

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

*Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable Daryl Reid  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, June 13, 2013**

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Are we ready to proceed with Bill 205?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** No.

**DEBATE ON SECOND  
READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Are we ready to proceed with Bill 204? *[Agreed]*

So we'll call Bill 204, The Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Riding Mountain, who has nine minutes remaining.

**Bill 204—The Manitoba Human Trafficking  
Awareness Day Act**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** I would like to continue with my comments and continue to put words on the record with regard to The Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, Bill 204.

In Manitoba, there are currently more than 80 cases regarding murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Manitoba alone, and many victims of trafficking end up with victims of violence and this is indeed the case in Manitoba. As such, any legislation designed to curb and combat instances of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Manitoba must take into account the demographics and socio-economic realities of Manitoba's First Nations population, expanding upon existing partnerships

and networks to address the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Manitoba is very proud to have—be leaders in immigration and having many people from throughout the world who have made Manitoba their home, and I believe that when you first become a new Canadian or move to the country there are many opportunities. But if you don't have the supports in place, there can also be tragedies resulting from that. So I believe that when we're putting forward legislation like this we have to ensure that there will be, you know, supports in place and strong policies and a strong structure of supports available to individuals who may be at risk.

Sexually exploited youth in Manitoba, 70 per cent are Aboriginal children, 80 per cent are female, 70 per cent in the care of Child and Family Services, and there are approximately 400 sexually exploited youth involved in the child welfare system. Larger than—in reality, Mr. Speaker, I am sure. So what we need to do as a Province is to ensure that not only provide an awareness week, but actually provide some teeth to this legislation and ensure that we show the world and Canada that we are committed to reducing and eliminating this type of violence in our province.

Mr. Speaker, Progressive Conservatives also understand that having a place to call home dramatically reduces those deemed to be at risk and, as such, are supportive of raising the rental allowance to 75 per cent of the median market rate. That would put many families in Manitoba at rest with regard to an additional expense or additional cost to their living expenses. It would provide them with a bit more flexibility in providing the care and attention that they need to provide for their families, and I believe anything that we can do to support families at risk is a step in the right direction.

There are more than 589 murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada, and I know that across the country there are various groups and organizations that are working together to find those family members. Some are found and are reunited with their families, but most, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they are not found alive and families are struggling with their loss. Many of these individuals are victims who are controlled through direct or

indirect forms of coercion. Direct would be rape and assaults; indirect would be threatening family members, and there's money attached to that threat. The daily earnings off a victim can range from \$300 to \$1,500 and up to \$3,000 in extreme circumstances. So whenever there is a dollar attached to exploiting a victim, such as in these cases, there is an incentive by the perpetrator to continue on with his or her acts.

The United Nations office of drug and crime reports that sexual exploitation is, by far, the most common form of trafficking at 79 per cent of reported cases. Forced labour ranks second at 18 per cent, with the remaining 3 per cent for all other forms of human trafficking. So we have a long way to go, Mr. Speaker, in addressing this issue. Canada, as in any country, is facing a serious issue with regard to transit and destination for victims of trafficking, and we need to do more to address this, and I believe this bill is a good start.

Primarily, international victims of trafficking are trafficked to Canada for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. Mr. Speaker, being a mother of a 17-year-old daughter, I know first-hand how easily it would be to influence her over the years to be swayed to, you know, issues that wouldn't be healthy for her. And I know that each of us, as parents, do our utmost to ensure that our children live in healthy environments, you know, relate to healthy activities and have healthy and supportive friends.

\*(10:10)

And I believe that if my daughter at any point would've become a victim of these—this type of tragedy, it would be heartbreaking. It would destroy our family. It would destroy her grandparents and many of the people in our community that know her. So I just—I believe that that should be recognized, that this is not only about the victims of trafficking, but also about the heartache and pain that this causes so many families around the world, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that there has to be, you know, a strong case so that these individuals are held to account for causing such pain and suffering to not only the victims, but to the families.

So I look forward to hearing more on this debate, and I believe that we as a Province need to do more in this area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development):** It is my pleasure to stand up in support of Bill 204, The Manitoba

Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, and I'd like to congratulate the MLA for Burrows for bringing this important legislation forward to this House so we can have this conversation.

I'd also like to thank the member from Riding Mountain for her words about our commitment and her acknowledgement of how we have moved forward to address this issue and how it's all of our responsibilities, and this awareness day is one of those initiatives that hopefully will be—improve awareness as well as also ensuring that people are aware of what services and programs are available to them if they need that support.

We are very excited about looking at the potential that every Thursday of the second week of March will be known throughout the province as Manitoba human trafficking awareness day. That will be very important that the date will coincide with Manitoba's annual Stop Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Week that was created in 2009 that implemented awareness initiatives across the province.

This is one of the phases—this is phase 3 of Tracia's Trust, and that was announced in 2008 by, now, the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh). And when it was launched in Rossbrook House, I had the privilege of being there with Tracia's family, with community members from the police services, from both the RCMP as well as Winnipeg Police Service and hundreds of individuals, women and men, who are committed to ensuring that we stop human trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls and boys within our community, and we bonded together. And as we had that conversation about what we needed to do as far as prevention, interventions and treatment not only for the child themselves, but also for the families and for the communities, we came together and made that commitment. We know that sexual exploitation destroys lives, not only of the life of the victim who's being exploited, but also the lives of the family: the mothers, the fathers, the aunts, the uncles, the grandparents, and also has a long-standing impact on our community. We need to continue to work together and this is one step of moving forward.

Some components of Tracia's Trust included the creation of a safe and rural healing lodge, a safe place for women and—that are able to get off the streets into a place where they will be wrapped around with traditional healing, given the supports

that they need to move forward on their journey of wellness and a safe place. And that was the most important thing and that—a rural—a site to make sure that they were able to feel secure and that they were able to share their stories as they progressed to wellness. As well, we have a program for child-care centres to help the staff identify sexual exploitation and also deter would-be offenders from targeting such places. So it's about education. It's about support and it's about awareness, and that's what the human trafficking awareness day will be doing for us. We'll be providing awareness.

But we also—we didn't stop there with Tracia's Trust. We have funding for programs offering specialized mentorship and support to vulnerable populations such as runaways and Aboriginal youth coming to Winnipeg from remote northern reserves and young men who are being sexually exploited. We've also established and designated two Crown attorneys to co-ordinate and prosecute special exploitation cases, as well as the criminal property 'fortiture' legislation, and expanded the Victims' Bill of Rights.

Tracia's Trust is an initiative that was born in Winnipeg, but is owned by all of us in Manitoba. Through Tracia's Trust regional teams we have established twel—in 12 Manitoba cities and towns, regional teams that work within their communities to raise awareness and counter local sexual exploitation.

The member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) made the link between sexual exploitation and our—and the tragedy that is happening nationally across Canada for women, Aboriginal women, which we have labelled "Missing and Murdered Women". And what we have done here in Manitoba, is we have continued to build on the foundation that Tracia's Trust has given us and work with our community groups. We have a special advisor, Ms. Nahanni Fontaine, who is respected throughout Canada about the work that she doing, of bringing people together and having the conversation about prevention, about what do we do when a missing—when a woman is identified as missing. How do we support that family? How do we work with the police agencies to move forward, to try and provide answers about what happened to that woman? And the ultimate goal is always to bring them home safely, and, tragically, that happens too seldomly.

But as we have worked and had the conversation with our community members about Tracia's Trust,

about our missing and murdered women strategy, we have encouraged awareness and have worked together on prevention. But we have so much more work to do and we have to start looking at the issues of poverty; we have to start looking at the issues of racism.

And I'm proud to be part of a government who has taken that on. We've taken that on with legislation that we have proposed, as well as with strategies. Tracia's Trust; the ALL Aboard strategy, where we're working on reduction of poverty and social inclusion. We need to continue to build on women's rights. We need to ensure that we're providing women and men with opportunities for education and employment, because we know that that is the answer for moving off of poverty and into—able to contribute to our communities and to support their families.

But I'd like to take an opportunity to talk about racism, because racism is one of those factors that continues to be a burden for all of us. And we need to start talking about racism and the impact that it has on Aboriginal people as well as other minority groups, about what is happening to them. We need to talk about it to build that awareness.

