manitoba, not even comparing this province's rates to those of other Canadian provinces, but there has not been a significant change in the injuries and deaths as a result of impaired drivers over the years, not the kind of change that we need and that our safety demands.

So this legislation, Madam Speaker, is not good enough. I know every once in a while the government comes along with a little announcement about some change to the impaired driving laws. This is another one of those. Instead of getting serious and dealing with the most daunting challenge in this area of public policy, we have this kind of legislation that falls short.

You know, it is interesting, here is the government that made a promise, and we made sure it lived up to it, that required the forfeiture of motor vehicles from johns. Yet when it comes to impaired drivers, those who repeatedly drive drunk, who fail to be dissuaded by the laws, who essentially use their vehicles as a weapon against Manitobans, who continue to drive while suspended, they get to keep their car. Why the double standard? What is the message here?

In terms of the specifics of the legislation, we will have some questions for the minister as to how innocent third parties, that is owners of vehicles which are being driven by impaired drivers, are dealt with in the event of a seizure. Madam Speaker, we are putting the government on notice that we are bringing in amendments to this legislation, and, of course, within the scope of it which is limited, but we will be introducing amendments that are indeed focused on the hard-

core, repeat drunk driver. We will introduce tiered sanctions based on blood alcohol content and on how many times a driver is caught driving impaired. That is the way to go; it is the only way to go if indeed we are ever to attain the title of the province with the toughest drinking and driving laws. Those amendments would be a good start.

\* (1010)

So we support this bill in principle, of course. We will be seeking to toughen it up, and if the government is serious, if the government wants to match its rhetoric with some action, it will support our amendments. We will move this to committee. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading Bill 35, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2). Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Madam Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

#### **Bill 43—The Highway Traffic Amendment and Summary Convictions Amendment Act**

**Madam Speaker:** To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), Bill 43, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Summary Convictions Amendment Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona.

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Madam Speaker, I am prepared to yield the floor to my colleague the member for St. Johns who will place our comments on the record with respect to this bill.

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** There is a mess to clean in this province, several messes, but the one I want to speak of is the mess that has grown under this government in fine collection. We have seen nothing but mismanagement of potential revenues from fines and, as well, a mismanagement of a system of

law enforcement that is essential to maintain authority and respect for the law in this province.

We understand that there are millions and millions of dollars, indeed the last figure available—and the minister would not update us in Committee of Supply—was that there was \$11 million in uncollected fines relating to traffic offences alone. That is how weak this government is. That is how weak on crime this government is.

So, in response to that, Madam Speaker, we have over the years provided suggestions to the government. Then in January of this year we brought forward a comprehensive plan, first of all to establish Canada's first comprehensive restitution program, and in terms of the collection of restitution, we intend as new government to relieve the victim of the onerous obligation to supervise and collect restitution where a victim so applies. We will legislate and enforce powerful collection tools and prioritize restitution debts above most other debts to ensure payment.

In terms of fines, we introduced the offender debt collection program that we will implement, and it will track, via the latest technology, all fines and restitution orders, fine surcharges, court costs, bail bond forfeitures. That program will vigorously collect money through payment schedules, asset identification at court appearance, by garnishment, attachment, licence revocation when there is default.

This legislation, Madam Speaker, pales in comparison to what we plan to do as new government. This legislation is all that they have come up with in the face of their pathetic collection record. The Premier said the other day: is that all you have got? I have got to ask the other side. Is this all you have got? Is this the best you can do? It is not just a matter of forgone revenues, as I said earlier. It is a matter of the law being enforced.

This legislation enables the government to refuse to issue or renew a licence for all unpaid fines. This government has had the ability to do that with regard to traffic fines for years. I understood that they were actually doing that at one time. I cannot say for sure if they ever did,

but I was told they were doing that and that there was a communication link between the courts and the Department of Highways, the motor vehicle licensing people, to make sure that that was done.

Well, the next thing I had heard was that there was some glitch, some breakdown, those two parties could not get their act together, and the information was never passed on. Of course, the amount of outstanding traffic fines grew and grew, and they made some feeble attempts. I think they got some outside agencies to try and collect. I do not even think there is any outside agency anymore. As I understand from Estimates, there is no collection agency doing that work since the end of March. No, they cannot get their act together, so they bring in this legislation to make it look like, oh, they are tough; you know, they care. But their record speaks volumes. They have had the opportunity, they have failed and now there is a mess.

This legislation, which, of course, we will support, if this legislation passes, and I trust it will. I am not convinced that this government has the wherewithal, the ability to put it into force, to actually use the legislation and not renew the licences of those who have outstanding fines. I have no trust either in the words, promises, or the deeds of this government. I have no reason to start to trust this government now. Absolutely not. It has gone quite the other way.

We will also be asking the minister what must be done to trigger action under this legislation, if it would ever come to fruition, to help ensure restitution payments. What is the role of the victim? Does the victim have to pursue action, or will this be monitored by the courts?

So, with those observations, Madam Speaker, we are prepared to move this to committee.

**Madam Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading Bill 43, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Summary Convictions Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Madam Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

\* (1020)

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill 44—The Gaming Control Local Option (VLT) Act

**Hon. Shirley Render (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe), that Bill 44, The Gaming Control Local Option (VLT) Act (Loi sur les options locales en matière de jeu (appareils de loterie vidéo), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

#### Motion presented.

**Mrs. Render:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce The Gaming Control Local Option (VLT) Act for second reading. The purpose of this new act is to allow municipalities to conduct and implement the results of video lottery terminal plebiscites as part of the municipal election cycle. The act will implement the government's decision to accept the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission's report of July 1998, the municipal VLT plebiscite review report.

When our government released that report, the commitment was made to formalize a process to allow municipalities to conduct and implement the results of community-based plebiscites. I am honoured today to speak in support of this important proposed legislation. The commission's report made a number of recommendations that have been incorporated into the new Gaming Control Local Option (VLT) Act. In addition to directing the timing of plebiscites, the key recommendations were: that plebiscites be initiated by petition or decision of a municipal council; that a standard question would be used for both petition and plebiscites; and a minimum requirement for a decision would be a majority vote. These recommendations, based on community consultations, serve as the backbone of this new legislation.

The commission's report made a number of recommendations that have been incorporated into the new Gaming Control Local Option (VLT) Act. In addition to directing the timing of plebiscites, the key recommendations were: that plebiscites be initiated by petition or decision of a municipal council; that a standard question would be used for both petition and plebiscites; and a minimum requirement for a decision would be 50 percent plus one. These recommendations, based on community consultations, serve as the backbone of this—Madam Speaker, I just realized I have two copies of page 2, so my comments of the last couple of seconds were a repeat. [interjection] Repetition, hardly ever.

