

Fourth Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 23, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PRIVATE BILLSBill 300—The Association of
Former Manitoba MLAs Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on second readings, private bills, Bill 300, The Association of Former Manitoba MLAs Act, and the debate remains open.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I am pleased to have this opportunity to put a few words on record in regard to this bill. I am particularly pleased as I have been one of those rocks in the rocky shoals of caucus, to quote the metaphor used by my colleague from Burrows, who also introduced the bill. Very clever. I like it. Governments and democracies are elected by the passengers to steer the ship of the nation. Come on.

As I said, I was one of those rocks in the shoal, opposed to the whole concept of the former MLAs having the ability to do what I cannot and have not been able to do in the whole time I have been sitting, and that is to be able to go into schools to talk about our democratic process and the workings of government, not being allowed to share my experience and knowledge and encourage young people to not only participate in our election process by getting out and voting when of age, but to consider charting their course, if you will, to become a politician at any level of government.

Unfortunately, the school division of St. James-Assiniboia is the only division to not allow politicians to participate in grads. It is frustrating in that it is also denying awards and other incentives. *[interjection]* No Portage la Prairie, either? My learned colleague advises me I am not the only one. Anyway, one of the biggest frustrations is not being able to provide an award like the MLA Peacekeeper Award, which encourages students to prevent bullying by reporting or intervening when appropriate to prevent a potential escalation of a negative situation. I have never understood the rationale that I

was given of people holding elected positions not being allowed, I suppose, I suspect, because of partisan concerns. However, trustees are also elected, so it is kind of salt in the wounds.

At any rate, in the opportunities that I do get to connect with children in schools during other events, I have found it even more frustrating to discover their level of enthusiasm in terms of politics. My favourite event is I Love to Read Month, and I always introduce myself as the MLA and talk briefly about what I do. In asking the children how many people know what it is, it never ceases to amaze me how much some of them actually do know and how keen they are with their questions.

Another event that I have had the pleasure of attending is the Speaker's Outreach Program which is highly successful in teaching through role-playing what the democratic process is and how it works. I have learned what a tremendous impact this makes and contributes to the learning experience of students.

My point is that, although the contribution of MLAs, sitting or former, certainly is not limited to schools, I have seen how very, very important it is to that segment.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order or privilege?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am wondering, given that there are no ministers in this Chamber, if that is in fact—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The mention of members' presence or absence is not allowed in the Chamber, and it is right in our rules. So the honourable member is out of order on that. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

Ms. Korzeniowski: My opinion on this bill, however, has come around 180 degrees since the

inception and the debate on it in caucus and out, and I now wholeheartedly endorse it.

I do not regret the length of time it has taken to come to the Chamber. I believe this group has used this time to address any concerns that one has had and to mature and prove themselves as a valuable and professional resource in promoting and preserving democracy. They have had the opportunity, for instance, to address concerns that I for one had regarding these partisan activities which apparently had been impeding my ability to be more effective. They have developed a parliamentary Speakers' program and a youth parliament, and in addition to that this bill is a measure of appropriate respect for former MLAs which cannot help but speak to the respect due to current sitting MLAs. It clarifies concerns about partisan activities by former MLAs which are addressed by the statute and by the association itself which advises that generally at least two members from different parties participate in public events, and it clarifies the non-partisan nature of the association and the powers restricted to matters that further its objectives.

Those objectives are "to put the knowledge and experience of its members at the service of parliamentary democracy in Manitoba . . . , to serve the public interest by providing non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of government for Manitoba."

The non-partisan nature of the association is outlined in subsection 3(2): "The association must not (a) pursue its objects for any partisan political purpose; or (b) advocate a position in support of any partisan political purpose," and "to foster a spirit of community among former MLAs; and to foster good relations between current and former MLAs."

Now, we all know that outside the Chamber many of us have had the opportunity to travel together. I think, I do believe we hold a good, healthy respect for each other, not always a tremendous like but certainly at least a good, healthy respect. I think that without the current responsibilities in the House it appears to me that when we join together in the next life of former MLAs, I think that the stresses and responsibilities of being in the Chamber will probably remove a lot of any potential hostilities that were there before.

* (10:10)

The act also does not call for any public funding and there is no stated intention to use the association

to pursue any additional benefits for members or otherwise attract public funds. A board of directors will manage the affairs of the association. The board will make by-laws to govern the day-to-day operation of the association, and the bill is modelled upon similar acts in B.C., Ontario, Québec and Ottawa that have granted statutory incorporation.

Why do we promote parliamentary democracy? Parliamentarianism has attractive features for nations that are ethnically, racially or ideologically diverse. In the unipersonal presidential system, all executive power is concentrated in the president. In a parliamentary system, it is a vital necessity that decisions necessary to the harmonious evolution of society be effectively explained and debated in serenity, clarity and objectivity.

I see my time is almost up. In conclusion then, I believe this bill will afford the association the sanction it well deserves to continue to do good work in promoting democracy in our province and hopefully serving as role models and talking about the rewards of serving the public to encourage young people to seek public office.

I look forward to some day being able to join in doing in schools what I am now limited to do by being part of this association. I am hoping it will also encourage school divisions like my colleague from Portage la Prairie and my own to welcome MLAs into their schools to serve a very worthy purpose. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for Fort Garry, I would just like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from St. John's-Ravenscourt 37 Grade 4 students under the direction of Mrs. Sharon Ainley. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Fort Garry.

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

* * *

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): The Association of Former Manitoba MLAs Act is an important bill that establishes this association as a non-profit corporation. The bill provides for the operation of the association, including details around membership, the objectives and powers.

This is not a new association. This association was formed in 2001. All former MLAs are eligible to join this association. It provides an association, a sense of belonging, for in excess of 100 individuals.

The association, one of its premises is that it is non-partisan. The executive represents all three major political parties in Manitoba.

The Speaker is the honorary president of the association. As well, this association has defined for itself specific objectives, the first being to put the knowledge and experience of its members at the service of parliamentary democracy in Manitoba, making sure that individuals, students such as the students from SJR, are familiar with democracy, the importance, what their role is and what the role of the government is and MLAs. It will also support individuals becoming involved, realizing that this is an opportunity that should be cherished and is important, that we all have the same opportunities to participate in democracy.

The second one is to serve the public interest by providing a non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of government in Manitoba. The non-partisan nature of the association is outlined in subsection 3(2): "The association must not (a) pursue its objects for any partisan political purpose; or (b) advocate a position in support of any partisan political purpose."

This will help the association work collaboratively together for the promotion of democracy in this great province of Manitoba. They will be able to put down their differences and work for a common goal, to share information, also to share some of their challenges, their rewards as they were when they functioned as MLAs and carry forward the skills that they have learned in this magnificent House.

Mr. Speaker, I think what they will also be able to do is this development of a community for the former MLAs. As a social worker I know the importance of that sense of belonging, and I can only imagine for some of them when they left this House how difficult that was for them, but if they have an association to turn to, to provide them with support, it will help them and make their adjustment, but it also will help them continue to serve the public. As a public servant, as an MLA we have the opportunity to participate in a number of different activities, and through this association the former MLAs will also have those same opportunities. They will be able to go into the schools to talk about democracy, to talk about the role of an MLA. They will also have the

opportunity to make sure that individuals, children and youth know that this is an opportunity that they too can participate in and enjoy.

Another important aspect is that of fostering of important relationships between current MLAs and former MLAs. I think that it goes without saying that every day in this House is an experience that is incomparable to anything outside and only people that have had this opportunity, this privilege can understand that. But I think that it is very important that, as a current MLA, we speak to the former MLAs and learn from what their experiences have been, learn how they have dealt with particular issues and use that experience to continue to build this incredible province to foster community safety, to foster democracy, and together we can do that.