So I think as we move forward with the human trafficking awareness day going to be proclaimed on the second Thursday in March through Bill 204, it's one more step. It's a step in a long-term plan that we have on this side of the government. But, again, it's just not one level of government; it's all levels of government, it's community members, it's community agencies, it's private citizens coming together and saying, we will not stand for sexual exploitation of our children in this province and in our country. And when we're able to do that together, we will make a difference and we will see the benefits—not only for those individuals, but for their families and their communities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 204. In fact, I enjoy the debate on this particular issue. It's one that all members of the House and, I think, every member of society is certainly focusing on. And whenever we can have an opportunity to draw awareness to that, whether it be a day of the week, a day of the year, whenever we have an opportunity to talk about it, I think that's encouraging for all Manitobans.

\* (10:20)

And I know that we talk about it in our household quite often, actually. Not that it's something we want to talk about, but it is something that we need to talk about. We need to make sure we have checks and balances in place. I have three children of my own, one daughter and two sons, and I have three grandchildren, two girls and one boy. And I can tell you that as a parent and a grandparent, we always want to make sure we have the safety of our children and our neighbours' children and those around us and those in our neighbourhood, that they're safe, that they're protected from the outside evils, as many of us know well about, that are out there.

And whenever we think about having someone in—that's been kidnapped or taken out of their own will, and a lot of them are taken, not necessarily out of their own will, but taken by bribery or taken by evil means of which they've been lured into a vehicle or lured to a site or lured to a place that they're going to be able to be taken advantage of, and we know all so well that, by the sheer numbers alone, what we've seen is unacceptable. Whether it's one—one is too many, but we know there's literally hundreds and thousands of people, each and every day, that are imposed through no will of their own or no wish of their own, and of course, then, on goes the travesty of which we don't want to even want to think about, but we do know what goes on is, unfortunately, the trafficking of these individuals. And I know that, I believe, there was, according to the numbers, around 800 that came into Canada last year alone, which, again, is way too many.

We need to ensure that there's checks and balances in place, that proper identification, a way of, perhaps, enticing border security to be putting more checks and balances into place as well, and, of course, in our neighbourhood, through Neighbourhood Watch, through other means of which we're paying attention to each other, helping each other. And I know very much—I know in my small community of Teulon, it's changed. The dynamics have changed. We used to know everybody on our streets. We used to know almost everybody in town, but that's all changed. It's a transit society, where we live such a fast life. We can be in Teulon one day and Steinbach in the afternoon, or we could be in New York or Phoenix in three hours. We can be almost anywhere.

So what we see in the morning is not necessarily what's going to happen in the afternoon. So we have to be very cognizant of the fact that we have each

other's back, that we have each other's thoughts and those that are around us that are protected. And we have to give the tools to the RCMP, to those folks that are involved in making sure that protection is of utmost importance.

And I just also want to commend Joy Smith, the MP that brought forward legislation, I believe back in 2009, Bill C-268, and thank her. And I know she's been on a number of panels in regards to human trafficking, and I've been to some of those presentations and it just scares the dickens out of me and makes me not even want to let my children out of my sight. It's scary. I mean, any parent, anybody that's seen what goes on is—it's just horrific. I just cannot imagine how you would even be able to cope, and I know we have to cope and we have to be there for each other and for our families and our neighbours, and many a time these people get lost. They get lost in society. A lot of them go into a depression. They have a hard time dealing with that. We need to ensure that in fact we have services for those folks that have been taken or put at risk so that we can help them through that, transition through that tough time. And just to think, just to think even for a minute, that humans are trafficked for financial gain is reprehensible. I mean, I cannot believe that anybody would stoop so low to take another individual's organs or use them for trafficking for whatever that may be. Again, it's totally unacceptable.

I know that here in Manitoba it's a 'seri' issue as well. It's worldwide. And we know that there's been several issues, one just not that long ago. A father took their own children, took them down to Mexico. It wasn't for 'trackiffing' purposes, but, again, it was not something that was agreed upon by all family members. And so whenever we look at those issues, as well, the impact that it has on those children which now has been relocated outside their comfort zone, taken from family, taken from their immediate loved ones and their kinfolk that they're used to and used to being around to help them.

And we also know that just last week or the week before, there was a young fellow in Brandon that was recovered, that was brought up, I believe, from Colorado. Again, unacceptable, totally unacceptable, even though it wasn't necessarily for human trafficking. But it's taking an individual that has not consented or had no say in that particular case. So it's more than just trafficking, it's about lives that are being put at risk, lives that are being put in disarray through no fault of their own.

And we need to ensure that whenever this happens there's a consequence for that action. And I would encourage the government and our side of the House as well, all levels of government, be it municipal, provincial, federal, we need to make sure that those checks and balances are in place in order to ensure the safety and well-being of every Manitoban.

I want to thank the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) for bringing this res—this bill forward, and as I said earlier on, that whenever we're thinking about safety for our families we can never go far enough. And whenever we have that opportunity I think we need to seize that moment. We need to seize that time and life and that if we can protect one life, one life by awareness, one life by bringing this conversation forward, then we're healthy.

It's not going to solve it, we know that, it's not going to solve the issue. But the more we talk about it the more we're able to debate the issue in regards to stopping this horrific task that we all are so against. We are accomplishing something.

So I just want to leave it at that, Mr. Speaker, that we're looking forward to moving this bill on to committee, as I think all members of the House will be pleased to support. And I know all members of the House want to debate it. So with that, thank you.

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** It's—I'm pleased to rise today to support Bill 204, and I'd like to thank the member for Burrows for bringing this forward. I think that members opposite and I don't always agree on a lot of things, but we don't all see it eye to eye, but on this one I think that the whole—we're talking all about the same things that this is very important to raise in the public 'spector' so people are aware of this.

And I think that education and awareness is really important when it comes to this and having a day recognized so people have more further awareness that this is going on in our society. It's really is, I agree with the member for Lakeside, that it's just a scary and despicable thing that this goes on in our society that mostly young women are being traded and taken from their homes. And usually it's done with—across border. They, you know, they take these people and they ship them overseas and they have no passport, no ID, and then it happens where they're really scared and then they have nothing else to do so these people put them into the sex trade. And I think it's just a despicable thing and I think members opposite and I will definitely agree on that.

We all have some responsibility in this, as members opposite said, that it's not just—this goes on well beyond party lines. It's everybody in the public has a responsibility to notice this and to be aware of it and to look for the signs so that way when you see something like this going on you can report it.

You know, we introduced, I think it was 2009 we implemented the reporting child porn on the Internet. There's a mandatory reporting in this province when—I think we're the first one to do it across the country. And it's that awareness. The campaign that was launched with that and the awareness to get that out there, people are reporting it. And this—that's something that this will do, it will bring up awareness so people will report it and, you know, let the police know.

You know, we're talking about education. I think that education's the key because when these children who are at risk, if they're not educated, if they drop out of school they're left with very little choices in life and a lot of times they become exploited and they end up in the sex trade.

\* (10:30)

And that's why we have a really strong commitment to education. We really believe, you know, we—every year we've raised amount of money for education. We've held tuitions to some of the lowest in the country for universities and, you know, we really have a strong belief that education is the way out of everything. It's the way out of poverty and it's the way to keep yourself out of a situation like this, so I think that's one of the really big commitments that our government has shown is towards the education system.

You know, and then one—another thing that we announced last year that I think is really helping is the tools that we talk about for the police.

We have the bill that came forward, the proceeds of crime bill, and we've announced—I think it was last week—six more RCMP officers were hired out of that. We seize assets from the criminals and bank accounts and cars and homes and motorcycles and whatever else we can get from these criminals, and we sell that. And then we put that money back into the policing and we give them the tools they need. They asked for tools that they need within their police department to do things, like Internet tracking and, you know, to find these predators and to hopefully shut down these organizations that do it.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we talk about giving people—research shows that when children are homeless, they're more at risk, and one of the things our government has done is committed to 3,000 affordable housing units in the past, and we added 500 more this year in this budget and, once again, that's a way of giving people who are, you know, at risk to being—to becoming homeless, giving those families a place that's safe to be so that way they don't end up on the street and end up being exploited in the sex trade by some of these horrible and despicable criminal organizations that take on this kind of thing.

You know, in our budget that we just brought in, we announced that we're increasing funding and support for the implementation of the sexual exploitation strategy. So, you know, we're really—we're trying to—it's a multipronged approach and it's—there's no one size fits all. It's definitely going to have to be something that all parties work on, and I know that the federal member for—I just—her name's Joyce Bateman; I can say her name in the House. I know that she brought forward a bill federally and I think that it's great that—

**An Honourable Member:** Joy Smith.

**Mr. Gaudreau:** Oh, sorry, Joy Smith, sorry. Joy Smith, she brought forward the bill federally, and I think it's great that all levels of government are looking at this and that we all—we can put aside the—our differences to look at what's important to protect these youths, and most of them are youth.