Madam Speaker, the plebiscite process in this act is modeled on the Local Option section in The Liquor Control Act. Other highlights of the bill are: it will prohibit the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation from conducting or managing a video lottery scheme in a municipality under local option; it will prohibit registration of a site-holder agreement under The Gaming Control Act in such a municipality. It will require cancellation of a site-holder agreement four months after the local option has been exercised by the municipal electors.

As you may be aware, Madam Speaker, last fall the citizens of Winkler conducted a plebiscite requesting the removal of VLTs from that community. This legislation supports that community's will. This legislation will recognize the legitimacy of the 1998 VLT plebiscite in Winkler. The four-month waiting period I touched on earlier will begin upon the proclamation of this act. In addition, the bill will provide immunity with retroactive effect for the cancellation of the agreement for Winkler.

Madam Speaker, the Gaming Control Commission will be responsible for developing the standard question to be used for petitions and plebiscite votes and for ensuring the validity of the petition. However, the validity of the plebiscite itself will come under The Local Authorities Election Act.

Madam Speaker, an important aspect of this bill is the incorporation of plebiscites into the municipal election process. We agreed with the Gaming Control Commission that VLT plebis-

cites are a local issue; therefore, they should be decided at the municipal level. This legislation recognizes the importance of community characteristics and supports local decision making. By contrast, provincial constituency boundaries do not reflect those of individual and separate municipalities, and the outcomes from major centres would unduly and perhaps unfairly skew results. Municipal elections are scheduled every four years. This means that the elections will serve as a way to hold VLT plebiscites at minimum cost and disruption. In addition, VLT siteholders would have fair notice of a possible plebiscite. This is important given that this aspect of their business may be at risk.

As well, Madam Speaker, and as I mentioned earlier in my remarks, the act allows plebiscites to be introduced into the municipal election cycle by one of two processes. First, by resolution of the municipal council; second, by valid petition of 20 percent of electors in that municipality. We believe this proposed legislation will clearly establish and clarify the rights of municipalities with respect to local option, local decision making and the related process respecting VLTs. It will help VLT siteholders by ensuring a clear process for determining if municipal residents want the establishment or continuation of VLTs in a community.

Finally, the bill strengthens local control over a decision and process that are clearly local in nature. I recommend this bill to you. Thank you.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** Madam Speaker, I would like to speak on behalf of our caucus. I am not the Lotteries critic. I am actually the former Lotteries critic, but on behalf of our Lotteries critic, the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), I want to indicate that this is an issue that a number of us on our side, having been Lotteries critics, including the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), have been fighting for quite some time.

We believe in community choice, and I think one of the most unfortunate aspects of government policy that we have seen in recent years in this province is the way in which this government brought in a massive increase in the degree of gambling in this province, particularly

with the implementation of VLTs, with absolutely no public consultation initially and absolutely no involvement of the communities involved. I give credit to the community of Winkler for taking a very courageous move in having the referendum. I say I have always argued, as has our caucus, that it should be a community decision. It is not a question of whether we individually are for or against VLTs. We have in this province that ability with liquor legislation. I mean, Steinbach is a good example of where a community has decided not to have facilities that serve liquor. I commend the people in Winkler for making their own decision. I think that is a legitimate decision that needs to be made by communities and should be their choice.

I want to say that I look in Saskatchewan, and there is a model of what should happen. In fact, shortly thereafter, in terms of Alberta, they moved far more in this direction than this government did. The reality is, and let us put the cards on the table here, to use a gambling analogy, the bottom line is this government wanted the revenues so badly that they did not want public input.

I say to government members opposite, particularly to a lot of the rural members here, they should recall that the original purpose supposedly of VLTs was for rural economic development. Do you remember those signs up in the hotels, and it was to support the hotel industry? Well, they did not stop at that. When they found it was a major producer of revenue, they rapidly expanded to the point where now we have \$220 million a year plus, coming from gambling generally, a lot of that from VLTs.

I also want to put on the record that some of the other things we have raised in addition to communities having the ability not to have VLTs. We have talked about ideas such as doing what we do with liquor legislation. We have seen in liquor legislation a situation where different approaches were tried historically, for example prohibition. Prohibition did not work, and it was not popular with a lot of people.

But, you know, I give you an example with VLTs. We used to regulate the number of hours in which you could have a licensed facility open.

People may remember the 6:30 to 7:30 supper hour closing. What is interesting is that what I find when you talk to people who are VLT addicts, and it is upwards of 2 or 3 percent of the population, there are people who will literally go into the casinos or go into the bar, and they will spend all day on the VLTs. I have had addicts tell me that.

\* (1030)

Let us not forgot that, for example, in my community we have VLTs now in the shopping mall because there is a licensed facility there. I have had reports of people going in, leaving their kids in the restaurant, and going and playing the VLTs. These are people that are admitting that they have an addiction problem. So I want to suggest that one of the next steps we need to make here, in addition to this act today which reinforces the ability to have plebiscites, is that we may want to look either on a provincial basis or on a local basis of having regulations that will deal with VLTs and gambling in the same way that we do with liquor, not prohibition necessarily, but having some restrictions.

I will just put this on the record. What if we were, for example, to have some limitation on hours? What if we were to have some limitation, some closure period? I remember even when we had the 6:30 to 7:30 closing time, there were reports that I used to get from people who would say that that was one way that did help break that sort of all day problem that people who had a problem with alcohol would be facing for that period of time. So I want to throw that out. There may be other ways in which we can do it, like, for example, should communities have the ability to restrict VLTs so that they cannot be in shopping malls? I am not sure myself if I want VLTs in the shopping mall in my constituency.

So what I want to suggest is, yes, we support this, but I want to urge the minister, perhaps particularly being a new minister here and not coming in with some of the baggage of previous ministers, but, you know, we have done it for liquor. We have evolved over time. We have constant changes in terms of liquor regulations. I want to suggest that what we do is understand that VLTs are a separate type of situation we are dealing with, but they do have an addictions

component. I want to suggest the regulation that should be put in place for VLTs should not be what it currently is. The current regulations, by and large, reflect the liquor legislations. Let us not forget, to have a VLT in a facility, you have to be licensed. So, basically, what we do is we use the same regulations for liquor licensing that we do for VLTs.

Now, I want to suggest we need to have some separate focus on that. I think that is the best way, by the way, of dealing with the problem of the 2 to 3 percent major problem gamblers but at the same time allowing, in communities where people want to have VLTs, allowing people who are recreational users of the VLTs, the 97 percent who do not have an addictions problem. That is what we do with liquor. I mean, a percentage of people who go to licensed facilities are addicted, have a substance problem, an alcohol problem. The vast majority do not.