This bill is very important to the association. They have advocated for this passing of this bill for a very long time. It will give them a sense that they are an organization that is recognized within the province. It will put them on par with other provincial jurisdictions in Canada. It will also ensure that, as they go throughout the province sharing their message, more people will become involved, more people will understand the importance and want to be involved in democracy.

There will be a board of directors that will manage the affairs of the association. The board will make up by-laws to govern the day to day operations. It is important to know that this bill is modelled, as I said, from other jurisdictions such as B.C., Ontario and Québec, as well as Ottawa, that they have been granted the same statutory incorporation.

This act is going to ensure that former MLAs continue to play an integral part in the formation of our province and democracy. They will work in partnership with community members. They will work in partnership with existing MLAs, and they will ensure that people continue to debate the importance of democracy and work together to ensure that there is full participation by all Manitobans.

There is a quote by Winston Churchill: Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time. That is Winston Churchill.

* (10:20)

I think this association and the former MLAs involved in this association will continue to build on their learnings that they have developed here and will continue to take that message out into the public as they have done for so many years.

I want to thank the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) for bringing this bill forward and encourage all members on all sides of the House to support this very important legislation. Thank you.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 300, The Association of Former Manitoba MLAs Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): I wonder if you could canvass the House to see if there is leave to proceed with private member's Bill 209, first on the Order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to deal with second reading of Public Bill 209, The Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists Act first? Is there agreement? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 209—The Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists Act

Mr. Speaker: So we will deal with Bill 209, The Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists Act.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Steinbach, (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 209, The Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists Act; Loi sur les audiologistes et les orthophonistes, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Maguire: It is my privilege to be able to speak again in this House in regard to Bill 209, the private member's bill that I have brought forward in regard

to enhancing the role of the audiologists and speech language pathologists of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

The bill has come forward as a result of a lot of work done by the speech language pathologists and audiologists association of Manitoba. The purpose of the bill would be to replace the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association Act and provides for the regulation of the professions of audiologists and speech-language pathologists in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this has been an issue that has been outstanding for some time with regard to this association and coming together. There has been a lot of work done by a particular individual who is the chairperson of the college initiative of the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association, a person by the name of Lori McKietruk. It has been my pleasure to have brought this forward on behalf on this association.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the government has brought forward many professional acts in regard to its time in the House since it was elected in 1999, and this is another one of those areas that I believe we have refined. I look forward to the government's support on this particular professional bill. It has been some time now that the speech language pathologists and the audiologists of Manitoba have wanted this type of professional legislation to allow them to be more responsive in the needs of their associations and responsibilities.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we brought it forward in regard to the last session, in regard to a forum of—it was Bill 204 that I brought forward at that time. There were some discussions around it. I know that the government had some changes that they wanted brought into this particular bill before they brought it in themselves, so we were able to work with them.

I know that Ms. McKietruk has had many meetings with them and brought it forward at that time as well. There were a good many areas that they worked with the Legislative Counsel to make sure that the wording was right in a number of areas on this bill. I note with interest that the government has indicated that they want to bring this type of legislation forward. So that has been their indication, although I know that the government has indicated, as well, that they might have brought in a broad-based type of professional legislation at one point. Perhaps that is their desire, and so I had not pursued it further till now, Mr. Speaker.

But I think it is time to bring this bill back because last week in the House, in fact, there was The Pharmaceutical Act, Bill 41, put forward replacing the pharmaceutical act that was there, and its purpose is to define the practice of pharmacy and provides for the regulation of the profession. There were a number of key issues for pharmacists in that whole bill, Mr. Speaker. So, it must be the government's intent to move forward with each profession on its own merits in regard to a professional bill for conduct and allowing their degrees to be recognized in their own profession.

So, with that coming forward of late, I wanted to make sure that this bill, Bill 209, was brought forward again in regard to an effort to support the speech language pathologists and audiologists of Manitoba. I know we have gone through a whole process of having Bill 204 in the House. It did not pass in the last session, and so I was very privileged to be able to bring this Bill 209 forward again on behalf of the association.

Of course, in discussing these issues with the government, I seek their support particularly on this bill to, I guess if you will, allow for the association to continue The Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association under the name "College of Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists of Manitoba" as the professions' governing body. Mr. Speaker, this would establish a governing board with public representatives to be accountable so that they each would have to be accountable in their own professional ranks. It would require the registration of audiologists and speech language pathologists, and it would create a process for handling complaints and discipline that might arise within their association's own ranks. I think that this is an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for this kind of professional bill to be recognized as an opportunity for the professional members of their association to deal with it in a more professional manner than what they have.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a great deal of discussion between this association and the government over these kinds of bills, dating back several years. I know that we brought forward—in fact, the person responsible for informing me of this bill at least so that I could bring it forward, Ms. McKietruk, has done a great deal of work with her association. Many letters have been written and responses received from the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) in regard to bringing this bill forward, and I know that a great deal from the Crown and

Legislative Counsel has been put in towards the writing of this bill and toward making sure that the wording was professionally correct, if you will, on this particular bill. I think that having gone through Bill 204, and now having the professional Bill 209 re-worded by the Legislative Counsel, I do not see what is left for the government not to accept in this bill.

So, it would be my desire, at least, that when such a bill comes forward to the government, when we vote on this bill, that the vote should be unanimous, that we work toward passing this kind of legislation. It would be one less that the government would have to deal with in regard to these professional bills. I certainly know that, of course, the government would certainly make the speech language pathologists and the audiologists of Manitoba very happy by moving forward and allowing them to have this kind of legislation come into force in Manitoba.

I know that one of those very areas that we looked at, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that this type of a bill would come into force on January 1 of 2007, as how this bill is now worded. That was one of the changes we made from Bill 204, of course, because there would be some time required for adjustments in getting their boards set up and put in place.

*(10:30)

So I think that there is a transition time required to move this bill forward and that opportunity should be there for regular transmission of change from the present act, from The Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association Act, having it repealed and moving towards the enforcement of this new bill as an opportunity to advance the desires of the speech language pathologists and audiologists of Manitoba.

I want to acknowledge that I referred earlier to a number of letters that have been exchanged between Ms. McKietruk, between the ministers and others in regard to this process, Mr. Speaker. I can only say that it was my pleasure to have brought this forward at first reading in the fall just before we broke the session and before Christmas. I know that in bringing this bill forward there is an opportunity to enhance the workings of this association through a bill such as 209.

I want to say that there has been again much consultation on this type of bill and the wording is now correct. I understand that the government had some concerns with that in the original form. We

were glad to make those changes and would openly desire that such a bill move forward now that the government seems to be very willing to accept these kinds of professional bills coming forward for each profession that has been dealing with it. I want to just refer to the fact that the government's—you know, the precedent for this is that since coming into power The Physiotherapy Act and The Dental Act have come into place as well.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I just want to put a few words on this bill. Having worked in health for 30 years and just about 15 of them at Deer Lodge Centre, which I must commend them for housing services in both that have shown me over the years just what valuable, valuable professions these are and how they contribute so significantly and perhaps not nearly as much as people should know about, in providing a quality of life to people at all ages and stages, but particularly I guess having worked in Deer Lodge I see how it can make end stages or young people who have been disabled in some way enjoy a much, much more quality of life than they would otherwise.

I do not think there is anything more fearful than having disability in hearing or the ability to communicate in any way, and I have seen what is almost next to miracles happen with young people who have had head injuries or whatever, and certainly I have been a recipient of the audiologist myself. So I am in total agreement that these two groups of people should receive whatever consideration is going to enhance their profession. I guess the main provisions that we are looking at here is continuing the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association under the name College of Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists of Manitoba as the profession's governing body and establishing a governing board with public representatives, requiring the registration of audiologists and speech language pathologists and creating a process for handling complaints and discipline. Well, one could hardly argue with these provisions. I believe they are commendable and highly necessary.