The average age, I think, is between 13 and 17 years old is where most of these people fall at risk, and, you know, they get recruited in many ways. I mean Internet right now, you know, that it's so easy to just chat with someone.

You know, I had the—I had an instance with my stepdaughter where she was actually on a chat line with a guy who was in New York, you know, and when we walked into the room and we saw that, we were just stunned by that, right? And you just don't know where these people are, and maybe he was a young man who's just on a chat room. We don't know that, but it's so easy to get into trouble with these Internet chat rooms, and they'll lure somebody, you know, meet me at a park and then all of a sudden that child is taken away and they're moved far away, and then they're put into the sex trade, and, you know, nobody knows where they are and they're afraid so they do whatever they have to do to survive.

So, it's a really scary situation and I think that all members of the House, from the sounds of it, we all feel very strongly about this and that we're going to move this forward. You know, I think that this modern-day form of slavery, it's scary that it still exists, and I actually, you know, sometimes when you live in your world where, you know, Winnipeg's a fairly small big city but in my area, in St. Norbert, you know, you don't see these things a lot so you just have a hard time thinking that it still exists in this world, and it's really scary that—to think of the children that are out there, you know, that you meet at all these schools when you go read to them and stuff, to think that some of them could be exploited, and it's really concerning and, you know, it's a really sad thing that happens.

So I think that with that I will—I know other members want to speak to this bill. I will allow them to do so. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Mr. Speaker, on speaking to Bill 204 brought forward by the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight), I want to thank her for bringing the bill forward. And it's—to put a few words on the record for The Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act which would recognize the first Thursday, the second full week in March, as awareness day of that.

And I—many ways, Mr. Speaker, I feel very fortunate, and one of those is that I have not had to deal with this on a personal level, on a family level. So it, you know, you should be thankful for the mercies that we do have and this is one of them that, to date, I have not had to.

But I want to, first of all, pay recognition to MP Joy Smith for bringing this issue to the forefront. It—you know, I was not aware of this up until a few years ago when she began her work as an MP and making—to make awareness of it. And through her work and—you know, other than seeing a few incidents on the news about different human trafficking where it made the news, where there was a capture of—or recovery, I should say, of the victims of this and the capture of the perpetrators, it was not something that—really that I was aware of. And so, through the work of MP Joy Smith, I became aware of it.

Obviously, poverty plays a huge influence on this, whether—poverty and drugs play a huge influence on this, whether it's here in Manitoba, whether it's across Canada or around the world.



That's the—quite often, that's the start of where the victims originate from.

So anything we can do to have more awareness of this of the general public, I think that's the first step. First step in any problem they have is recognizing you have a problem and recognizing the issue and then beginning to work towards a solution. And we can have all the laws we want, but if people are not aware of what is out there, there may be signs that they have seen in their everyday life that, if we can create awareness from the issues out there, perhaps we can help intervene in some of these circumstances that arise. And so, that's the everyday citizen's job in this to be more aware, and this—through this bill and through the work of Joy Smith, that's obviously what we're trying to do here.

And when you read the notes on human trafficking, it is really astonishing to see this. And it's a quickly growing form of oppression, and it's—there is—it occurs 'nash'—regionally, nationally and across international borders. And we know that there's always the profit end in it, people victimizing other people for a profit, and that's the reality of the situation. And so it's—whether it's for sexual exploitation, forced labour, organ removal, child begging, forced marriage, whatever the circumstances—and there probably many more examples of that, but it's—it really is offensive to see what can happen out there.

And it's—Mr. Speaker, we need to obviously understand the trafficking activity. They're normally categorized as country of origin, transit or destination. And these, quite often, they overlap. And it's especially—it's always difficult, whether it is these people are being brought in from other countries or whether Canada becomes just a transit point for this—for the trafficking, we need to be able to understand it is a very complex and clandestine nature. It's not something that we're easily going to see, but then with awareness perhaps we can see—become—when we are aware of it, we can hopefully, perhaps, intercede in some of these, at least give the proper authorities the tip that they need to step in.

And, of course, our—with the First Nations people in—across Canada and here in Manitoba, we have some 589 murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada, and that's something that we all need to work on to help curb this trend that's happened out there. It is—it's not something that we can be proud of by any means and we need to do everything we can to help both solve these murdered

and missing women, but also to prevent it from happening in the future. And education is important for everyone, including the Aboriginal community. Poverty plays a large role in this and so we have to work at reducing poverty, and with reducing poverty and increasing education, it, at least, hopefully will start to stymie that trend that's been out there.

\* (10:40)

And, of course, human trafficking not only occurs in Canada, but is—it's not only happening here. But it's increasing at an alarming rate and it's a huge concern for everyone because it become—it is under-reported because of the clandestine nature of it, and so it's much worse than even what is seen on the surface. There are numerous reports from around the world and through the United Nations—has reports on it. We can quote all the statistics we want, but the fact is it remains there, it is a problem and we need to address it.

And this bill is a small step towards that, if we can—with more awareness we can help, first of all, recognize that the problem is there and help Manitobans realize that the proliferation of human trafficking exists within Manitoba. And how do we begin to address this? We need to have meaningful efforts to create partnerships and networks and increase the awareness of human trafficking and thereby combatting it. So we're certainly looking forward in—whether it be consultation with First Nations leaders, First Nations women's organizations, other provinces, other territories, stakeholders and community groups, these are all part of the way with—that we can combat this, create awareness and work towards reducing this.

And, you know, there's—there is just no understating the importance of having a safe place to call home so that our young people have that grounding where they have the place to—that they can call home—a safe place—and that comes with reduction of poverty. It comes with increasing—or a continuing education so that they can be able to move forward with their lives, to be able to feel safe. The Internet out there is—while it has its benefits, it certainly has its detractors, too, with—given the availability of the predators out there on the Internet now and the vulnerability of our young people, no matter where they live and no matter what their circumstances are, and that's not necessarily related just to poverty; it comes across all sectors of our society, with the predatory nature of some people on the Internet. So we have to be aware of that.

We'd certainly like to see more work done to help people get out of poverty because that is still probably the most at-risk youth are in there. But, again Mr. Speaker, it affects all people from all across society, and with this bill, if it's just one small step, that's a positive step.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) for an excellent piece of legislation here, Bill 204.

And I want to reflect on the member for Midland's comments, when he began by stating that regardless of what you have in terms of legislation, if people don't know about the legislation and they're not enforcing the legislation, it really doesn't have a—much of effect. And he's absolutely correct there because the reality is before MP Joy Smith started making this an issue, you know, across Canada, this offence has been covered under the Criminal Code for the last 100 years, except that the public were not paying much attention to it. And the fact of the matter is that she—it's not the importance of her bill that's so important, it's the importance that she has driven this issue and made it, you know, made us conscious of it, which, you know, wasn't the case. And the problem's been around forever. It's been around for a long, long time. But she has drawn—shone a light on it.

Just to put it into perspective, the difficulty she had at the time when she started is that she couldn't even get her own caucus onside on this particular type of legislation, probably for the same reasons that they would—the Justice Minister would say, well, it's already covered. And she persisted and she crossed party lines on this because of minority government situation, and she was able to get Joe Comartin from the NDP involved and Joe not only gave her a lot of advice, because he's a professional in this area, and helped her get this bill ready, but he helped other MPs that were under similar circumstances.

And I also want to give credit to Steven Fletcher. Steven Fletcher, and if you read his book you will see it's very clearly spelled out that he, too, in a minority parliament co-operated with Pat Martin to get some resolutions through the House, and others. So you'll see that with successful politicians, I think, in any House. There are those that can work with other parties to get things done even when their own parties are not really overly supportive of them.

And I do applaud Joy Smith for her efforts and the member for Burrows for her efforts as well. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** I would like to thank the member for Burrows for bringing forward Bill 204, The Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, proclaiming the Thursday of the second full week of March to be the day.

I would like to put a few words on record in regards to this bill. This is a very admirable bill that's coming across that—it entices people to be educated and make awareness of what's happening in this world today. But we can't just stop there in making people aware of what's happening. We also need to put any laws that we're putting out there have some teeth in them.

Today the trafficking of human beings is a very lucrative business. The gangs do it, there's a lot of people who make a lot of money from the trafficking of human beings, and this is something we all need to be aware of and really take a look at to see what we can do to stop this. Human trafficking is something we all wish did not exist, but it does.