We have rejected outright prohibition on a province-wide basis. We have in the case of liquor a very similar parallel to VLTs. Steinbach, for example, does not have licensed facilities. But I want to suggest that is the next step. Now we have got some level of consensus, I think, for what the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and myself and the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) and our caucus have been pushing for for some time. I want to suggest, let us do it.

I want to throw out another suggestion. This is something I mentioned in the past. I do not know why at some point in time when issues like VLTs and even with liquor, and I am the liquor critic here, and I will put this on the record, why we do not look at an all-party approach, perhaps a committee of the Legislature that can deal with this. I mean, surely when we are dealing with addictions issues, surely when we are dealing with licensing and regulation issues, surely when we are dealing with something that can have a significant impact on communities like VLTs, surely we can have something of an all-party approach on at least the regulatory aspects. I want to throw that out towards the minister because I would certainly love to be able to participate in a legislative committee in a constructive way in terms of some of the



suggestions that I have and I know other members of our caucus have.

So with those words, we are pleased to see this bill go through to committee and once again pleased to see that we do have the choice now. Winkler has made that choice. That is our position as a party and has been since the VLTs came in. Communities should have the choice over whether they have VLTs, and we are glad to see that the government finally, somewhat belatedly, in this bill is reinforcing that as a legal right. We are finally glad to see that communities in Manitoba will truly have the ability to choose on VLTs. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, I, too, want to say a few words before passing this bill into the committee stage. This is indeed an issue that has been around for a good number of years. In fact, I can recall upon first getting elected is when the government really made the decision that they were going to get seriously involved in gaming in a very significant way. Some of us will recall that what we saw first and foremost was the issue of the Crystal Casino being a year-round casino, and the government's line was not to fear, this money was, in fact, going to be going towards health care.

Well, I can recall, in opposition at the time, we said, well, you know, you kind of confused the debate. If you say that you are going to move into gaming on a full-time basis, that should be the issue that needs to be thoroughly debated. It never was really debated inside this Chamber. The government was very successful in terms of trying to deflect any sort of criticism by saying whatever money we get from gaming is going to go towards health care at the time. It was expected that we would make a few million dollars a year by having this casino. Well, what we quickly found out was that there is a lot more money that was being made, and before you knew it we had the government wanting to expand.

So then they came up with the idea of, well, we have these great little machines, these VLT machines, in which we have a lot of communities out in rural Manitoba, let us put

them out into rural Manitoba. Of course, not wanting to debate the issue of gaming, the government then came up and said that what we would do is that all the proceeds that we get from those rural VLTs would go towards rural economic development. Madam Speaker, again, what we saw was trying to defuse the bait, and it was quite effective for the government, I must admit even though it frustrated me personally. The focus of the debate was, well, look you cannot oppose rural development so why not encourage individuals to participate in the VLT playing in rural Manitoba.

Well, what quickly became the reality of the situation was that there are great gobs of money that are being made, far more than what the government had even anticipated was possible with the VLTs. So as a result of that, what we saw was the government had just too much money coming in through VLT revenues, and they could not give enough away in terms of rural economic development. So, what they did, Madam Speaker, is they said, well, we will put some of that money also in health care, and because it is so much money, any excess we will put towards the deficit. Then before you knew it, now we have VLTs in the city of Winnipeg.

Again, the arguments are that it is going towards health care, it is going towards economic development, it is going towards deficit financing. Well, the bottom line, of course, is that it is going into all the same coffer, the provincial coffer. It is, in essence, revenue coming into the government, and that is where we have seen huge increases in revenue. It is in the gambling area to the extent where we are talking of hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

In fact, one of the stats that was provided to me, and the minister responsible can always correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that each one of those thousands of VLT machines throughout the province collects approximately, on average, \$10,000 of revenue for the province. Now, that might be out somewhat, and I look to the minister to correct me if, in fact, it is out by very much, but I do not believe it is.

Madam Speaker, you know, we have always argued within the Liberal Party and myself,

personally, consistently, through the years since 1991 that what we need to do is to acknowledge that, yes, there is a role for gaming in the province of Manitoba. We have acknowledged that. It would be irresponsible for us not to acknowledge that.

In fact, Manitoba has led Canada on gaming policy, Madam Speaker, because I can recall once getting a call from I believe it was the Toronto Star when Ontario was moving into gaming, and they did not have any critics. So I guess they went to Manitoba, and they believed, because I was the critic at the time, that I was an expert or an individual with great knowledge, which really illustrates the lack of debate that has actually occurred on this whole issue.

\* (1040)

We do not have the type of expertise, I believe, that is necessary in order to have had the type of debate that would have been warranted and that could have influenced government policy back then. But what we and what I, on behalf of the Liberal Party, had articulated, Madam Speaker, is that gaming policy should be tourism driven. That is a very important point. From our perspective, the gaming policy of the government has been nothing more than revenue generation for the Province of Manitoba.

Given what we have seen and the social costs, everything from suicides to marriage breakups to a person's economic livelihood being taken away to criminals being made through this form of addiction, we underestimate the real cost to us by having this. That is the reason why I said, look, it is the way in which you administer gaming policy. If you have casinos, for example, and I have suggested and the government often refers to my suggestions from 1993 in terms of gaming—[interjection]

Well, the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) points it out, the three casinos. Well, the suggestion was that we take a look at Hecla Island, or we look at an Elkhorn resort. We look at the possibility of a boat. That is all it was, was the fact of looking into, as opposed to having VLTs in every corner of the province.

We have VLT machines that are right across the street from high schools, Madam Speaker.

Whenever I get class tours that come into the Legislature, I always bring up one of the questions, where do you think we get our revenue from? One of the things which I always do is I show a little bit of action, you know, those little machines you kind of pull down like this. All the kids' eyes kind of light up, or a good number of the kids' eyes light up, and they say, oh, yes, that is a VLT machine. There is no shortage of people who are prepared to answer that particular question. [interjection]

Well, the minister asks how many times I have been to the VLT machines. You know, the McPhillips station is actually in my riding, and I have never set foot inside it.

**An Honourable Member:** So you are an expert on this then.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Well, he poses the question: am I an expert on it? Well, I have had many discussions with people who have serious gambling problems, Madam Speaker. I think, you know, for me, I do not want to come across as lily clean and never do anything wrong. I am sure there are things which I have done wrong in my past.

But, having said that, I do believe that the government really needs to refocus the way in which it provides gaming in the province of Manitoba. The focus needs to be more so on tourism as opposed to revenue generation. In terms of the bill itself, I think that it is a progressive bill in the sense that it is moving forward by allowing communities to have their referendums. It is something which we have advocated for in the past.