I guess Bill 209 is replacing The Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association Act and provides for the regulation of the professions of audiologists and speech language pathologists. Yes, indeed, we have been looking at this type of act in other professions. On that point, we certainly recognize the complexity. There have been, for instance, a couple of professions that have taken years to get this through.

I think this is wonderful. It is a major start. I think the member who brought this bill in—

An Honourable Member: Arthur-Virden.

Ms. Korzeniowski: Arthur-Virden, hit it on the nail when he referred to "working toward." I think we do have a lot of work still to go on this, but it is an excellent start.

The Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association is one, as I said, of many professionals operating within the health care system, seeking repeal and replacement of existing legislation or seeking self-governing status. Yes, that is totally correct. There are many that need updating and it is unfortunate that it does take so long. Probably part of the complexity is the length of time that is taken before these outdated statuses have existed. We are aware of the fact that the current act is outdated and requires updating, is my point.

We do support the principles behind the bill. There are, however, a number of issues to be addressed before that can happen, and there is a process. Like my learned colleague from Fort Garry, I also am a social worker, and process is a huge part of my training. I strongly feel that a process does have to be used to fully come to a reasonable end. Not only further consultation with the association is required, but also consultation with employers, other government departments, other health professional regulatory bodies and stakeholders, such as the hearing aid dealers.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I would just like to speak to this, speaking of the hearing aid dealers. I know that I have learned a lot about hearing aids. When I was canvassing, actually, in 1999, I learned a lot about people's hearing problems and always looking to the government to provide more money for hearing aids. What I learned as a result of that, trying to meet these constituents' needs is that one of the biggest problems is that everyone seems to think that hearing aids are the answer to hearing problems.

Unfortunately, many of our vulnerable seniors have been taken in by, this is the answer, and they have had hearing aids provided where they were not appropriate. They cost a lot of money and it did not fit their needs. So that was news to me and I am sure that it still exists. That is part of why everyone should have access to an audiology assessment, because it can not only save a lot of money, it can more appropriately serve the needs of the person. It

is an extremely valuable service and it is a skill that is one that deserves the dignity and the respect in the regulation that is being spoken about here.

There has also been little consultation with other practitioners or organizations, like school divisions, that may be affected by the proposed legislation. Again, this is a critical timing to detect hearing problems in the early years and can avoid not only financially costly, but emotionally and psychologically costly events or situations in the life of the child that could have been detected earlier.

* (10:40)

Part of the process, again, for public bills involves a critical review of certain standard elements, for example, a review of administrative law provisions to ensure they are most up to date. Bill 209 appears to be based on The Physiotherapists Act and does not include administrative law provisions that have been updated since 1999. Now, this is far beyond my knowledge, the intricacies of the whole thing, but this is what I am being told and have no reason not to believe.

In addition, in the case of bills relating to regulated professions, a review of the proposed scope of practice—now I have come across that in others, I think we all know the architect and engineering scope of practice—to ensure that a monopoly on certain activities is not granted is required.

I am being told my time is up here, so I guess all I can say is, again, I commend the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for bringing these incredibly necessary and valuable professions to the fore here. I do hope that we can continue to work on this and come to a satisfactory result. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to indicate that as Liberals we are encouraged by the effort that the Member for Arthur-Virden has put into this legislation. We feel that it is a pretty good basis to start, and there may be room for some amendments which can be made at committee stage. We think that this bill should go on to committee stage, so we would urge all sides to work together to get this to committee stage so we can hear from various parties.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I am very pleased to stand and speak on Bill 209, The Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists Act. I want to thank the Member for Arthur-Virden very

much for bringing this forward in this House. This is a very important bill before this House.

I think, clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Manitoba audiologists and speech language pathologists profession deserves to have its own regulatory body, which is what this bill is all about. I believe that this is taking place in other jurisdictions, and I think it is time that Manitoba take a leading role in this. What is unfortunate about this is the fact that the government has neglected to bring something like this forward themselves in recognition of this profession, the profession of audiologists and speech language pathologists.

So, as I understand, this bill includes provisions continuing the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association under the name College of Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists of Manitoba as the profession's governing body. It provides provisions for establishing a governing board with public representatives. It is also requiring the registration of audiologists and speech language pathologists and creating a process for handling complaints and discipline so that they can do what they know is best for their own profession, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I believe strongly this has happened where colleges have been set up for other areas of health care whether it be for the College of Physicians and Surgeons, whether it be for the College of Registered Nurses and so on. I think it is incumbent upon the government to update The Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association Act to reflect the changes that the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) has taken the leadership role on here for those in the profession of audiologists and speech language pathologists. These are very important people when it comes to health care in Manitoba.

There are a lot of families who depend on audiologists and the speech language pathologists and many children who are suffering from hearing impairment and speech language problems as well. I think that those in these professions deserve our recognition. It is time for them to be able to regulate their own members, and it is time that we give them the credit where credit is due for what they do for so many of the children in our province and others as well who suffer from hearing impairment and speech language problems.

I can recall a good friend of mine when I was at university was specializing in speech impairments, and she has gone on and has made a difference in so

many people's lives out there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think we owe it to her and we owe it to her peers, those who spent many years in university to become the professionals that they are within our health care system, and I think that it is time that we recognized what they have done for us. All of the children, I know that she specialized in children and adolescents who were suffering with speech language problems and in some cases dyslexia, some other cases, and she was able to work very closely with these children and be able to bring them to a stage where they felt comfortable being around other children of their age and work through some of the very serious problems that they faced.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is just incumbent upon us to recognize everything that audiologists and speech language pathologists do for the children and for others suffering from these illnesses. I think it is just, if I could just digress a little bit, when it comes to the issue of health care in our province, I think the government has really missed the boat in so many areas and this just being one of them.

Of course it takes the Member for Arthur-Virden from the opposition side of this House to take a proactive role when it comes to standing up for those people, the audiologists and the speech language pathologists. It takes someone from the opposition again to bring this forward. I would hope that members opposite, members of this government take this issue very seriously. I hope that they support this bill because it is a very important one and just because they did not introduce it, which is often the case, what they may do is come out with another bill of their own offering something almost identical to this.

You know what, that is probably okay, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but rather than wasting a bunch of time, effort and energy trying to recreate the wheel we would hope that members opposite would just support this bill because it is a very important bill for the audiologists and the speech language pathologists. So let us just hope that in this case they do the right thing, whereas in many other cases when it comes to our health care system this government has neglected to do what we believe is the right thing especially when it comes to issues of wait lists.

I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that certainly they have sent around a fancy brochure to I think pretty much every household in Manitoba talking about their wait list reduction strategy and so on. What I

find interesting about that is some seven years ago this government ran on ending hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million, and they ran on the fact that they would fix our health care system. Now, seven years later they have to send out a brochure saying that, oh, we have now seven years later developed a strategy to reduce our wait lists. Well, the promises, promises, promises that this government makes time and time and time again but they never, ever follow up, and seven years later I think Manitobans know that this government is not living up to the promises that they have made when it comes to our health care system.

* (10:50)

Again, I would just encourage them, when it comes to this Bill 209, that they would do the right thing where this is concerned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and support this bill. I believe that it should be supported by members opposite, and again I hope, you know, if they feel that they have to take the credit for this and come up with their own bill, you know, that is what the audiologists and speech language pathologists want. They just want to be able to do this themselves. So if the government feels that they have to pat themselves on the back, and they have got to introduce something themselves then, you know what, go ahead. Do what you want.