Human trafficking is the trade of persons for the purpose of sexual slavery, servitude or forced labour. This trafficking often involves our most vulnerable citizens, children, youth and young adults. Human trafficking is a global issue and a modern-day form of slavery. It affects every single country in the world. Mr. Speaker, it's estimated that 20.9 million men, women and children are trafficked in this world today, whether it be in forced labour, sex or pornography. And there's also another part of human trafficking that's a very black hole, that's most 'despicious' thing you can have. It's a very ugly situation: the murder of innocent people for body parts. This is something that is just not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, and I guess because this is such a lucrative industry, we all need to take our part in trying to stop this. It's something that we all need to be aware of, to not turn a back when we see something that's happening that we may be able to stop.

I mean, only a few short weeks ago in Ohio, three young women escaped from a home where they had been held for over 10 years. Ten years is a long time to go unnoticed. It's something that's despicable. I mean, they were beaten, they were raped, and it was only a miracle that they were rescued. And I believe that one of them was escaping and it was a

citizen who saw that and helped out to get the other two out, and there was also a child involved.

Here in Canada and in Manitoba, we face the same problems as the rest of the world. First Nation youth have also been found to be particularly vulnerable, First Nation youth who have left reserves and left their peer support to move into urban areas where they are exceptionally vulnerable, especially to the sex trade.

\* (10:50)

Mr. Speaker, there are more than 589 murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada. There are currently 80 cases regarding murdered and Aboriginal women in Manitoba alone. The statistics are deplorable: sexually exploited youth in Manitoba, 70 per cent are Aboriginal children, 80 per cent are female, 70 per cent of the children in care of family services—like, has a policy which is helpful.

Native Women's Association of Canada has gathered information on 79 cases in Manitoba, making it the province with the third highest number of cases in Canada, 14 per cent. Mr. Speaker, 81 per cent of cases in Manitoba are murder cases, higher than the national average, and this is something we cannot continue to have happen. We need to work on this and stop what is happening in this province and in Canada, in the world.

Many victims of traffic end up murdered, and this is, indeed, the case in Manitoba. As such, any legislation designed to curb and combat instance of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Manitoba must take into account the demographics and social economic reality of Manitoba's First Nation population.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the member from Burrows complimenting the work of the MP for Kildonan-St. Paul, Mrs. Joy Smith. She introduced Bill 268 with very stiff penalties for individuals trafficking minors in Canada. She also brought forward Bill C-310 that amended the Criminal Code to deal with persons that were traffic—travelling abroad for human trafficking. Joy Smith also started a foundation to help in the fight against human trafficking.

Fifteen years ago, one would have believed that we have no problem in this country with human trafficking. Today it is a serious problem. As times change with the Internet and other tools that are available it's become a very serious problem.

Children are being kidnapped for child pornography, another lucrative business.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a political issue. It's not a partisan issue. This is an issue that all members of this House and all Manitobans need to support and do their share to eradicate and eliminate human trafficking here in Manitoba, in Canada and the world.

I know that many of my colleagues are interested in speaking to this as it is a very important issue—and put some words on record in regards to Bill 204. Thank you.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It gives me great pleasure to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 204, and I thank the member from Burrows for bringing this bill forward.

And it's—and I think it's going to be great that both sides of the House are going to be able to move this bill forward today because, basically, Mr. Speaker, The Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act is proclaiming that the Thursday of the second full week in March in each year, Manitoba human trafficking aware—be known as the Manitoba human trafficking awareness day.

And taking a look through the bill in regards to some of the points of reference, and if I may quote from page 1 of Bill 204: to Stop Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Week takes place during the second week of March to promote awareness about the sexual exploitation of children; and whereas heighten awareness about human trafficking and sexual exploitation is an important part of Tracia's Trust, the Province's comprehensive strategy to end sexual exploitation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to put a couple additional words on the record in regards to what has happened nationally and internationally and also here in the province.

I know that the past—in my previous life as the guidance counsellor in the high school, grade 6 to 12, we had many, many tools, as far as guidance counsellors, that have come across our desk in regards to use and to go ahead and teach and take the time with students, in addition to their health classes, their phys. ed. classes, and talk about various safety measures within the different grade levels, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd like to take just a few seconds to talk about the Kids in the Know program, which I had the

pleasure of being trained on and then was able to deliver that program alongside my co-workers, some of the counsellors in the division, as well as social workers in the division as well. And, you know what, it's a great program, Mr. Speaker, because it varies from the various grade levels and it basically speaks to the different grade levels as well. It's not the same message that's going across all grade levels. It basically starts in the early years, and there's actually some puppets that come with the kit and you're able to use the puppets in engaging some of the earlier years students. And then it moves up into, of course, the safety precautions that kids need to take, whether they're on the streets in rural Manitoba or in the streets of the city of Winnipeg or various other cities in our province, and also just the awareness and to always be aware of exactly where you are, who's around you and who are you with and to minimize those possible circumstances that you can actually get yourself in.

So, again, working with the various social workers and counsellors, I'd also like to commend the collaboration efforts that we're able to have with the local RCMP detachment, as well, back in the Beausejour area. And I know in the other communities in my constituency now and within Sunrise School Division I know that they had this program, and they had the RCMP officers come in and share some of the stories that the officers had to deal with. Of course, without mentioning any names, they would mention some of their postings around the province as well.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, that First Nations youth have also been found to be particularly vulnerable and that many of them have left reserves and some of their support and they have moved into urban areas where they've become even more vulnerable to sex trafficking. And with that, it comes again to awareness and not necessarily being prepared properly for moving into the larger urban areas. And so, with that I'd like to also congratulate the House of Commons on the passage of, on June 11th, S-2, the bill for Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act as well. There's many forms of legislation that are really trying to minimize the harmful effects or things that are happening to Aboriginal women, but not only Aboriginal women but many of the minority cultures and also absolutely everybody.

It's just a—it's a shame of what's happening and a lot of the predators—I know that the member from La Verendrye made mention of the situation that

happened in the States with the apprehension of those three young ladies. And thank goodness they were found and returned home, and I'm sure through much, much therapy they're going to hopefully be able to rebound from that. And with that, Mr. Speaker, again, I would just like to say thank you to the member from Burrows for bringing this bill forward. It is very important that we bring awareness, and we can't stop, again, from bringing that awareness to all our youth so that they're prepared when it comes to their adulthood. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further debate on this matter?

House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** Question before the House is second reading of Bill 204, The Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act.

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

\* (11:00)

The hour being 11 a.m., it's—oh, the honourable Government House Leader?

### House Business

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Yes, on House business, Mr. Speaker.

On House business, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, June 17th, 2013, at 6 p.m. to consider the following reports: Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2003, including the conduct of the 38th Provincial General Election, June 3rd, 2003; Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2008; Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2009; Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2010, including the conduct of the Concordia by-election, March 2nd, 2010; Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2011, including the Conduct of the 40th Provincial General Election, October 4th, 2011; and the Permanent Voters List Study report, dated June 2013.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, June 17th, 2013, at 6 p.m. to consider the following reports: Annual Report of Elections

Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2003, including the conduct of the 38th Provincial General Election, June 3rd, 2003; the Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2008; Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2009; the Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2010, including the conduct of the Concordia by-election, March 2nd, 2010; the Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2011, including the Conduct of the 40th Provincial General Election, October 4th, 2011; and the Permanent Voters List Study report, dated June 2013.

Now, the hour being 11 a.m., it's time—*[interjection]* The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on forced municipal amalgamations, brought forward by the honourable member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese).

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on forced municipal amalgamations, brought forward by the honourable member for Agassiz.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Now, the hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution we have for consideration this morning is the one sponsored by the honourable member for Riding Mountain, title of which is the Decade of Mismanagement within Manitoba's Child Welfare System.