Of course, Madam Speaker, the real question that needs to be answered on that is to what degree the province is prepared to assist those communities in terms of subsidy because of loss of revenue by not having the VLTs. That is something the government has been very vague on in terms of answering. I think that many communities would like to have very clear direction, and maybe one of our ministers will make it very clear in terms, because you have to keep in mind the proximity of rural communities to other rural communities and the impact that it has on one deciding to have them removed.

With those few words, we are quite prepared to see the bill go to committee. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading, Bill 44, The Gaming Control Local Option (VLT) Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Madam Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

### REPORT STAGE

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, if I could ask if you could call for report stage, Bills 20, 21, 23, 28 and 30.

#### Bill 20—The Chiropodists Amendment Act

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura), that Bill 20, The Chiropodists Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les chiropodistes, reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### Bill 21—The Ophthalmic Dispensers Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), the honourable Minister of Labour, that Bill 21, The Ophthalmic Dispensers Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les opticiens d'ordonnance et modifications corrélatives, reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### Bill 23—The Order of Manitoba Act

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I would move,

seconded by the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs and Housing (Mr. Reimer), that Bill 23, The Order of Manitoba Act; Loi sur l'Ordre du Manitoba, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### Bill 28—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (2)

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura), that Bill 28, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### Bill 30—The Veterinary Medical Act

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe), that Bill 30, The Veterinary Medical Act; Loi sur la médecine vétérinaire, reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

**Motion agreed to.**

### House Business

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, given that it is almost eleven o'clock, I would ask if we could call it 11 and allow the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to bring forward, with leave, the resolution that he has asked to propose. Should that resolution be concluded before the hour is up, I would ask if we could go to the next resolution on the Order Paper for private members' resolutions. I believe it is the resolution of the honourable member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan).

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to commence private members' hour? [agreed] Is there leave of the House to proceed now with the private member's resolution of the honourable member for Inkster, Resolution 68? [agreed]

**Mr. Praznik:** For the members' information, I believe the resolution has been distributed by way of the Order Paper, so although one may not have been distributed it does appear on the Order Paper.

\* (1050)

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

#### Res. 68–300th Anniversary of the Khalsa

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau),

"WHEREAS on April 13th 1699 the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh established Khalsa, the Order of Pure Beings; and

"WHEREAS the Sikh community has made tremendous contributions to the growth and development of Manitoba; and

"WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognizes the tercentennial anniversary is of great significance to members of the Sikh faith.

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognizes the importance of April 13th to all Sikhs and the contributions that Canadian Sikhs have made to our province and country.

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba also recognize the importance of the five K's the KIRPAN – a sword representing indomitable spirit, KES – unshorn hair, representing a simple life, saintliness and devotion to God, KARA – a steel bangle worn as a sign of the eternity of God, KANGA – a wooden comb worn to represent a clean mind and body, and KACHA – short breeches, representing hygienic living."

#### Motion presented.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** It is indeed a privilege for me to be introducing this resolution to my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, Madam

Speaker. It is with great pride that I reflect on my former colleague Dr. Gulzar Cheema, who first provided me the opportunity to get to know so many members of his community. That is, in essence, where it started for me in terms of being embraced by so many within the community, so many different families. I would, I believe, be wrong to start naming some of the families in fear of leaving some out, but suffice to say, from me personally and my family, I extend our best wishes to those within the Sikh community who are celebrating a very noteworthy time.

Having said that, I would also like to acknowledge their contributions to our social fabric, the contributions to our economic development. We are who we are today in Manitoba because of the significant contributions of the Sikh community. The contributions are, in fact, immeasurable and cover every walk of life. Whether it is home care providers to heart surgeons to taxi drivers to entrepreneurs or businessmen, Madam Speaker, every aspect of Manitoba's culture and heritage has been touched in many different ways. I would go on to make special mention in this tercentennial of Sikhism of a special contribution to the Children's Hospital that is being made by the community, which, I thought, was just a wonderful gesture from a wonderful people.

With those few words, I would ask that the resolution be passed. Thank you.

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert):** Madam Speaker, it gives me honour today to be the seconder of this motion brought forward by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and myself. I have had the opportunity over the past ten years of working with the Sikh community, and they have taught me a lot. A lot of the areas that I learnt actually taught me more about peace and tranquillity, giving me the opportunity of being able to understand myself better because of what I learnt from the Sikhism. The resolution speaks for itself.

The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has put forward his words on the issue, but let me just say that on the weekend I attended a festival for Khalsa celebration at the Walker Theatre. There was an entertainer from Punjab

that was in. Let me say that I found out that also within the Sikh community they know how to rock, because let me tell you, Madam Speaker, it was entertainment that all should be involved in and hear. To see this artist performing was an eye opener for me. I do not think I would have ever had the energy or the stamina to stand through a show and put forward a show such as this in my life.

I also think that it was important that we went through and put in the last RESOLVED about the importance of the five Ks. All too often we do not recognize the importance of different cultures within our province and what spirituality or which symbols they recognize. This recognition will help us in seeking peace throughout the world as we as a peace nation take our cultures and spread them throughout the world and work with other countries on bringing peace throughout the world.

With those short words, I would like to see the passing of this to celebrate Khalsa and the Sikh community within our province and our country. Thank you.

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I, too, want to join with my members in supporting the resolution before the Chamber. I think it is important as Leader of our party that I speak to the private member's resolution because I think it is important that we go beyond just the party's individual private member's resolution and speak to the policies that flow from the resolution before us in this Chamber. I want to say that this resolution is very consistent with the comments that were made at the Convention Centre—I made the comments at the Convention Centre at the celebration of the 300th anniversary of Khalsa—that the five Ks had to be part of our resolve in the ability of us to speak to the community. It also means that we have responsibilities to understand and to act on our understanding.

Madam Speaker, it has been an interesting number of months to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Khalsa. I have had the opportunity of attending the flag-raising ceremony at City Hall, and I am proud that our mayor did proclaim that anniversary day and did have the community totally involved as fellow Winnipeg-

gers and Manitobans in the raising of the flag at City Hall. All party Leaders, I know, attended the march and the picnic and the meeting that took place a couple of weeks ago, I think it was June 12, at the Centennial Concert Hall. I was proud to be there with five members of our caucus and two members of our federal caucus to join with the community in the celebration of the anniversary and the values of tolerance, pride, and the supremacy of God that is so important in the Khalsa religion.