I mean, I would say that, you know, I would encourage members opposite just to support this and the way it is so that we are not wasting a bunch of time with people drafting further legislation and so on, and I hope they just support this because the audiologists and the speech language pathologists want this. They want this very badly, and I think it is incumbent upon the government to listen to those professionals out there within our health care system. I know that is a difficult thing for them to do often because they do not like to consult very often, and they do not like to listen to what people really want out there because this is a government that believes that they know what is best for people. So I would encourage again that this government support this Bill 209, and I encourage them to support it, and I also want to thank the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for taking a leadership role in bringing this forward. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): It is my pleasure to speak today to the private member's bill, Bill 209, The Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists Act, which grants regulation of their professional body to them as a group, and I want to congratulate

the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for bringing this bill forward. I know that he has a specific interest in this. I know that he has done consultation. I know that he has spoken with the groups of people, the audiologists and the speech pathologists, and they as another professional body in this province are just seeking what other professional bodies have previously been granted, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

To regulate the profession in Manitoba, why would we not want to do that? We have done so for other groups, as mentioned. The College of Physicians and Surgeons, the nurses, the lab technologists, pharmacists, I think, were mentioned by the Member for Arthur-Virden. These groups already have a status in the province with having regulation and control over their professional bodies, which seems to me as a very equitable and fair and right thing to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It grants them more recognition for the needs of their own association, and they can then look at setting up their boards. They can also look at internally disciplining, if that action is ever needed to be done, and looking after their profession themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is really important to recognize the work that the audiologists and speech pathologists do in our province, a very professional group of people, and I know that they do work in conjunction with school boards, with children. I know, having been through that process myself, where your son or daughter must have a hearing test because maybe they are not paying attention in class, and the first thing that they do before they go into attention deficit disorders and that kind of thing is to look to see if the child has proper hearing. So I think it is very important to recognize the work that they do in the schools with young children and, as well, throughout the life of people that may have need for their services in health care.

I think it is important to recognize the degree of professionalism that this awards this group of people, the audiologists and speech language pathologists. There are other groups, as I mentioned, that have been recognized as professional groups by granting them licensure and registration over their own business affairs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and certainly I do not understand why this government does not hold the audiologists and speech pathologists in the same esteem as other professional bodies within health care.

I certainly want to recognize the work of the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), and I know that he has shown a leadership role in bringing this bill forward on behalf of the audiologists and speech language pathologists in the province. I know that he has done consultation with them, and I know that this is something that they desire. I think that we, as opposition, are continually having to bring forward things to the government to do things that they sort of want to not do, and I do not understand why they would not want to recognize this group of people as a professional body. That really does not make a lot of sense to me.

As I said, it is important that the government accept this bill, and the leg work has already been done, the groundwork has been done, the consultation has been done. There is no reason why this government should not accept this bill. It has been written, and as the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) says, why would we want to reinvent the wheel and start again by taking the time of the legal counsel to redraft a bill and do all of the readings all over again. We have the bill in front of us. It is a good bill. I suspect that the reason why the government is opposed to the audiologists and speech pathologists bill is because they did not bring it forward themselves, and that is just playing politics with this professional group of people. It is just not necessary, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think, though, that I know that the Member for Arthur Virden has said that he is quite willing to see amendments brought forward. He wants to see this bill pass. Why would we not want to do that? Why would we want to stall it just because it is introduced by a private member on the opposition side of the House instead of a government bill? Certainly if the government, as we have seen before, the government will take a very good idea put forward by the opposition and steal that idea, rewrite it basically in the same wording, put it into another name that they can introduce as their own bill, and then support it. So, it does not make a lot of sense to not support this bill, rewrite it, change a few words and then support it. Then they will be standing on that side of the House finally speaking in support of it whereas today we see them burying their heads in their desks and not wanting to speak to this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is a very straightforward bill. It recognizes the regulation for the advancement of professionalism within the ranks of the audiologists and speech pathologists in the province of Manitoba, and I

would recommend that this bill be passed today, passed into committee so that we can take it—*[interjection]* The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) has indicated that they may be passing this bill. So this would be very good news. So I would recommend that we pass this bill to committee and have people come in and speak to it, and you will see the government will then see that there is a wide support for this bill. I would encourage the members opposite to stand and speak to this very, very important bill which recognizes the professionalism—

* (11:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Morris will have three minutes remaining.

The time being 11 a.m., we shall now proceed with private member's Resolution 10 on Professional Accreditation, proposed by the honourable Member for The Maples.

RESOLUTION

Res. 10—Professional Accreditation

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan),

WHEREAS the economic and social well-being of Manitoba is tied to our ability to actively encourage the growth of skilled people in all fields and disciplines; and

WHEREAS it is necessary to ensure an attitude of co-operation and inclusiveness so that newly arrived Manitobans can participate equitably and contribute to the economy; and

WHEREAS 7,427 immigrants with a variety of skills and occupations entered Manitoba last year from all over the world and many of them were unable to effectively use their training and education in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the province benefits from the diversity of new skills and knowledge that new immigrants bring; and

WHEREAS by recognizing the high level of skills, education and training of those immigrants as important assets for Manitoba and Canada, the government's priority is to ensure all new Manitobans are given every opportunity to find suitable employment in the province without delay; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has shown strong leadership in qualifications recognition for skilled immigrants in Manitoba through its continuing partnerships with regulatory bodies, educational institutions and occupational sectors in such varied fields as teachers, pharmacists, accountants and truck drivers; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has held a Qualifications Recognition Summit pledging to work with regulatory bodies and stakeholders to remove the barriers highly-skilled immigrants encounter in securing formal recognition of their qualifications; and

WHEREAS the Province has a goal to increase and retain the level of skilled immigrants, it is therefore necessary to find efficient, transparent and effective methods of assessing foreign-trained individuals while enduring practice standards and public safety are met.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the provincial government in continuing its efforts to develop and support an innovative professional qualifications recognition strategy.

Motion presented.

Mr. Aglugub: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and speak about the resolution that is before the House today. The issue is close to my heart, especially since I am an immigrant myself.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I immigrated to Canada in 1969. Winnipeg has been my home for the last 35 years. I have heard talk of qualification recognition since the day I landed. The search for a process for recognition of credentials obtained abroad has been going on since the 1970s. In other words, it has been an issue for more than 30 years. It has been researched, studied and debated so many times. Workshops and seminars on the subject have been conducted with the collaboration of professional bodies, government organizations and affected immigrant communities.

In the year 2000, shortly after the NDP formed the government, a national conference on Canadian immigration called Pioneer 2000 was convened, and one of its findings was that government, business and professional associations need to co-operatively address the issues surrounding accreditation. The recognition of immigrants' formal education credentials and professional work experience is lagging. This creates barriers for immigrants and does not

lead to maximizing their economic and social contribution to Canada.

Ken Zaifman, reporting for Group 5 at the conference said, to maximize the benefits of immigration, we have to ensure that immigrants can fully utilize their skills. We have to ensure that accreditation procedures are in place to fully utilize the skills that people come to this country with.

Provincial governments have delegated responsibility for professional regulation to professional organizations through legislation. They retain the right to reverse or adjust such legislation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must create a society that appreciates and values the skills and expertise that immigrants bring to Manitoba. Manitoba has welcomed immigrants from around the world over the years, and the government has provided services through non-governmental organizations such as the International Centre, Welcome Place to soften the shock of resettlement.

What still has not been provided is a procedure for recognizing the diverse skills and experience that they bring to this province. We are more concerned about the numbers of immigrants than whether their skills are put to use. We must provide a mechanism for recognizing their qualifications, so that they are able to make the transition to a new place, a new environment, a new culture, to restart their lives and careers. Only then we can say that they are taking advantage of their opportunities and participating economically and socially. This welcoming society will come about partly through things that government can do. Legislation and regulatory reform or adjustments are only a part of this resolution.