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 16—Decade of Mismanagement within Manitoba's Child Welfare System

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), that,

WHEREAS since the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry was called in March, 2011, Manitobans have been hearing the horror stories of a need-of life needlessly lost, as well as consistent examples of failures of

accountability and oversight in the child welfare system; and

WHEREAS Manitobans are more reliant on the child welfare system than any other province, as experts have defined it as the busiest child welfare system in Canada; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is responsible for 10,000 children in care, which is equal to a population greater than the city of Selkirk and amounts to more children than those served by the entire Brandon School Division; and

WHEREAS despite the scale of responsibility involved in supporting the child welfare system, the provincial government is ignoring recommendations from the Auditor General about the need for better processes and systems to track these children; and

WHEREAS there are still 28 recommendations outstanding from the report on the death of Gage Guimond, five years after the recommendations were issued.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge that the Minister of Family Services and Labour and her predecessors have not provided proper oversight to the child welfare system, with disastrous results for Manitoba children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately implement all recommendations of the 2006 report of the Auditor General entitled "Audit of the Child and Family Services Division Pre-Devolution Child in Care Processes and Practices," as well as the recommendations made in the 2008 review regarding the death of Gage Guimond.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Riding Mountain, seconded by the honourable member for River East,

WHEREAS since the—

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House to consider the resolution as printed in today's Order Paper? *[Agreed]*

*WHEREAS since the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry was called in March of 2011, Manitobans have been*

*hearing the horror stories of a life needlessly lost as well as consistent examples of failures of accountability and oversight in the child welfare system; and*

*WHEREAS Manitobans are more reliant on the child welfare system than any other province as experts have defined it as the "busiest child welfare system in Canada"; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government is responsible for 10,000 children in care which is equal to a population greater than the City of Selkirk and amounts to more children than those served by the entire Brandon School Division; and*

*WHEREAS despite the scale of responsibility involved in supporting the child welfare system, the Provincial Government is ignoring recommendations from the Auditor General about the need for better processes and systems to track these children; and*

*WHEREAS there are still 28 recommendations outstanding from the report on the death of Gage Guimond, five years after the recommendations were issued.*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge that the Minister of Family Services and Labour and her predecessors have not provided proper oversight to the child welfare system with disastrous results for Manitoba children; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to immediately implement all recommendations of the 2006 report of the Auditor General entitled "Audit of the Child and Family Services Division Pre-Devolution Child in Care Processes and Practices" as well as the recommendations made in the 2008 Review regarding the death of Gage Guimond.*

**Mrs. Rowat:** Statistics: The number of children in care in 2000 was 5,568; in 2012 it was 9,730, a change of 74.7 per cent. The number of families receiving care from Child and Family Services in 2000, 7,951; in the year 2012, 9,624, a change of plus 21 per cent.

The number of children in each category—number of children in foster care in 2000, that was 3,863; in 2012, 6,173, a change of 59.8 per cent. Children in residential care, including private group homes, own-agency group homes and residential treatment in centres in the year 2000, that was 314;

in the year, 2012, that's 698, an increase of 122.2 per cent. Children in other placement resources, places of safety: in year 2000 there were 800; in the year 2012, there are 2,268 children, a change of 181.4 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put those stats on the record because I believe that we are seeing the busiest system in Canada, welfare system in Canada, but we're also seeing numbers growing in a very disturbing rate. So, I believe that when we provided this resolution, we wanted to raise awareness, let Manitobans see exactly what is happening within the child welfare system and to see the numbers—which numbers don't lie—and to encourage the government to take child welfare more seriously. Take the recommendations and the resolutions that have been put forward by experts, by the Children's Advocate, by the office of the Children's Advocate, by the Ombudsman and many other experts out there, including the recommendations that will be coming from Ted Hughes from the inquiry on Phoenix Sinclair's death.

All of those recommendations are significant, important, and people put time and effort in reviewing the system, in reviewing child deaths at the hands of family members or caregivers. And they—these people who have put their time and effort—deserve to be recognized for the work that they've done by this government taking action on those recommendations.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, to the children who have lost their lives, who were under the watch of this government, under this minister and her predecessors, deserve to have a system that is run much better than it is at the current time.

Jaylene Redhead-Sanderson, Nadine Beaulieu, Tracia Owen, Heaven Traverse, Venecia Shanell Audy, Gage Guimond, Phoenix Sinclair and so many others, Mr. Speaker, did not have the chance to reach adulthood. They did not have a chance to make a difference in their lives and their families' lives, and I believe that today this resolution is speaking to their loss and wanting to see improvements made.

Mr. Speaker, Carol Bellringer, the Auditor General of Manitoba, delivered a report in 2006 that indicated that the computer system, the CFSIS, was outdated. And, you know, I'll start with that, because that is the tool that social workers and front-line workers, child welfare workers, the system needs to ensure that people are communicating within the system. And they were told, the government was told

in 2006, that this was needed; it was a necessary tool to assist workers in the system to communicate and to ensure that no child is lost within that system. Nothing has been done with that computer system, and it's 2012.

\*(11:10)

The Auditor General did a review of her 2006 recommendations and that one is still outstanding. And I find that rather interesting that I, you know, that I've heard that it did go to Treasury Board; they did discuss it and that they decided that it—they weren't going to provide the resources needed to upgrade that system. And to me that is just disrespectful to all the work that has been done within the system on the reviews. It's disrespectful to the families who have lost children. It is disrespectful to the children who lost their lives, and I believe we need to see action on that front, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about the reviews. There have been so many reviews—and I know talking to the different, you know, the Ombudsman, the advocate, the office of the Children's Advocate—we had a meeting yesterday, actually, with—through committee with the office of the Children's Advocate. And what we're seeing still, Mr. Speaker, is a government who is failing to address the themes or recommendations that have been put forward by these independent bodies.

The office of the Children's Advocate continues to receive reports from children and youth related to the lack of contact or the lack of response from their social workers. That's—how do you build relationships? How do you build trust within an agency or within the system if you don't care about meeting or aren't able to meet the needs of those children? And we know that that plays a huge role in crisis intervention. It plays a huge role in how children are able to communicate. It breaks the communication link between the child, the youth or their social workers. So we need this government to pay attention to that.

We need—we know that there are significant challenges. There's staff turnovers. The casework or the workloads have not decreased, and we need to ensure that the crises prioritization exists. We need to make sure that the priority is on the importance of the young client, the young child who needs this engagement, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard from families, and so has the office of the Children's Advocate on the removal of foster

children from foster families who aren't told about an appeal process. You know, the caregiver is very important in these—in that period of time because they are providing a meaningful relationship with the children. They're serving the child through their schools, through their communities and are providing a familiar environment.

So when we find that the office of the Children's Advocate is indicating that there's been reported significant delays in the foster parent appeal process—because we know that that time is of an essence. We know that children who are in a loving environment, the longer you keep them away from the people that have been their parents, in a sense, their foster parents, who are providing that love and support, the longer you keep them away from those families who love and care for them, the more hurt that is created.

And we've seen and heard of children and youth being removed from the foster home prior to the completion of the foster parents appeal process. Again, this contradicts Child and Family Services standards and regulations. So, again, we're seeing a system that is working in contradiction to the recommendations and—that have been received and the reviews that have been done. And we've heard of reviews that were done and, you know, during the Phoenix Sinclair time frame that—and, you know, you can't help but wonder if those reviews were just a knee-jerk reaction, a political reaction to covering this government's back.

Because we do know that those reports, those recommendations, those reviews to improve the standards in the care of children were filed. They were not allowed to be shared with the people that needed them: the front-line staff.

And they talk about—you know, the former member—or the former minister of Family Services, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), once said, you know, you're making this political—you're making this political. I have not seen any issues with regard to what is happening in the system—[interjection] She said that in 2006. Well, we know now that that is not true. She was covering her behind on that at the risk and at the detriment of Phoenix Sinclair and all the other children that have died under her watch.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about where this is going with the child and family services. The numbers are increasing, and they talk about putting money into the system. Well they should, but they should also make sure that the recommendations that are required to make the

system better are actually taking place, and we're not seeing that.

So I believe today, we are raising this as an issue. We want the government to pay attention to what the issues are and we expect—and so do the families who have children in care, the children who are in care and the people that are trying to make a difference within the system are actually heard and listened to and are being supported.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I want to rise today to talk a little bit about this very important issue, and I appreciate the members opposite. I appreciate their desire to raise awareness and to share their concerns about the child welfare system, and I appreciate and understand the desire to see change in that system and I understand the desire to see that change urgently. And I certainly appreciate the member for Riding Mountain's (Mrs. Rowat) motivation to bring this issue forward. Even if I don't entirely appreciate the form of the resolution, I do certainly share with her the desire to see changes in the child welfare system, and I understand the motivation, the desire to see this happen as quickly as possible.

I want to, just for a minute—I know probably today is going to be a very political day in this House and a very partisan day in this House, but I want to for a minute reflect on a really good experience I had recently with the member for Riding Mountain and the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) and the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) when we were asked by the interns to come and speak about the reality of being women and being MLAs and how that played out in our lives, and we had some different perspectives on that.

But the moment that we all kind of came together is when we talked about what was the experience of being an MLA and a mom, and it was a really special moment for me because I'm a new—I'm relatively new to the parenting thing and I don't often actually get to sit with other women, and I certainly have never sat with female members of the House from both sides and shared stories about what it's like to be a mom in this job, and it was a really special moment for me. It was a really humanizing moment for all of us, I think, because we weren't going at each other. We were talking about, you know, I miss my kids and I won't, you know, if—with the member's allowance—she shared a really, I

thought, touching story of driving away one day with her little one running after the car and her having a moment of thinking, like, what am I doing this for? And she was comforted by the fact—later, I think—her husband called her and told her as soon as she turned the corner, her little one was fine and everything was okay again.