In reading some of the history of Sikhs in Canada, and it only speaks to about 120 years or less than 120 years of the 300 years of Khalsa celebration, this history is one that I think should be taught in our Canadian history, because for us to learn to be more tolerant is to learn some of the examples of intolerance in the past, the issues of employment, the issues of citizenship, the issues of the right to vote, which became a huge issue in the province of British Columbia in the late '40s. We are proud of the fact that our predecessors in the CCF were very committed to the right of all citizens to vote in the provincial elections in British Columbia in the late '40s. Magnus Eliason writes in his book that it may have cost us the provincial election because of intolerance in those years, but, of course, doing the right thing was as important in the late '40s as it is as we approach the next century.

We also know that immigration policies were changed. I think it was the straight passage bills and laws for the right to be a Canadian citizen that put undue hardship on many Commonwealth citizens that were denied citizenship because of the regulation on safe passage.

So it is an interesting history because it is a history that allows us to learn from our intolerance as a country to be more tolerant in the future. This resolution speaks to tolerance. I want to congratulate the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in bringing this resolution forward.

\* (1100)

I spoke of the five symbols at the assembly. I think it is important to speak to the five Ks here in this Legislative Assembly as part of our recognition of the 300th anniversary. It is also important to note the Khalsa code of ethical

conduct, principles of pride in one's religion but respect for others' religions. The issue that we must provide an honest day's labour and help the poor and needy is also an issue of Sikh ethical values. Sikh religious philosophy is something we have all learned as we have attended many events and learn more and more each time we go. The whole issue of the importance of family life, the equality of the sexes, the social responsibility to help others in need and the importance of community services, surely the principles that are founded in this Legislature and are very consistent with the resolution that is before us today.

I am attempting to learn, in this celebration ceremony, some of the language. *Wahe guru ji ka Khalsa wahe guru ji ki fateh*. I know that it means Khalsa is the creation of God and victory belongs to God. It is important that today, in this 300th anniversary, that we pass this resolution. I join with other members in endorsing this resolution and offering the support of our caucus to this resolution.

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I would like to join with members in offering the support along with my colleague the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), who seconded the resolution offering our support for this important resolution here today.

Perhaps my only regret in having it brought forward on this particular day is, as is always the case when we are ending the session, we also have a committee sitting in another committee room, which, of course, means that we do not have as many members present in the Chamber as we would normally do on this occasion, but that is part of running the business of the House.

So that is my one regret in coming forward today, that more members, just because of the way the business is being conducted this morning, are not able to be here.

I want to join with other members in recognizing this very, very important event in the life of the Sikh community in Manitoba and in the Sikh religion. As a newly elected MLA some 11 years ago, I was introduced to the Sikh religion and culture by many in the community

who have invited me from time to time to visit temples and to participate in community events and cultural events. On many of those occasions, I was joined by the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) or the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), our former colleague for The Maples constituency who served in this House for a number of years, and it was for me a very educational experience to be able to learn in a first-hand manner about a religion and a culture that was not something with which I had grown up in the area north of Winnipeg in the Selkirk and district, where until recently we had a very, very small Sikh community. But it was an opportunity to learn about a religion and culture that was very new to me, and I enjoyed that.

What always impressed me, and still does, was how absolutely welcome one was made to feel within whatever temple one visited or whatever community event one visited. I always enjoyed taking my young daughters with me, as I do from time to time, because for them, as young people, the opportunity to learn about others is so important in building the kind of, I think, understanding that we need as a province and a country to move into the next century.

For Manitobans, we are a very unique place in many ways, and I say this as a great grandchild of emigrants from Ukraine who came to this country at the turn of the century. Around a hundred years ago actually our family celebrated our coming to Canada, and this year will be 101 years that my family has been in Canada. But many of the stories and many of the problems and many of the difficulties and many of the issues of intolerance, of prejudice, of difficulty in settlement, of apparent clashing of cultures in a new land, I think many of us who also have backgrounds that were different in our families coming to Canada, appreciate what one goes through. Although it was not my generation who went through it, it was certainly part of my growing up to recall and learn about from my grandparents the story of their parents and the difficulties in coming to the country.

But what has always impressed me about the strength of this province and the strength of this country is that ultimately we are able to embrace cultures and religions and peoples from all over the globe and to be able to bring people together

and weld together a variety of peoples to form one community, and within that community still maintain our differences, our traditions and our cultures, with mutual respect for each other's background but still build one community.

When I look at other parts of the world with a similar tradition or history—and one looks at our neighbours to the south in the United States where the melting pot theme was very much part of their culture, where people would be melted into this pot of being Americans, and perhaps that is what they did because of their huge size and their very temperate climate and all the opportunities that came with that.

For we Canadians out here on the northern part of the continent with a harsh climate—and I look to the member for Thompson who represents a northern riding. I know in all the times I have visited the North where we have the most severe climate, I always see in miniature in those small northern communities that great effect of huge distance, large land and harsh climate and what it does to people. It forces us, ultimately, to live together with mutual respect because we have to depend on one another, unlike the United States that is so big where people get molded.

We have to respect each other, learn about each other simply to survive. In a very real way, you see that when you visit those small Northern Affairs communities in northern Manitoba where small groups of people, and you realize there are just so few people, if you do not get along, if you do not rely on one another, in the harshness of that climate you do not survive.

In many ways, that is the story of Canada: a nation, and certainly in Manitoba, a province, with few people, lots of land and a harsh climate. That has forced us, I think, and to our great benefit, to be a country that embraces others, embraces differences. We all know we have our share of intolerance and prejudice in other communities, but ultimately we overcome that because we need one another. The Sikh community in Canada and in Manitoba is and has contributed greatly to our province.

As a former Minister of Health, when I recall all the individuals from the Sikh com-

munity who play a role in the medical world and in the health world, it is truly phenomenal. As the Minister of Highways and Transportation, in the ground transportation industry the tremendous contribution of the Sikh community in that particular industry is phenomenal. When we look at many of the new businesses that are growing and developing in our province, many of them coming from individuals who are part of the Sikh community, the cultural side, as the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) has indicated. So I think today, and I say this as a member of cabinet and I say this on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Filmon), that the contribution of the Sikh community is a critical part of the growth and future of our province.

\* (1110)

I know as someone who comes of Ukrainian background how important it was for my community when we recognized Taras Shevchenko decades ago with the placing of the statue on our Legislative grounds. I know as a former Minister of Northern Affairs how important it was for the Metis community when this House passed a resolution recognizing the role of Louis Riel. I know how important it is to my colleague from Sturgeon Creek who rises each day on Tartan Day, how important it is to the Scottish community.

In the same way, this resolution today being the first time that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba has recognized in a formal, official, and appropriately on this day, the importance of the Sikh community to our province. This resolution sends a message to all Manitobans, not just to the Sikh community but to all Manitobans, about the importance of the Sikh community in the make-up of our province and our nation. It says to the world that Manitoba is a place that embraces all people to build its future.