* (11:10)

Former Premier Ed Schreyer, in a 1977 address to the Manitoba Mosaic Congress said, and I quote: So we have made a good beginning but much remains to be done. We must now set out to create a society that values both the contribution and the continued existence of many cultural groups for the two must always go hand in hand. That society will come about partly through the things that government can do.

Now the question is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what can we do today to create that society that values the skills and experience that immigrants bring to this country, to Manitoba? Well, five years after Pioneer 2000 we have identified the real issues but we have not done much about it. The real answer lies with the

Legislature and the professional organizations, licensing bodies who are willing to accommodate, open up and understand and be a welcoming place instead of putting up more barriers to recognition.

With the new immigration rules no one can immigrate to this country as an independent immigrant without some kind of post-secondary training or education. Each immigrant is assessed on the basis of a combination of several factors: age, education, work experience, language and adaptability. Depending on your experience, generally, the higher your education, the more points you will get. In most cases, education determines whether you are in or you are out. So if you have a master's degree or a Ph.D., your chances of qualifying are higher.

When the early pioneers came to this country, all they had to do was to gather their belongings and get on the right boat heading to Canada. Today, it is much different. We have become more sophisticated, selective and restrictive. The bar has been set too high in terms of qualifications and other requirements.

Today, when an immigrant arrives and applies for a trade or professional accreditation, he is told to go back to school and get upgrading. It sounds so simple, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the reality is how can an immigrant think about upgrading when he has only \$10,000 he brought with him in his pocket to support himself while looking for a job. When the money is all gone an immigrant has no choice but to take any employment that comes along. That is the reason why you will find immigrants with architectural engineering degrees working as janitors, cooks or taxi drivers; an environmental scientist working as a gardener or a bookkeeper.

Jim Carr, the CEO of the Business Council of Manitoba, was quoted recently in the press as saying, and I quote, "There is work to be done on this file. It takes too long for many immigrants to find jobs appropriate to their level of training." Manitoba can secure a real competitive advantage over other provinces if it fast tracks accreditation for the professions and the trades.

As recently as May 15, last week, *Winnipeg Free Press* ran an article by Bill Redekop who said that there are 150 foreign trained doctors in Manitoba and even more engineers who cannot find work here because their education is not being recognized. These foreign trained doctors could solve our shortage if we could grant them a second level of licensing as doctors' assistants.

I speak from my own experience because I am one of those who have experienced a similar fate, having worked in a paint manufacturing company in the beginning. I thought I would forever be destined to do that kind of work. I kept saying to myself, I deserve better. I brought with me my agricultural training and several years of experience, but that was not recognized for purposes of employment by prospective employers. I then began to look for something else at upgrading at the university which would mean full-time study, but the question then was if I go full-time study how am I going to support myself. I opted to go to Red River Community College and I started, without government help, an evening program to train as a computer programmer analyst. It worked quite well because when a position became available at the Department of Agriculture I was luckily hired on the basis of my recent completion of the computer training and my agricultural background which the department needed at that time.

In the seventies, medical professions were dominated by immigrants from medical practitioners to laboratory technicians and nurses. Most were immigrants as were the support workers, kitchen helpers and floor cleaners in the hospital. Today I guess I consider myself lucky and perhaps I am the exception. How could I predict that someday I would become a member of this Legislature describing to my honourable colleagues the plight of skilled immigrants and advocating on their behalf? Give immigrants what they deserve, the tools to restart their lives and careers. Give them the recognition of skills, education and experience that they brought to this province.

Just look at me and the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) and any one of us in this Chamber. We did not have to have a special accreditation to become members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. We had to learn on the job by performing the roles and duties—

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

Mr. Aglugub: I seek leave, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to just complete my—

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Aglugub: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank the House.

Mr. Aglugub: We have to learn on the job by performing our roles and duties of a representative of the people. What immigrants can contribute to this society, the economy, the diversity and the quality of life here is often ignored, but we have a good opportunity to do justice to our immigrant community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have an opportunity here to provide a model for the country and the issue of qualification recognition. We have to continue to work with our partners to come up with the specific plans to resolve the issue. One solution might be to empower professional organizations to grant a second level of licensing to allow skilled immigrants to practise in their profession under the supervision of a licensed practitioner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on that note I ask the members opposite to give their full support to this resolution so that the immigrant community can participate fully in building a just and prosperous society. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciated hearing the words from the Member for The Maples and the reference to the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha). I suspect we will hear from the Member for Radisson on this resolution before it is completed, but it was good to hear his personal story and to hear his experiences as he has dealt with this issue on a personal level. I appreciated hearing that, and I am glad that you have put it on the record because I think it is a good example for many people who are coming here and dealing with different issues of accreditation.

Certainly I know within my own constituency of Steinbach and other constituencies right around the province but I know my friend from Pembina deals with these issues on an ongoing basis as well regarding accreditation. I have heard from so many immigrants who come from around the world who are seeking opportunity here in Canada, in Manitoba specifically, about trying to make a better life for themselves and for their family. They often come here with the expectation that they are going to be able to continue to do here in this country and here in our province what they were doing from whichever area they are immigrating from.

Those expectations often are not met, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and sadly that unfulfilment of expectations brings with it a lot of different challenges, families, financial issues, the community deals with issues sometimes of a disenfranchisement

or a disconnect in some ways as those new people to the community do not feel that their skills that they have brought forward from other areas are being valued here in the province of Manitoba.

* (11:20)

I have had the opportunity to speak to a number of new Canadians regarding this particular issue, and they have certainly asked that more be done in terms of accreditation and a lot of different issues. We sometimes focus on doctors, in particular, which is an important aspect, obviously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I appreciate the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) talking specifically about the challenge that there is with accreditation for doctors here in the province, and those are challenges and a lot of other different issues, people coming with trade skills.

Quite often, specifically in my area, the constituency of Steinbach, where there is a real trade shortage, that is a shortage that is being represented and being felt right across the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those individuals who are coming over where they feel that they should be able to walk into sort of a journeyman's position, whether it is an electrician or a different sort of trade skills, are not able to apply those skills. They go about and find other work in the community and they feel they are being underutilized and in many ways underappreciated. I can imagine the frustration, I hear the frustration, but I can scarcely imagine the frustration when there are those that are being advertised, these positions, in different areas and different papers, being advertised for positions that these individuals feel they have the training for and yet they cannot apply because they do not have the accreditation.

That does not mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is not, obviously, a process that needs to ensure that the standards that are set here in Manitoba are not compromised. We all know that safety and accreditation standards are important. But we need to ensure on two fronts, I think: To ensure that there is that sort of communication when individuals are coming to Canada, that they understand what it is they will be able or will not be able to do in the immediate future and what they might need to do to ensure that their skills that they are bringing with them are recognized here in the province of Manitoba. So that is a communication issue.

The other issues, of course, do relate to government, as government needs to get through this sort of bureaucratic issue and red tape issue of ensuring that accreditation is recognized. Certainly,

when I look at the resolution that has been brought forward by the Member for The Maples, I think there are a lot of good things. Within the resolution, the Member for The Maples makes some very good points. What I do find difficult, perhaps, is the fact that we have now been here under a New Democratic government for six years and we are still debating this issue.

I remember very clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, back in the early part of this government or even in the late 1990s where members of then-opposition would bring forward issues of accreditation, and said: Why are not these things being addressed? Why are we not doing certain things? That was really when we were on the cusp or the sort of cutting edge of an influx of immigration into the province and the issues were just starting to emerge. Now after six long years, or seven years, as my deputy leader points out correctly, after seven years of New Democratic government, we are still dealing with this issue. We still have not seen a resolution. So why the resolution that is debated before us here today I think has value, one wonders if it is not sort of a hand-cleaning exercise and ability for the government to say, well, we are now going to pretend that we have done a lot of different things and we are going to pretend that a lot of things happened.