But I have that thought. I, you know, I had that thought this morning after, you know, another day yesterday of having spent less than an hour with my own child, total, in the day, and I know that's more than a lot of members got to spend with their own families yesterday. And luckily being awoken at 6:30 in the morning to play trucks, so I got some more quality time in. But I thought as I was leaving the house today and what will likely be another long day, you know, what am I doing this for? Is this worth not getting to see my kid?

And it is worth it because, you know, when I try to do this job—and I got to say this is the hardest job I've ever done in my life, being the Minister of Family Services. And I know the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) will speak. I don't know if she found that when she was the minister. I know other ministers who have served in that portfolio on this side of the House have shared that with me.

And the way that I try to go forward—I don't make the mark every day—but the way that I try to go forward every day in this job is to think about what I will want for my kid, and to think about how do we have a system where every kid gets that. And what I want for my kid is I want him to be safe. I want him to be—always be secure. I want him to never doubt for a moment that he's safe in our home. I want him to use our home as a springboard to experience the world. I want him to always feel like he has a safe place to come back to. I want him to know that there are loving arms to hold him when he falls down. I want him to know that he is going to be respected as an individual, whatever choices in life he makes, even if he sometimes makes political choices I may not agree with, that he's going to be respected as an individual. I want him to feel that we treat him with patience, even when that's sorely tested, and I want him to always feel accepted. And that's what I want for all of the kids.

And this is one of the hardest jobs I've ever done because the stories that you hear in this job, and I am not on the front lines of child welfare, but the stories that I hear every day are heartbreaking. And I thought I knew, coming into this job, I thought I had



a pretty good grasp of what the reality was in our communities. I worked for non-profit organizations for several years, often with women who were dealing with addictions, who were dealing with violence in their own lives, often with women who were trying to heal from their own childhood traumas and sometimes those women mistreated their own kids and neglected their own kids and had their children apprehended by child welfare and were—I was part of a team working with them to find a way to get their lives back on track so they could get those kids back.

\* (11:20)

So I thought I knew coming into this job, but I didn't know, and probably none of us fully know some of the exceptionally horrific things that happen to kids in this province. And so it's easy, when you're confronted with that reality day in, day out, it's easy to become discouraged. And I struggle against that, because I know that I cannot do this job and I can't do what I need to do, as imperfectly as I do it, to move the system forward if I get discouraged and if I give in to cynicism that nothing is ever going to change, nothing is ever going to get better.

So what I'm trying to focus on—I believe the child welfare system needs to be accountable, needs to be more accountable, because the power to take away your kids, aside from the power to take away your freedom by putting you in jail, is probably the most critical and intrusive power a government has. And so, a system that has that power has to be held to account by the public. That is absolutely true, and I think in many ways we've taken steps to strengthen that accountability and we have other things that we need to do.

The member opposite talked about meeting with the Children's Advocate last night, and that's relatively new, that the Children's Advocate will come to a committee of the Legislature. I think it's only since 2008 when that law was changed that the Children's Advocate comes to the committee. And I thought it was a good exchange last night, a good—a lot of information. I know I took a lot of that information down, went back and talked to my officials about the way we need to move forward. When you look at agencies in child welfare, they're responsible for responding to hundreds and hundreds of recommendations, and some of those recommendations are very straight forward and some of those recommendations involve multiple levels of

government, multiple organizations with public and private sector.

And some of those issues are ongoing. I know the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) last night, she raised the issue about caseloads and asked questions. And I thought she said something that was very honest when she said that caseload issues have always been with us, and I took her to mean that in her time as the minister and our time as the minister that has been a struggle for the system. And we've put in place a new funding formula that I hope will work to lesson some of those caseload issues, but certainly since the beginning of the child welfare system there have been struggles.

And there have been things that the system has done wrong. Nobody today, I think, would stand and defend the practice of—that's called the '60s scoop that really went on 'til the '80s when Aboriginal children were taken away from their families, adopted all over the country and into the States, and now those kids are adults struggling to figure out who they are. I don't think any one of us would defend a practice that was common in the '50s and '60s where if you were a single woman having a baby that baby was taken from you without, often without, your consent, because it was believed that single women could not raise children. So the child welfare system has much to answer for in its history, but I also want to say that in this job not only do I hear stories of tragedy, I hear stories of resilience, and that's what keeps me committed to doing this work.

I get to go to things like age-of-majority graduations where I see children who are turning 18 who have been in the system, some for a long time, and sometimes both their foster parents and their birth parents and their social workers are there to celebrate this milestone in their life. And I remember one particularly touching experience where a young person had both her social workers speak on her behalf and her mom, and her mom said, you know, I couldn't raise my kid; I needed help to do that, I got the help, and I'm trying to do the best that I can. I thought it was amazingly honest and courageous of her to talk about that.

I get to talk to people like members of Voices, who's Manitoba's child-in-care network that we've been able to increase funding and support for, and they talk honestly about the struggles that they faced as children and youth in care. And many of them also talk about the fact that for them coming into care

saved their lives—that as hard as it has been that they have had a better life because the child welfare system was there to protect them.

I get the great opportunity of sitting and meeting with foster families who face tremendous challenges, and we have to continue to work on those things, but I also get to do things like come and support them with funding to move forward on their mentorship program so that they're having time to learn how to be better foster parents and share with each other. And that's one of the good things that I get to do.

I get to go up north and visit with agencies who are doing incredible work in some of the most challenging situations imaginable, and I get to talk to front-line workers who every day face, sometimes in their small communities, being targeted because they dare to stand up for children.

So there's lots of work to do and I know the members opposite are committed to doing that work, and I'm committed to doing that work, and we're going to get on with it. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I am pleased to rise today and speak to and support the resolution that's been brought forward by my colleague, the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat). And I also do want to thank the Minister of Family Services for the comments that she has put on the record.

And no question, no doubt in my mind, that none of us here, in this Legislature, regardless of political stripe, want to see children hurt. But sometimes policies and directions that are put in place by governments do have a negative impact or an effect on the lives of children, and children—very vulnerable children that need our support and our due diligence in trying to ensure that, you know, when standards are put in place in the child welfare system, that those standards are followed. And standards are not worth the paper they're written on, Mr. Speaker, if those standards aren't followed. And when it's pointed out to a government that children are falling through the cracks, it's incumbent upon that government to take a close look at what is happening and what is going on.

And I know that we had opportunity to speak to the Child Advocate, and yes, it was this government that brought forward the initiative to have the Child Advocate come before a committee of the Legislature, and I think that that was a very positive move.

I don't think any of us can sit back and say that any one government has done everything right or everything wrong when it comes to child welfare. But when we legitimately point out issues to government, and issues surrounding children that are being harmed in some way as a result of policies and procedures that have been put in place, I think it's incumbent upon a government to take a look at that.

And I see, time after time, families that have come forward and indicated that the system, as it exists today, is not working, that the child is not the primary focus of the system. Mr. Speaker, I think we all have to take a look at that and say, what can we do better and how can we make things better for children?

And I hear terrible stories from individual families that have contacted me. And these are issues that I've brought forward to the minister of the day or to the Child Advocate's office. I mean, my job, as a member of the Legislature—when I hear stories about children that may have been removed from a dangerous situation, a family situation, and placed in temporary care in a foster home, Mr. Speaker, and have remained in that situation for many, many years, and have bonded with and known only one family, and that is the foster family. And then all of sudden, without the proper documentation, that child has been moved from that foster family to reunite with a natural family.

And I think we all have that goal in mind and we all know—and every foster family that goes into that situation, where they've decided to take children into their homes and try to provide a loving, nurturing environment for that child, on a temporary basis, until they can be reunited or moved back to be with family. I mean, people don't take that kind of responsibility lightly and they often realize that there will be a time when that child will be moved, but it's our responsibility to be respectful to that child and to ensure that the very best transition plan is put in place so that child experiences the least amount of trauma. It's incumbent upon all of us to make sure that that happens.

\* (11:30)

And, Mr. Speaker, we're hearing, time and time again, individual cases where that is not happening, where foster families have not been included in the transition plan. Where foster families are not given the kinds of information they need to be given in order to have those children move into a new environment is something I think that we all need to

take a look at very seriously. And very often we raise these issues with the government, with the minister and her department, with the Child Advocate, and it takes far too long to have the issue looked at.