So this is a very significant day not just for the Sikh community in recognizing an important part of their religious life, but it also sends a message to all Manitobans that the Sikh community is an important part of the great mosaic of our province and will be a great part of our future.

**Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington):** Wahe guru ji ka Khalsa wahe guru ji ki fateh. It is my great pleasure to join with my own caucus colleagues and members of the other caucuses in the Legislature to support this resolution which acknowledges the tercentenary celebration of Khalsa and also recognizes the work and contributions that the Sikh community has made to the nation of Canada and the province of Manitoba.

I too participated in the celebrations on June 12, the march and the celebrations at the Convention Centre. Also, this last Saturday I was honoured to be at another celebration along with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), a recognition on the part of the City of Winnipeg of the contributions that the Sikh community has made to the growth and development and the nature of the city of Winnipeg. As the mayor said and as I said on Saturday, one of the strengths of the city of Winnipeg and also the province of Manitoba is our diversity, and the Sikh community has played an enormous role in that diversity and in the making of Winnipeg and Manitoba the city and province that it is today.

I believe, as well, that we need to reflect as legislators particularly on the code of ethical conduct and the principles of the Sikh religion and way of life: the supremacy of God; the importance of family life; the rejection of any social distinction based on caste, creed, race or sex; the full equality of women; the social responsibility to help others in need; and the importance of community service.

We all in this House and I believe most citizens at the very least pay lip service to those principles. There is not a one amongst us who would deny the importance of those principles. The challenge comes, particularly for us as legislators, in implementing those principles in everything we do in this House, whether it be as government in bringing forth legislation or as members of opposition in challenging that legislation at times for its lack of fulfilling the principles of Khalsa. I believe it is very important and very timely, as we are debating legislation in this House today and have been and will continue to do so, that we try—and all we can do as fallible human beings is try—to reflect on those principles and those codes of

ethics. If we did it perhaps a little better than we currently do, our community would be a better place to live, and we would owe even more to the Sikh religion and foundation.

I also believe that as legislators this is an opportunity for us to recognize the members of the Sikh community throughout Canada who have made a difference in various legislatures and in the House of Commons in Parliament. We do recognize the role that the Sikh community has played in many parts of our society, but we have an opportunity as members of a legislature to recognize the role that our peers and our colleagues across the country have played and are continuing to play in our parliamentary system.

I would like, very briefly, to outline some of the Canadian Sikhs who have made a position for themselves of honour and dignity and importance. In the House of Commons. Mr. Herb Dhaliwal is a cabinet minister. Also, there are two other members, I believe, in the House of Commons: Gurbax Singh Malhi, also from the Liberal Party; and from the Reform Party, Germant Singh Grewal from Alberta. So there are three members of the House of Commons that are representing the Sikh community, as well as their constituents in Parliament.

I would like to recognize, as well, the contributions that were made in this House by Mr. Gulzar Cheema, who was the member for The Maples before he went to British Columbia. Also, I am very proud as a member of the New Democratic Party, which has spoken out for decades against racism, against intolerance, and for inclusion, alone, Madam Speaker, at many times in our history but steadfast in those principles and speaking out on those principles, that we have four members of legislatures in western Canada who are from the Sikh community.

In British Columbia, we have three members of the Legislative Assembly who are also cabinet ministers. Mr. Moe Sihota was the first Sikh to be elected to a Canadian legislature. He is joined as a cabinet minister in the British Columbia government by Ujjal Dosanjh, who is Attorney General, chief law enforcement officer, in the province of British Columbia and is doing



magnificent work in that regard as the chief law enforcement officer and the person who is responsible for making sure that justice is available for all people in the province of British Columbia. Transport Minister Harry Lali is also a member of the cabinet in British Columbia.

I think it is also very important that we recognize the MLA from the province of Alberta, who also happens to be a New Democrat in Alberta, which is not often the most friendly territory for New Democrats, but Raj Pannu has been elected as an MLA in the Province of Alberta. So I just, as a member of the Legislature in Manitoba, would like to recognize the role that the Sikh community has played, not only in the rest of our society and they have done a remarkable job in a little over a hundred years as a factor in the Canadian mosaic, but also for those legislators throughout western Canada who have made an impact and continue to make an impact on their various legislatures, and again I would just like to end by saying congratulations to the members of the Sikh community on the role that they have played in our city and our province and our country.

I hope that we as legislators and individuals will reflect and try and enact and live by the principles of Khalsa. We could all do far worse than do that, so congratulations.

\* (1120)

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** It is certainly my distinct honour to put a few brief comments on the record. I am very taken with the activities of the Sikh community in Winnipeg and Manitoba, and in a very small way I too have had reason to notice the significant contribution that this group of individuals has made to the growth and development, not only of Manitoba, but of Canada. I think it is fitting that we as legislators pause to recognize the significant contributions that they are continuing to make to the development of Manitoba.

The Sikh community has made tremendous contributions to the growth and development of Manitoba, not only in the economic sense, and we know of their hard work, their diligence,

their principled approach to economic matters which I think causes us all to understand that wherever we are from, whatever cultural background we are from, we all can contribute to making this province, from an economic point of view, much more dynamic. The Sikh community has not disappointed us in that respect. The Sikh community continues to strengthen the economic backbone of Manitoba and we certainly look forward to seeing more of their community join us here in Manitoba. We need more immigrants in Manitoba, and these are people that have demonstrated what a tremendous asset immigration has been to Canada.

Of course, speaking from my own cultural and religious group, we came to Manitoba as early as 1870, and the Mennonites generally have also contributed to the development of Manitoba.

The Sikh community in some respects are newer to Manitoba, but they have made no less an impact on that and on the economic development of Manitoba. I want to say that I have always been welcomed at the temple in my constituency on McLeod Avenue. They have always greeted me and my family in a very positive, friendly way. They have discussed their concerns with me. They have raised them with me and asked me to understand specifically their problems and how we can resolve them together. I have found that in our discussions they have always conducted themselves in an honourable way.

So I have spoken about the economic contribution that this dynamic community has made to our province. I also want to talk about the cultural influence of this community in Manitoba and also in my constituency. These individuals, as I have indicated, have invited me and my family to their temple to share in their religious experience and their religious ceremonies. Although we do not necessarily share all of the same principles, I think they respect my views in that respect and I respect their views. I think that is the wonderful thing about Canada and working together as a multicultural society.