Perhaps, a friendly amendment could have been brought forward under the THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED clause that would have said that we encourage the government to now start taking action on these issues, as opposed to using words like "continue," because we really have not seen a lot of action being taken. If those members opposite disagree with what I am saying, as they sometimes do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be happy to host members opposite in Steinbach, or in Niverville, or in Grunthal, or different communities in the region which I represent that have these issues of accreditation, and we can bring forward individuals who are having these struggles. I think if we read this resolution to those people who are dealing and struggling with accreditation issues, they would be shocked. They be surprised, I think, to think that the government itself believes that they have done an awful lot on this issue, that they believe that they have done significant work on it. I think these individuals would say, well, that has certainly not been my experience, my life experience.

In many ways, to move this resolution forward here this afternoon, it might, in fact, do a discredit to

those individuals who still deal with these issues of accreditation, who still feel that their skills are being underutilized and that they are not being put to the good use that they could because they are still living in this frustration, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they still cannot get the accreditation, cannot get the jobs that they believe that they are trained for. So, in fact, we might be sending the wrong message to these individuals if we would go for the resolution the way it is.

However, I think if we talk about the resolution in terms of an amendment or perhaps talk about saying that we now encourage the government to take seriously these issues and to start taking seriously these issues, that might be something that we can all look at more favourably, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it would be a recognition that enough has not been done in this critical issue.

I think that, then, would send a very clear signal to those individuals throughout Manitoba who are new Canadians, who are coming from different areas that finally, after six or seven years, the government has now been given a specific mandate to specifically start dealing with these issues in an important fashion.

But just to pass this resolution, sort of a pat-on-the-back resolution, then to go forward into the communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and say, look at what we have done, it would paint a false picture. I think that all members, if they would go back to their constituencies—because I think that everybody here has new Canadians who have come into their area and are dealing with these issues—each of you would find that, as you speak to people who feel they should be qualified in a trade or in a medical position, they would say that they were living with this daily frustration. Whether it was a communications issue in terms of not being told appropriately what it was that they would be able to do when they came to Manitoba or whether it is still this bureaucratic issue and the red tape that this government has not been able to break through in seven years probably does not matter much to them. They just simply want this issue dealt with. They want to feel valued here in the province of Manitoba, and they want to feel valued for the skills that they bring to our province and that they want to apply in our province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that my time is running short, but I would certainly encourage this government to look perhaps at an amendment that

would indicate that enough has not been done in the seven years of the New Democratic government, that enough has not been done to ensure that people who are coming as new Canadians have that ability.

So I look forward, after seven years of not doing enough, to seeing this government finally step forward with some real solutions to the ideas, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I look forward to hearing others speak.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to firstly thank and congratulate the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) to bring this, a very good resolution, and I echo his sentiments that immigration is extremely important for the modern world, not only for Canada and Manitoba, but the entire world to see the exchange of people from one country, one culture, to move to another country and make really the world a better world by mixing and by interchanging cultures and being united as a human species.

The reason why I think this particular resolution is important—I would speak very briefly; my other colleagues want to speak. But I disagree with the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who says that we have not done much. I think we have started things which we have still to go ahead, but it has started, which was never done before. We have 8,000 immigrants in Manitoba for the last 40 years. If you look at the history we will find out the Provincial Nominee Program has worked extremely well by bringing these immigrants here in Manitoba and trying to help find suitable positions.

I was fortunate to attend a University of Manitoba function with the Minister for Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) where the engineers graduated from a program that is a co-operative program developed with the help of the government and this 12-month internationally educated ingenious qualification program I was happy to share with the 15 internationally educated engineers that received the diploma. The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering was available to congratulate them, and they were very, very happy.

So this is an achievement which was not done before. There are some programs that we also know to get the education to doctors retrained, so we have started a program that is on its way, and the resolution calls to continue this. But I think that the Member for Steinbach is perhaps not right in saying

that we have not done much. Over the time we have done remarkably well.

Number two point I would say that if you look at the country that I came from called India, when I came in 1969, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had my pre-master's degree there and I had experience. I came here and the university said straight, your qualification is Grade 12; go to first year Engineering or first year Science and study that. I said, you must be thinking that the degree which I obtained has no merits, but if you look at the curriculum, and I debated with the head of Engineering, and when we started talking, he understood my skills. He immediately said, It looks like you are very qualified, not to go back, but we will try and get you into the master's program.

* (11:30)

I am very proud to state, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a gentleman at the time called Ostop Hawaleshka, he started in the industrial engineering program with me, called Master's in Engineering, M.Eng. program. I was the first student enrolled in that because they looked at the curriculum of my engineering background, and then they studied and understood, yes, this meets the criteria. So from that time to now, we have come a long way.

I think we need to see this particular new program that the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) has started, the accreditations. The institutes that we have, like Red River College or the university, these are the people who are trained to give accreditations of qualifications. They look at what you have done and then they will try to assess and evaluate and give you further training if required and then give you the qualification. It is very important for the regulatory authorities not to be intervened by a political force to say, you do that. There is a process. I think we have been very fortunate that our government has started, and I think it is proceeding very well.

So I think that this is a resolution that will encourage the government and other institutions to continue this in an effort to train engineers. I remember, it was called brain drainage during the early seventies when people would leave, having been well trained. They come back here in their new countries, and some of them, I also know this—I remember when I was in business a gentleman who came from Russia. He was a professional engineer, well trained, but he applied for a press operator job. When I talked to him, I found out, boy, this

gentleman is really very, very qualified, and I offered him a particular position in engineering drafting and he did an excellent job. I encouraged him to go back to university because there was no program then, which we have now, that he had to go and finish from first year, to go four years, and he got the degree.

So I think that we have done a remarkable job, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am thankful to the Member for The Maples for doing this, and I think without spending too much time, as my other colleagues want to speak on this bill, I would say let us all, all support this bill which has a lot of merit.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before the Chair recognizes the Member for Inkster, on behalf of the House, I would like to welcome, now seated in the public gallery from Southeast College, 44 Grade 11 students, under the direction of Ms. Annie Anderson and Ms. Michelle Courchene. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen).

* * *

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did want to put a few words on the record in regards to this resolution. I think we have to be very careful when we pass a resolution that we be very careful and look over the BE IT RESOLVED. It is actually very clear, obviously, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the provincial government in continuing its efforts to develop and support an innovative professional qualifications recognition strategy.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not believe that this government has been effective in terms of recognizing the credentials, the many credentials that Manitobans have. In fact, it was just the other day I had a meeting with some representatives from the Filipino community, and they were expressing a great deal of concern about doctors that are here today that are not being recognized for the credentials that they have, and that is just over a week ago in which I sat down and shared with some of the frustration that they were having.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was suggested that why not see if we can arrange some sort of an informal or formal meeting with the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale). Well, I took the opportunity to

walk over and talk with the Minister of Health and just to indicate would there be any interest on your part to meet with a group of individuals, doctors, that have some concerns in regard to credentials. The instant response I got from the Minister of Health was no, no, no, no, I do not do that. I do not want anything to do with it. I do not want to meet with them. I have nothing to say on it, Kevin.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what sort of—*[interjection]* Why did he say it? Well, ask the Minister of Health why it is he said that. Just look the bench ahead of you, and you can pose the question to the Minister of Health why it is that he will not even meet with the individuals to talk about that. That is why, I think, that we have to be very concerned with the lip service that this government has given to the immigrant community in the province of Manitoba, and it has been lip service.