And when we're asking, Mr. Speaker, for the minister to look at these cases and these circumstances, we're not asking her to politically interfere. But we are asking her to ensure that the standards are being followed, that the children are being seen, that case plans are in place to make the transition as smooth as it can possibly be, putting the child first. And that is not happening, and we know it's not happening.

We heard from the Child Advocate last night that it's not happening, that far too often these issues are still coming to light through her office. And families are still calling her office, asking her office to advocate on behalf of the child—the child, Mr. Speaker—that should be first and foremost in this process. And that, again, is not happening.

So, Mr. Speaker, I understand where the minister comes from when she stands and she says that she does care very deeply, and I believe that she does. But I'm asking her to take that one more step, and that is to ask her officials, who ultimately have the responsibility under legislation to ensure that children are protected, that they're in a safe environment, that safety of the child comes first and the best interest of the child comes first. And the best interest of that child is to ensure what—that when there's a move from one family situation to another family situation, that the child is put first and that the proper plan is in place, that that transition happens in a way where that child can continue to grow and to thrive. And we are seeing, and I have sat and talked to and cried with families who have not seen that happen and are still experiencing, throughout the system, that that is not happening.

So I ask the government to try very hard to hold the agencies accountable, the authorities accountable and the bureaucrats within the Child Protection branch accountable, to ensure that children are first and foremost the priority, and that the proper standards, the proper procedures, are in place and have been followed.

Mr. Speaker, I say, again, that it's great to have wonderful standards and to spend all kinds of time writing those standards, but if the standards aren't followed, we will see and continue to see children falling through the cracks. And we, as legislators, owe it to those children to ensure that they are first

and foremost, that the proper processes are in place to protect that child and to ensure that that child continues to have the best opportunity to thrive and to succeed in life.

Mr. Speaker, that is not happening in all cases. And I would ask the government today to take a look at those things and not to politically interfere, but to hold those that are working in the system accountable for those children that need our support and need our care. And that's the responsibility of any government or any minister that has the ultimate authority under legislation to ensure that children are protected.

Mr. Speaker, let's all work together, and let's—I'm asking the government today to take very seriously the recommendations that are made by the Child Advocate, to take very seriously the recommendations that have been made by all of the reviews and ensure that our system is child-focused and that the child is the No. 1 person that is protected through any type of move or changes within the child welfare system.

So I am asking that today of the government, and I would hope that they're taking my comments as very serious comments that puts the child first.

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

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** So, I will speak from a sort of different perspective, Mr. Speaker, having spent 16 years working with kids in care, certainly high-risk kids in care, and what that was like, and sort of connecting that, I guess, a bit to here and what I hear sometimes in the House.

One of the things I often hear is the number of children in care, and speaking about that—and, of course, no one wants children in care. We all want families to be happy and healthy and no child to need to be in care, and that would be wonderful. It's not the reality. So, when I hear people talking about the numbers being too high, yes, they're too high in the sense that we certainly want to do more work in addictions. We want to help families more. But the reality is that in all of the years that I worked with these kids—and I heard their histories in detail because we were one of the programs that really did a lot of work going back through the kids' histories and working through their autobiographies and life with them—I never ran into a kid, Mr. Speaker, once, where I thought this young man should never have been in care. It was unfair to him that he was

removed from his family. That was never the case. I sometimes wondered why it had taken so long for them to get to live in a place where they were loved and cared for and finally made to feel like they were valuable and important.

I often experienced the heartbreak of hearing what life with those families was like. I worked with sexually aggressive youth who had sexually assaulted, usually children, for those 16 years. But if you heard their stories, there was many where you could understand how that path had led there.

So, I really worry when we speak in the House because I don't want this driven by political correctness. And I think when devolution happened, I know that the workers I spoke to before who were non-Aboriginal, before devolution, were always incredibly careful, of course, before they removed an Aboriginal child, and rightfully so. But sometimes that meant children, because of political correctness, remained in an unsafe situation.

So, I think it was key when we brought in that the safety of the child, that the member opposite was just speaking about, become first, remain that way, and that we be very careful about what we say here, because if you have met the kids that I met and experienced and—hearing their stories over and over, you certainly wouldn't want them to have remained in that. We want family connections built. There is no question. And sometimes that has to happen after that child has been removed and put somewhere safe. We built many relationships back with family once those young people were with us.

But I had kids come in, Mr. Speaker, who, at 14, believed they couldn't read or write. And we worked with them and taught them, night after night, how to do that, and they learned that they could master that and that they had hope. Like the minister, I spoke to kids—I worked with kids who never believed in a million years that they would graduate. Never. It was not in their world. No one in their family had ever graduated high school before. They did not believe for a moment that they would be able to do that. And I went to those graduations and watched those young men, you know, achieve something that they had never believed possible. I watched youth-care workers and social workers knock themselves out in this system trying to help those kids.

\* (11:40)

So sometimes I worry that what we say here makes these people who dedicate their lives feel like

somehow they've totally failed, and they have not. They have not. So I think that's super important.

I hear members sometimes speak about children being removed simply for neglect. That statement just mystifies me. Neglect means that maybe you're not being fed, you're not being washed, you're not being clothed. No one in the home is speaking to you, Mr. Speaker. You don't exist in that family. That's what neglect is. It has tremendous effect on the development of your brain, aside from the incredible emotional pain.

And I remember a young man who, after some time with us—he had told us that he had been sexually abused by his father, and his sisters had been, and that was documented. And after about a year, he said to me, you know, I have something to tell you. I said, well, what is it? And he said, well, you know, my dad never sexually abused me. He sexually abused my sisters, but, he said, the reality was that he didn't even know I existed. He would come into a house and he never spoke to me, never said a word to me. It was like I just wasn't there at all. And to him, being sexually abused by his father would've been better than the neglect that he faced from that man.

So, please, I caution you, when you make words like, oh, he—they were just affected by neglect, well, neglect has a tremendous effect on your brain and it's one of the key factors. We worked a long time, as I said, with sexually aggressive youth. One of the key things in their history, Mr. Speaker, was that they had watched—they had been neglected—that was even more likely to then work into sexual aggression than if you'd been sexually abused yourself. And the other thing was watching—simply watching, in your family home, domestic violence—huge. It's huge.

So I can't speak enough, I guess, about the need to not be politicizing this in a way where we don't take a child because we're afraid that somebody in the House will stand up and say we have too many children in care, so that child goes through unbearable circumstances because of that. We—I really don't want to see that.

We want families helped. We want addictions worked on, like I said. We want to do everything we can to work with those families earlier on, and I know absolutely that the minister is absolutely dedicated to that. I know the ministers in the past were dedicated to that.

You know, I have—I know the member from River East experienced many of these things. I have

it in front of me, you know, that—you know, for years and years, the child and welfare service system isn't working despite the fact we're pouring more and more money into the system year after year. That was the previous government; that was the Conservative government that said that. It's a—it is a problem in every government. It's difficult. It's hard. It's not an easy subject to be worked on. And we do want to, you know, improve our every model that we have, and I really believe absolutely that everyone on every side is dedicated to that.

I just am really concerned when we talk sometimes about things in ways where I'm not sure that people ever actually met those kids, ever experienced what it was like in their homes, you know, and I know those who have know what I'm talking about—right?—and the pain that they experience sometimes, so—and the difficult life of the worker.

So, I know that we want to keep doing more. I was a foster parent early on in the '90s when the government cut foster rates, and many, many foster parents, you know, just gave up. We were almost—it was almost impossible, at the time, to cover your costs anyway. We weren't allowed to work. In my case, I was running an emergency foster home back then. That was my first experience, having left the corporate world of real money, to spend many years working with kids in the non-profit sector, so I know that this is an important issue for everyone.

And I know that many, many children have been helped and who—lives have absolutely been saved by these people who are working in this field. I have had posted on my board in front of me at work, a letter that I'd gotten from a young man who had sent us a letter when he left—a card. And he'd changed the words on the card that—to say that we had saved his life. And he knew that he would have been dead, lost in the, sort of, the drug-trade world, probably at 13 or 14 if he hadn't come to us. So for those of us who work in the field, we do post those things so that we remember that, you know, children's lives are being saved.

Do we need to do more in the system? Absolutely. Of course we need to continue to make improvements and we need to continue to save children's lives.

Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, let me thank the member from Agassiz and the

member from Portage for allowing me a chance to speak.

I want to start by talking about the number of children in care. We have about 10,000. Under this government that number has gone from about 5,000 to about 10,000; it's almost doubled.