They do not hesitate to share their cultural values, their religious values and, I believe, go to

some lengths to explain to me some of the principles that they believe in and hold dear. I know I have shared meals with them at the temple. I want to say that the food that they have shared with me and my family has always been exceptional and, again, is demonstrative of their generous spirit and the kindness that they show not only to me as their MLA but, in fact, as a member of another cultural group.

It gives me very great pleasure to stand here with the Legislative Assembly and fellow members, and I want to thank the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) for bringing this resolution forward. I think it is a timely resolution. I know it also speaks well of the member for Inkster and his very close contact with the Sikh community. I specifically want to thank him for bringing this resolution forward, because I know in his workings in the constituency and in the Legislature he has never shied from bringing forward the views and the concerns of the Sikh community.

I just wanted to put that on the record. I note the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), of course, who stepped into the shoes of the former MLA, who was also mentioned here, Mr. Cheema, who, again, as a member of that community, contributed greatly to the debate and the progress of matters here in the Legislature.

I want to just simply recognize the importance of April 13 to all of the Sikhs and the contributions that the Canadian Sikhs have made to our province and our country. I also want to put on record here, and I know to some extent I am simply stating what the resolution already says, but I think that it does not hurt for us to repeat the importance of the five Ks that are set out in the resolution. I think it is important for us to reflect on those matters.

First of all, the Kirpan, a sword representing the indomitable spirit; the Kes, the unshorn hair representing a simple life, saintliness, and devotion to God; Kara, a steel bangle worn as a sign of the eternity of God; the Kanga, a wooden comb worn to represent a clean mind and body; and Kacha, the short breeches representing hygienic living.

Which one of us in this Assembly cannot agree with these principles? I think these are principles that we all share, whatever religious or cultural background we come from. It gives me great pleasure to honour the community here in Manitoba, the contributions that they have made, and to recognize the establishment on April 13, 1699, of the Tenth Master, when he established Khalsa, the Order of Pure Beings, and to reiterate that the positive contribution that these individuals have made as a community and as individuals bodes well for the future of immigration in Canada.

We welcome more of their community to our country as, indeed, we welcome others from other racial and cultural backgrounds to this country that many of us, of course, came to as immigrants. So they are not strangers here in this country. We are all working together to achieve the same goals, the same principles and seek to live together in this wonderful country. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** Madam Speaker, I wonder if there might be leave not to see the clock, so that we not only have the opportunity to not only speak on this but ensure that we pass this important resolution.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House for the Speaker not to see the clock? [agreed]

\* (1130)

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I had the very great honour to attend a very important ceremony in my own community of Thompson marking the 300th Anniversary of Khalsa and to attend the Assembly here in Winnipeg just recently. In fact, I had the very great honour to be asked to speak to the Assembly on the 300th Anniversary of Khalsa.

A lot has been said about the importance of the contribution of the Sikh community in Manitoba and Canada, but I think it is important to recognize that the Khalsa fundamentally is not a cultural event. The Khalsa represents a very important historic development in the Sikh religion that goes back to Guru Nanak 500 years ago and the last guru, Guru Gobind Singh. I

want to stress the fact that as I have discussed Sikhism, I have learned so much of what Sikhism stands for. It is very important that we recognize that it was a revolutionary doctrine, a very revolutionary, religious, social, political and economic statement that was made at the time and still is at this time in our century.

Five hundred years ago, we had a declaration that was some 450 years ahead of the universal Declaration of Human Rights, of Guru Nanak, 450 years. We had a declaration that talked about the dignity, the respect of all people and the equality of all people, the rejection of the caste system and discrimination based on that, the equality of men and women. As anybody who has attended, as I have, at Gudwaras and seen the Langar, the community kitchen, what a revolutionary concept that in the Gudwara, every one is equal. There is no status. What a revolutionary concept. This is from hundreds of years ago.

I say to many people in Canada that often if you look around this building, we often see different elements of western European civilization represented, Confucius, but in keeping with what the government House leader (Mr. Praznik) talked about, I think it is time to recognize that Sikhism itself is one of the fundamental, ethical, moral, social, political, economic and religious movements in the world and should be recognized not only in the form of this resolution, but perhaps, and I make this suggestion, that we make some concrete effort to recognize the 300th Anniversary of Khalsa in this building, which should represent that spirit.

I want to stress, too, that we are not simply recognizing history, because we often make the mistake of assuming that history is something that is past. You know, we are all making history every day that we live. As a member of the Legislature, I deal with these issues myself on a daily basis, and I want it recognized because too often we forget the kind of struggles that have happened in our lifetimes and certainly within the last number of generations.

You know, Sikhs have lived in Canada for 100 years. It was not until 1947 that all Sikhs in Canada had the right to vote. That is shameful, an absolutely shameful chapter of our history.

In 1907, the straight passage law was brought in by, actually ironically, a future prime minister of Canada, Mackenzie King, that prevented Sikhs from being able to immigrate directly, even though they were British subjects entitled legally to live in Canada. For a generation, many Sikh men were denied the opportunity to be reunited with their family.

We talk about the head tax. The head tax was applied to Sikh Canadians. In the 1930s, our leader referenced that the forerunner of my party, the CCF, was attacked in British Columbia for supporting the right of Sikhs and of all Canadians to be able to vote. There were full-page ads saying: if you vote for the CCF, you are voting for orientals to have the vote. That was the kind of racism that we faced.

I want to say, sadly, that at times we forget that this is not just history, that racism still continues at this time. You know, I have seen the reaction. I remember sitting in this Legislature when we had the debate on motorcycle helmets. We took the stance, the government at the time, of saying that Sikhs should be entitled as Canadians not to have to wear a helmet, out of respect for the Sikh religion. You know what struck me—by the way, my wife is from Greece—it is amazing that in the Second World War, in her mother's town, you know who liberated that town from the Germans? The first troops in were the Sikh troops.

What struck me when I saw the debate on the helmets, and later in terms of the RCMP, is that there were far too many Canadians who had no problems with Sikhs fighting for Canada, fighting against oppression, respecting the ability to wear a turban, but did not want RCMP officers to have that same ability. I am so glad that, whether it be in terms of motorcycle helmets or whether it be in terms of the RCMP, enough Canadians stood against that—I use the word "racism" because there was racism—and allowed what I think was a human right of Sikh Canadians to be in that position, to do that.

But I want to suggest one step further. I mention we are all making history. Three hundred years ago Guro Gobin Singh made history with Khalsa, but we are all making

history today. I want to suggest, as a challenge to this Legislature, that what we do is recognize that racism still exists in our society. I want to say that some of the strongest voices against racism have been Sikh Canadians. I think if anybody understands the history of Sikhism, they will understand why. Sikhs have always fought against, not only racism directly towards Sikhs, but against all people. It is part of Sikhism. It is part of the belief.