The biggest success story that this government has on immigration is through the Provincial Nominee Program, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the biggest story on immigration in the province of Manitoba today, and that program was started under Jean Chrétien and Gary Filmon. So, all this government has had to do is just kind of carry the ball on it. I can recall the Premier (Mr. Doer) of today, while he was Leader of the Official Opposition, made it very clear that he wanted 10,000 immigrants to come to the province on an annual basis. That was way back then. Not only does he have the mechanism through the Provincial Nominee Program to actually do that, to achieve that, we are nowhere even close to it.

Yes, there have been some increases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I can tell you back in 1998-99 when I was talking about this program, there was a feeling that we were going to get more and more immigrants coming to this province, more than the 7,000 that have been referred to, and it has taken them seven years to get it up to that level.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I represent a North End constituency in which Judy Wasylycia-Leis brought in a bill, first time, once-in-a-lifetime legislation. The purpose of that once in a lifetime was to allow people to be able to say, yes, I want this person, I want that person, have them come on over. You want to talk about restrictions, look at this government, and the restrictions that this government gets on the Provincial Nominee Program.

If, in fact, they wanted to be able to act on what it is that they talked about in opposition, they could be doing a whole lot more, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government has not been friendly when it comes to immigrant policies in the province of Manitoba. They know the lines to talk, and knowing the lines and actions and actions speak louder than words. They know the talk, but they have failed when it comes to actually walking the talk because the only thing that the current minister could talk about is how the numbers have grown in Manitoba and that we are getting more and more. Of course, we are getting more and more. The program that was established a number of years ago allowed that to take place. But, if we are getting the numbers in which the Leader of the Official Opposition back 10 years ago was talking about, we would have even more immigrants coming.

* (11:40)

But that is only half the story. You have to look at the credentials that immigrants are bringing to our country. You wonder how is it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have doctors today that do not have their credentials recognized. How did they get to the province of Manitoba? I tell you in good part it is because of their spouse who was able to qualify through the Provincial Nominee Program and other programs, and then they are able to come to Manitoba. But, once they hit Manitoba, and it talks about getting credentials, there are barriers that are put into place that prevent them. A sad story once when I was doing some shopping on St. James, and I met an individual who is a medical doctor, worked in obstetrics, at a furniture store in St. James. I understood at the time that in Brandon they had to bring pregnant moms to deliver here in Winnipeg because there was no one there to deliver babies. Well, here we have a medical doctor who has delivered hundreds and hundreds of babies selling furniture as opposed to being out in Brandon delivering community health care.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So, you know, these are problems that are here today. They have been there for years now, Mr. Speaker. This government has had seven years to be able to address the issue and this member wants us to stand up and applaud the government for its efforts. Surely to goodness the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) realizes that his government has not met the expectations of the immigrant community. They have not and we know they have not. That is why

one has got to be very reluctant, when you bring forward resolutions of this nature you often will build up expectations. The expectation that is out there today is that if they have a skill and Manitoba could benefit by recognizing those skills that we should that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has not done that. Everything that they have done, they have been pushed into it. It has not been a government saying yes, you know, whether it is a doctor, engineer, lawyer, nurse.

In fact, in regard to the nurses, if you are a nurse from the Philippines or from India or from wherever, try to get here under the Provincial Nominee Program. You cannot. The best way if you are a nurse is you have to come down maybe under a visiting visa, try to write some exams, try to get your credentials recognized first and foremost, and then you can put in an application, if in fact you can locate the job first. We do not apply those principles to others. *[interjection]*

That is the problem, to the minister, is I do understand the program. I do not think she understands it, Mr. Speaker. What is scary is she is the minister that is responsible for the program. Is she trying to tell me today that a nurse can apply for the Provincial Nominee Program? *[interjection]*

Well, the question is a simple yes or no answer and she espouses on from her seat, Mr. Speaker, which is proof she does not really even understand the program which she is supposed to be administering. She knows full well that if you are a nurse from the Philippines, well, you can put in an application, but you are going to be rejected. That was a simple question for the minister and she could not even answer it. Well, she should talk to Judy Wasylycia-Leis. She should talk to some of those more progressive social-minded individuals who would recognize the value and learn something from it. Even talk to some Liberals.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, you know, we are talking today about this government's abysmal record in dealing with credentials for our immigrants. Mr. Speaker, what surprises me is they have not gotten on the band wagon saying, well, it is Ottawa's fault. Ottawa has got to come to the rescue here, because many of the problems that immigrants are facing today are in fact provincial-driven problems. It is this

government that is refusing to take down the barriers that are necessary that are going to make the difference for hundreds, if not thousands, of immigrants. They have got to recognize and they have to take the responsibility. They have been there now since 1999.

That is the reason why, when I see a resolution of this nature, I am passionate because I have seen the frustration of my constituents, of many Manitobans where their credentials are not being recognized. So I do not want to pat the government on the back when they could have done so much more.

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that if we had individuals like the member from The Maples, the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), the member from Broadway as a part of Cabinet that maybe there would be more influence.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It seems my lot in this Legislature to always speak either after the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) or after the Member for Inkster, so it is quite a joy to stand up and perhaps to—

An Honourable Member: Put some facts on the record.

Mr. Swan: —put some facts on the record as the Minister for Family Services and Housing (Mr. Melnick) has suggested.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are 57 constituencies in the province of Manitoba, but there are none in this province with as many new Canadians as the constituency of Minto. Indeed, one-third of all the people that I am privileged to represent in this Legislature were born outside of Canada, who chose to make Manitoba their home. I am certainly happy and very privileged to get to meet the various communities, to become active in, for example, the Philippine community, to become active in the Portuguese community as we gear up for World Cup 2006, the Vietnamese community, the African communities that are now enriching the West End.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the West End and I see the renaissance and I see the rebirth, I see it as being driven largely by these skills and the energies and the abilities of new Canadians. You can see it when you look at what is happening in housing in the West End, new families improving their homes. You can see when you drive up and down Ellice and Sargent avenues, the storefronts are full,

as opposed to the vacancy signs that existed back in the nineties when the inner city was forgotten.

Certainly, we can do better, and I believe that the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) knows that. That is why he has brought this resolution forward, and I believe that we all accept that we still can do better as a provincial government in terms of dealing with the various bodies which regulate different professions, different trades, to make sure that indeed individuals with skills and qualifications are fully able to provide their services and their abilities and their talents to benefit all of us. It is almost like—and I will talk slowly because an analogy of a hydro dam is a little bit difficult, I believe, for members opposite to understand, but the flow of new Canadians with their skills and their talents is like a great untapped river, and certainly we have the opportunity to tap that resource for the benefit of all of us.

Certainly, qualifications recognition is not an easy issue because we are dealing not just with the provincial government being able to wave its hand and declare someone to be qualified. What the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) does not understand is that that can only happen by negotiations with different bodies which govern practices, which govern trades in the province of Manitoba. I am not sure if the opposition parties believe the heavy hand of government should simply tell doctors what to do or tell nurses what to do.

On this side of the House, we prefer to deal with those individuals and those bodies and to come up with a plan which makes sense. That is why the provincial government has held a Qualifications Recognition Summit which has pledged to work with these regulatory bodies and stakeholders to remove those barriers that highly skilled immigrants have in finding formal recognition of their qualifications. If the Member for Inkster had listened to what the Member for The Maples had said, what the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) has said, that is indeed an issue. That is why we held that summit to come up with better ideas on what we could do to demonstrate the commitment to recognizing the credentials of foreign-trained immigrants.