And when our situation in Manitoba has been compared very carefully, in a very carefully carried out comparison, with the United States, with the United Kingdom, with New Zealand, with Australia, with Sweden what has been found is that we have about 10 times as many kids in care per capita as all these other jurisdictions. It is unbelievable, exactly as the member near me has just said, that we have so many kids in care. And I don't believe that our kids here are inherently worse than the kids elsewhere; I don't believe that our families are so much worse than elsewhere. But I do see that there are some real problems with supports.

We talk about neglect, lack of food. Well, one of the real problems that we have in this province is a level of extreme poverty. We have a large number of people who have so little support for their shelter rates that in fact what happens is that they have to use the money which is supposed to be used for their food for their children in order to pay for their rent, and, as a result, they don't have enough food for their kids. They are forced to the extent they can to go to food banks, but when you ask why kids don't have food, you know, a large part of the problem is that we've had an NDP government which hasn't paid the adequate attention that it should have to increasing shelter rates and to making sure that those who are poor are helped.

We are the province which has had the largest increase in food bank use of any province in the last decade. One would have expected something different under an NDP government, but the reality speaks for itself. We have overall—while our food bank use has gone up by about 50 per cent, the number of people using food banks in Newfoundland has gone down by 10 per cent. It's quite a dramatic contrast with what's happening here and what's happening elsewhere, and it speaks very clearly to the extent that there has been lack of attention to helping people and families.

When I have gone into a First Nations community and talked with people who are involved in the child and family services system, and they tell me that about 30 per cent of the kids are there because there's inadequate housing—that the housing

is not up to standard. Then, that tells me that as a province working with federal and provincial government and the First Nations communities we're not doing the job that we should be doing to make sure that the housing is adequate and is there. And I've talked with quite a number of people who have pointed out that the supports for helping children and families haven't been as good as they should have been. And, yes, there's probably quite a lot of variation from one part of the province to another.

\*(11:50)

But we had a presentation at one of the forums which we held from a woman who had worked at Lake St. Martin First Nation in child welfare for many years, and what she reported is that under the NDP in the middle of the 2000s that the funding that went to helping families was decreased, that the amount of support was less. And when you do that, the inevitable consequences is more kids being taken into care. And so this is a dynamic situation. If you don't approach this in the right way, we're going to end up with a lot more kids in care, and that's what's happened under the NDP—has been really poor management, very bad mismanagement, inability to work well in recent years, in particular, but for much of the time with the leadership in the First Nations community.

Now, there are occasional examples which are working well. In Nelson House Cree Nation, for example, they have taken approach and turned things around, and said, we're going to support families much more effectively. And the net result, as we heard at one of the forums that we put on, from Lore Mirwaldt, who's a lawyer who works there, is that her caseloads have gone down from about 70 to about 20, a dramatic decrease in the number of children having to be apprehended and taken into care, and all because they have switched the approach to one which provides a support to children in families so that they don't need to go into care in the first place.

And that's what we need to do in this province. We need to switch from the approach that we've had, which is poor management under the NDP, which is basically an apprehension-first system, to approach which has a much better and greater focus on supporting children and family. And in doing this, we can decrease the number of kids who have to go into care.

And I have heard and talked with many who point out examples to me of where there could have

been a little better support to people, kids, who are in care. I was talking, not very long ago, to a fellow who had been in care. What had happened was that he was staying with his grandmother, being looked after by his grandmother. He said this was the best home that he ever had, and it was basically working out very well. But there was a little problem, a problem that could have been sorted out had there been paid attention to, and as a result he was taken out of his grandmother's home and put in a foster home, which turned out to be far, far worse, terrible for him, and, indeed, he circulated through a number of foster homes, and when he was 18 he was put out on the street, and he was essentially homeless for two years after being dropped at the street corner.

Now, we have improved—started improving in terms of this transition, but as the Children's Advocate pointed out in her report and again last night, there are not yet standards for the transition when a child comes 18. Far too many children are still not having a plan developed well in advance so that when they reach 18 they are not thrust out on the street and on their own.

So there is still a lot to do, and I think for the government to say that it is managed well, they're really not looking at the situation appropriately. This resolution, which is one that I support, has it right, that there has been some real, major problems with mismanagement and that we need to change the whole system so that, in fact, it provides much better support for children and families, it gives us a healthier society and a healthier community and one which doesn't have nearly so many kids apprehended.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to recognizing the honourable minister, I just want to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Gladstone School 25 grade 5 and 6 students under the direction of Jennifer Petit. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard).

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this morning.

\*\*\*

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities):** It's a honour to be able to

give some thoughts on this resolution. I do want to thank—see—recognize the young people from Gladstone. I got to visit Gladstone School actually a couple months ago, so it's great to see them here.

I do appreciate, actually, all of the comments and thoughts and views of all members of the House on this resolution. As you've heard, you've heard many people come from the members speaking how actually diverse and complex and, to some degree, I think we all recognize how challenging, you know, the issue of supporting young people that come from, you know, incredibly complex and vulnerable backgrounds.

And I do want to—I do appreciate the Minister of Family Services and Labour sharing the thoughts that she had with the member from Riding Mountain and the member from River East, and, you know, that's what it's going to take. It's going to take, of course, here in the House, to have debate and to be able to talk about these things.

But also we have to come from other perspectives, you know, being able to share your thoughts and views on supporting children and young people as a parent; as a politician; as a member for Burrows (Ms. Wight), who is incredibly dedicated long before she got into politics, to supporting our most vulnerable young people.

And I got to say, it can't be easy to come into the Chamber and after a number of years, over a decade of experience working with some of the most challenging and complex issues—and to be able to come in here and share those thoughts and ideas, I think, is incredibly—not only powerful, but really, really needed. And I appreciate all the comments that I've heard so much on the resolution.

One of the things, without question, that we see when we're working with young people, whether it's through government; whether it's through non-profit; whether it's through our First Nation communities; whether it's through the areas that we represent, is this idea of a shared responsibility, that all of us have to play a role in supporting young people. All of us have to play a role to push our systems to do better. And that's a healthy thing and that's an important thing.

And I know that we work with many people broadly throughout the province of Manitoba, experts and advocates and First Nations leadership and new Canadian leadership and, you know, people who represent non-profit organizations, all to do

everything that we possibly can to maximize the potential of children, youth and families, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, you know, talking about these things, bringing these things forward, is part of that.

I do want to spend a bit of time—I'm a big believer that it's irresponsible of us to ask anyone to overcome hardship and challenge in their life unless we can show them others who have been able to do it.

And although we need to look at where our challenges exist, where our most difficult circumstances are, where our biggest barriers are, we always have to make sure that we spend some time talking about the incredible achievements of people who've been able to overcome some of the biggest hardships and challenges in their life so that other people know that they can be able to do it.

I'm a big believer, it's one of the—probably one of the most important things that I have learned coming into politics and, certainly, being honoured to be the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities, that if we want to maximize the potential of our children, of our youth, of our families, it starts even before they're born. It starts at the prenatal stage, Mr. Speaker. And the investments that we continue to make in early childhood development I know are making a huge difference every day. I've got to travel the province many times already, talking about these investments, how they're making a difference.

Now, one of the things that we recognize is the investments we make, we know that they work and we know that they work incredibly well. Often our challenge though is to get those services and resources and target it to the people who need them the most. That's where we have to continue to engage people; that's why we need to continue to listen to people; that's why we need to continue to have debate and discuss these issues, because if we want services and resources to be maximized, then we have to make sure that those families who need it can engage in that.

And sometimes that means not just engaging a parent, but making sure the grandma knows, making sure a grandparent knows, making sure those foster parents know, making sure a strong network of people know.

I know one of the things that we do is we provide the Prenatal Benefit so we support future

moms, we give them some financial support so they can have proper nutrition. And we know some of the results we get, that babies are born at a healthy baby weight, that we know that there's less preterm births. But one of the biggest things about when families start to access some of these benefits is that it improves—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities will have five minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, June 13, 2013**

**CONTENTS**

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Debate on Second Readings—Public Bills**

Bill 204—The Manitoba Human Trafficking  
Awareness Day Act

Rowat	2311
Irvin-Ross	2312
Eichler	2313
Gaudreau	2315
Pedersen	2316
Maloway	2318
Smook	2318
Ewasko	2319

**Resolutions**

Res. 16—Decade of Mismanagement within  
Manitoba's Child Welfare System

Rowat	2321
Howard	2324
Mitchelson	2326
Wight	2327
Gerrard	2329
Chief	2330

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings  
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>**