I want to say that because I have a very personal connection. I have learned very much from people I know very personally. My political mentor, in fact many of my closest political connections, people I have learned very much from in my own community, John Mann, for example, whom I know very well, and many other people I know in Winnipeg—I am proud to say that, by the way, because I have learned so much myself.

I want to finish by saying this today: passing this resolution is very important, but let us not stop at doing this. If we as a Legislature have learned anything from the discussion today, if we have learned anything about what the spirit of Khalsa means and what Sikhism means, what I would like to see is, first of all, a recognition on these legislative grounds of Khalsa, of Sikhism, and, second of all, that when we have the chance to pass laws, when we have the chance in this Chamber to act, what we do is we practise that same tremendous vision of society. Whether it be in terms of barring any kind of racism, I still think we have a long way to go. We can pass acts of that kind, ensuring real social and economic equality, ensuring the end of subtle racism in our society.

I say, in this Legislature, let us learn the lesson, not just recognize the date of 300 years. Let us learn the lesson of Khalsa, of Sikhism. It is a lesson that I have learned myself; it is a lesson I learn every time I talk to the passionate Sikhs I know, it is a lesson for all Canadians. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** Madam Speaker, I too would like to say a few words about this resolution. I would like to thank my colleague for Inkster for bringing forward this resolution today. It is no surprise that he would

do it. I have attended the Sikh Society of Manitoba, which is in my constituency, a number of times with the member. So his closeness to the Sikh community I have seen with my own eyes.

My comments will not be so much on the philosophical nature but on the personal level. From the time that my wife and I chose to live in The Maples, one of the reasons why we chose to live there was because of the strong immigrant ethic in there. So my daughter, from the time that she started going to school, has been going to school with people from all different communities, including the Sikh community. She has attended birthday parties at many homes that were Sikh. At Dalip Bedi's house she went to Karen Bedi's birthday party. I have been invited to these homes. So the idea of welcoming the Sikh community, to accept the Sikh community seems foreign to me because it has become so natural. From the time I first entered politics, when I was running for school trustee, and the MLA for The Maples, Gulzar Cheema, and my colleague for Inkster took me around the Maples, he took me to many Sikh homes. I was immediately made to feel welcome.

\* (1140)

That is why, when he brought forward this resolution, I know he has also discussed with members of this Chamber about finding the place in the Legislature where we could, possibly the Pool of the Black Star, put some commemorative plaque or some recognition of the Sikh community's presence in Manitoba. I hope he will continue to work with other members so that there is a place in this Legislature where we could recognize the Sikh community.

I have other connections with the Sikh community. My cousin was the visa officer in New Delhi for a number of years. I was not aware that is where he was posted. I had lost contact until just a month before he left there. It is a good thing for him, because otherwise I would have been phoning him quite often about a number of visas, but I was able to get his assistance on a few visas. He has since returned to Canada and told me about living in New Delhi and the number of Sikh friends that he has had there.

A number of young men from The Maples who have applied for the Winnipeg Police Service, some of them, after they had been refused once or twice, their application was accepted. I have worked with them, coached them, given them letters of reference and helped them get on the Winnipeg Police Service. They have been on long enough now to know that they have performed very well. I am looking forward to possibly working in a cruiser car with some of those young men from the Sikh community, because I know they will be fine officers; they will be brave, honourable. I look forward to working with them.

Going to the temple is always a wonderful experience. I go there very often. One thing that was mentioned is their acceptance of other religions. I do enjoy talking about religions with the priest and the people there. The idea that my religion is accepted when I go there, I enjoy the idea that everyone is equal. I always make a point when I go to the temple, when after the service we share a meal, whenever possible I try to serve to accent the point that, yes, I am no better than anyone else here and no one here is any better than me. So whenever possible, I serve at the temple. I enjoy that, and I hope the people appreciate that.

At the temple, I have met some wonderful people. At the temple, I met Dr. Dhalla, who I was later to find out received the Order of Canada as a result of the research work he has done at the St. Boniface Hospital. I think not only Sikhs, but all Manitobans should be very proud of the work that Mr. Dhalla has.

It was brought up about political parties, and I think we all have things to be proud of and we all have things to be ashamed of. Political parties have made mistakes. Whether it is boycotting temples or helmet legislation, we have made mistakes and I am glad we have gone beyond that and now we can come together to pass a resolution like this.

I know that one thing that has been mentioned here is the Sikh community. From what I have seen is their involvement in the democratic process, from the time when Gulzar Cheema first was my mentor in The Maples and introduced me and helped me get elected, his

entire executive for our political party was Sikh. So I quickly learned how committed the Sikh community is to the democratic process.

Then in 1995, my opponent from the NDP was Inderjit Singh Claire. He was a very honourable opponent. On the night of the election, he came over and shook my hand and he ran a very dignified campaign, and it showed the commitment to the democratic process of the Sikh community. In fact, even for this provincial election, for a while it looked like all three candidates were going to be from the Sikh community until George Sandhu decided to run in Inkster and Kara Sidhu's nomination was overturned. At one time, we were going to have all three parties represented by a Sikh-nominated candidate so it shows how committed to the democratic process the Sikh community is. So I will not delay the passage of this very important resolution.

I thank the Sikh community for all their assistance. I have now learned that for all the times I have gone to the temple, always this phrase that they said, finally now, I learned what it means: that God created Khalsa, and Khalsa's victories are God's victories. Now I know that, I am looking forward to going to the Sikh Temple in the future. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services):** Madam Speaker, I would just like to place a few comments on the record this morning. First, I strongly support the resolution that has been brought forward by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and nominated by the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

I guess what I would like to say is I am a rural MLA, Madam Speaker, and as such that I have not had the pleasure of having a strong relationship with the Sikh community as so many of my urban colleagues, but I think all that has been said here this morning, certainly, as a rural MLA, it really makes me appreciate the contribution that the Sikh community has made to the development of this country and of this province.

I know that there has been, earlier on in the year, the City of Winnipeg made a presentation of a tree to recognize Khalsa, and I am happy to

say today that the planting of this tree will take place on the legislative grounds. Our chief groundskeeper is presently trying to seek a location where it can be planted, so that it will definitely stand out as a landmark recognizing the contribution of the Sikh community and recognizing Khalsa.

So with those few words, Madam Speaker, I suggest that we pass this resolution.

**Madam Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is private member's Resolution No. 68, the 300th Anniversary of the Khalsa. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Madam Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

\* (1150)

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I would ask that the record show that it was passed unanimously.

**Madam Speaker:** The record will accordingly show that this resolution was passed unanimously.

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House to call it twelve o'clock? [agreed] I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that this House will reconvene at 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, July 8, 1999

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