Manitoba is recognized across the country as showing leadership and improving qualifications recognition for skilled immigrants in the province. Examples where credentials have now been recognized, among others, include pharmacists, occupational therapists, engineers with international training, teachers, early childhood educators, doctors,

accountants, credit union service representatives, hairdressers and even truck drivers.

Indeed, Manitoba has developed, in consultation with groups, the Qualifications Recognition Initiative which provides new approaches for fair and for efficient assessment processes to help new Canadians understand the work culture, work experience and strengthen their employment outcomes, for stakeholder involvement not just of the regulatory bodies but of businesses, to speak to businesses, to find out what their needs truly are and developing standards for assessment and innovations in engineering, teaching, pharmacy, occupational therapy, financial clerks, early childhood educators and accountants.

So, certainly, as my friend from Inkster has tried to say in his own way, there is still room to do better, and on this side of the House we understand that. But it is interesting, you know, when I get to meet families—and I do meet several families each week interested in the Provincial Nominee Program, because people who have come to this province know this is a good place to live, a good place to raise their families. Certainly, if they have friends, if they have relatives with skills they think could enrich Manitoba, they are more than happy to see if they can get them into Manitoba.

I am very pleased to meet with people from Minto, from Inkster, who come to me to get some advice on the Nominee Program, and, indeed, sometimes I talk to them and I say, you are from Inkster, why are you not going to see your member of the Legislature? They have some great difficulties with the Liberal government and their approach to immigrants. They ask me why is it the province of Manitoba can go through a nominee application and come up with an answer within three months or four months, how come the application then has to go to the embassy in Manila and sit for a year or 15 months or 18 months and I say I do not know. Why do you not talk to somebody who has buddies in Ottawa in the Liberal Party who have made no effort to allow the flow of paper to happen to truly bring those with skills to the province of Manitoba and indeed to Canada?

* (11:50)

They also ask me why did the Liberal Party of Canada support a racist head tax which imposed a specific amount on people without any consideration to the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Indeed, certainly, I know that I get very passionate about this issue because it is very difficult to justify the head tax supported by the Liberal Party of Canada which was clearly designed to keep out people from countries that do not have the same purchasing power, that do not have the same per capita income as others and they have a great deal of difficulty.

They also want to know—[interjection] Of course, when the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wants to talk about the Liberal record on immigration and even has the audacity in this House to mention the bill brought forward by Judy Wasylycia-Leis he cannot explain to his constituents or to this House why it was that his Liberal friends in Ottawa voted against that bill. I say shame on the Member for Inkster.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, let us get back to the positive. I know every time the Member for Inkster speaks, negative thoughts come to the surface, but I think we will leave those behind just as the people from Inkster will leave that behind in the next election when they have a New Democrat member of this Legislature who truly will speak up for their interests.

The big issue of course is that it is a balance. There are certainly untapped resources of people in our province but at the same time there are standards, some of which are entirely valid, and we do not plan to simply overthrow the regulatory bodies and the different groups in this province. We want to make sure the standards which they set are reasonable to protect the public, to make sure that somebody's credentials, somebody's training truly is appropriate and truly is measurable and can assist Manitobans.

I am proud of the work of the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) and multiculturalism and her department in dealing with these issues but certainly, as my colleague from The Maples, my colleague from Radisson have very astutely said, we can do better. Just as we are working to tap the potential of our northern rivers and just as we are working to capture the potential of the prairie wind so too can we do a better job of tapping the great potential of new Manitobans who have chosen to come here to raise their families, to start their career and to enrich all of us in this province.

So certainly I am encouraging the members opposite to support this resolution. It is a very positive one and certainly one which is important to our province's future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to be able to say a few words in regard to this private member's resolution today in the House on professional accreditation.

As with the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) that brought this forward, this is an issue that is also close to my heart as well. There may be a little bit of a gap in the time frame between when he arrived and when my ancestors arrived in this country. He is saying that he came in in 1969. Certainly my ancestors came to Canada in the early 1800s and moved to the west in the 1880s, but I think regardless of when we arrived in Manitoba, we are all proud to be Manitobans and we are all proud to be Canadian citizens. We need to make sure that the accreditation process for allowing persons coming into the country or into the province of Manitoba, particularly, is moved along with as much expediency as we possibly can to allow these people every opportunity to find work, to get education in our province for their families and be a part of our process in the province that we call Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the one issue that we look at I think that is very, very important that we deal with in this whole area is that of co-operation and inclusiveness of these individuals as they come into Manitoba. I know I have had a number of personal situations with dealing with immigrants coming to Canada, and I know that probably each member of the House has, over the last few years, an opportunity to deal with certain circumstances. I know that the nominee program was brought in by the Conservative government, and a very good program it is, but we need to make sure that the government of the day continues to deal with as much expediency as they can.

I know that the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) that just spoke in regard to knowing someone that might have someone in a friendship position in Ottawa, he was beckoning to the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), but I remember his Premier (Mr. Doer) in 1999 running on a slogan that he had a great relationship with the government at that time, the Liberal government in Ottawa. Today, he is saying the same thing under a Conservative government. We are most appreciative of the fact that the Premier feels that he can get along well with the Conservative

government in Ottawa, and we look forward to dealing with the government, perhaps, in Ottawa down the road, as well.

We need to make sure, as the Member for the Maples (Mr. Aglugub) and the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) and Member for Minto have indicated, as well as my colleague, the Member from Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that we welcome all of these individuals into Manitoba with as much opportunity as we can to expand the labour force in Manitoba. We need that. We know that persons are leaving Manitoba to go to other provinces throughout Canada.

In fact, the resolution indicates, if I could say that, use his numbers, 7,427 immigrants with a variety of skills and occupations entered Manitoba last year. Well, according to the numbers of the provincial migration program, total interprovincial out-migration for the year 2005 was 22,085 persons, Mr. Speaker. I think that that is a first place to make sure that we start looking at how we retain our youth, how we retain persons such as immigrants who are well trained in our own province and, once they get that training, to keep them here in Manitoba. That was an increase in out-migration of 34 percent over 2004, which had an out-migration of 16,447, which in itself may be, well, I think it is a high number to see moving. It is an extremely high number, if I could be so bold as to say that.

The net migration is the number that we should be most concerned about. Mr. Speaker, even after we take in the immigrants and others from other provinces that moved into Manitoba, the total out-migration in Manitoba in 2005 was 8,218 persons. That is, over 8,200 people left Manitoba for other provinces, primarily the west, Mr. Speaker, Alberta, British Columbia, but not just there, other provinces as well.

The net migration of our youth was 5,862, that is ages 15 to 24, that left Manitoba in that six-year

period when the NDP were in government. Mr. Speaker, I know that we educate young people and then export them. It has been said and quoted by a number of persons throughout Manitoba. It has been said in this House before, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to draw attention to a person in my own constituency, Ms. Bertha Penner, who has done a good job of bringing forward many immigrants into Manitoba, working with them to become part of Manitoba, worked through the nominee program with them and they have found many skills in Manitoba, and hopefully the majority of them have stayed here.

I also want to make a point of saying, you know, the member indicated that there have been 150 doctors—there are 150 doctors in Manitoba, according to Mr. Redekop's article that he quoted from, that could take care of our doctor shortage.

Well, number one, I would like to say that it is nice to see that the government has finally admitted that there is a doctor shortage in Manitoba, and as I say, in the weekend's papers, there is a doctor who wants to move to Deloraine to be a doctor there, Mr. Speaker, but they are wondering now whether they can actually hire him out there or not, once he gets his exams passed. Because he volunteered, he just took a look at a posted wanting sign in the college to come out to Deloraine to work and he indicated he would, but now they are not sure whether they can hire him.

Mr. Speaker, I think that keeping our youth and our citizens here in Manitoba is paramount—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden will have four minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 23, 2006

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