

Second Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXX No. 72A - 10 a.m., Tuesday, October 24, 2017

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
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DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
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GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Madam 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, and 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.

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: As was previously agreed to by the House, this morning the House will be considering a private member's bill from 10 to 10:30; from 10:30 to 11:15 the House will consider the private member's resolution sponsored by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) titled Dwarfism Awareness; and from 11:15 to 12 p.m. the House will consider the private member's resolution sponsored by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Saran) titled Establishment of Private Members' Entitlement Equity.

To resume debate, then, on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Rossmere.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): Yes, Madam Speaker, this morning it is the intent of the government to continue debate of Bill 215, as you just stated, and we're anticipating moving in that direction.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to consider debate of Bill 215 this morning? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: I heard a no. Debate has been denied on Bill 215.

Is there leave, then, for the House to debate second reading of Bill 202?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 203?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 205?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on 206?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate of Bill 29–209?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 210?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 211?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on No. 212?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 213?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 225?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 227?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Sorry?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 228?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 232?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 217?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 216?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 220?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 219?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 224?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 231?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider debate on Bill 200?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 218?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied for debate on all private members' legislation this morning.

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, a rather unfortunate turn of events this morning, but I'm wondering if you could canvass the House to see if we could pursue the next item of business which was

outlined by yourself earlier and announced by the Government House Leader in a previous session a few days back.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave now to move to private member's resolution put forward by the honourable member for River Heights titled Dwarfism Awareness? *[Agreed]*

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 23—Dwarfism Awareness

Madam Speaker: So the resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Dwarfism Awareness brought forward by the honourable member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I move, seconded by the MLA for Burrows, that

WHEREAS October is Dwarfism Awareness Month in many countries of the world and is dedicated to increasing public knowledge, creating positive awareness, changing negative misconceptions and increasing opportunities for people born with dwarfism; and

WHEREAS today, various Little People organizations exist worldwide, including Little People of Manitoba (LPM) because of the parent organization Little People of America (LPA) formed in 1957 by people like actor Billy Barty and his commitment to inclusiveness and his dedication to our community; and

WHEREAS the first LPA meeting was monumental for a group of people who were severely mislabeled and misunderstood by society and the LPM is a non-profit, registered charity, dedicated to creating awareness about prominent issues and providing social support for people with dwarfism; and

WHEREAS it is the mission of LPM to create awareness and to educate the general public about dwarfism; to promote a positive image of people of short stature; to provide social, emotional and educational support to people of short stature and their families; to encourage life-long acquaintanceship; and to enhance life opportunities for all little persons in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS in declaring October 25 as Dwarfism Awareness Day, LPM hopes to raise awareness that "People with dwarfism are no different than any other person. We may just need a well-placed stool."; and

WHEREAS established in Winnipeg in 1981, LPM is part of a worldwide network of Little People organizations with membership consisting of persons of short stature, as well as families and friends from different genders, ethnicities, socio-economic status and sexual orientations; and

WHEREAS approximately one in 40,000 people are born with dwarfism, eighty percent of them have average height parents and siblings who have a 50-50 chance of passing the dwarfism gene on to their child; and

WHEREAS it does not generally affect cognitive abilities, there are over 200 distinct forms of dwarfism and skeletal dysplasia which affect bone growth resulting in a typical height range of 2'8" to 4'5"; and

WHEREAS in July 2009 the word "midget" was declared inappropriate and offensive and persons born with dwarfism prefer to be referred to by their own name, other acceptable terms are: having dwarfism, short stature, little person, LP, and the medical terminology use of dwarf.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial government be urged to increase opportunities and promote awareness for persons with dwarfism and dedicate October 25th annually as Dwarfism Awareness Day.

Madam Speaker: And prior to moving forward with this, is there leave to call it 10:30, then, as we move to this resolution, to clarify for the record? *[Agreed]*

And also to clarify for the record, the private member's resolution will receive 45 minutes of debate and then we will go on to the next resolution as previously determined.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on this resolution which is to urge the provincial government to increase opportunities and promote awareness for persons with dwarfism and to dedicate October 25th annually as Dwarfism Awareness Day.

There is a particular reason for calling October 25th Dwarfism Awareness Day. It is the birthday of Billy Barty, who formed the organization The Little People of America in 1957.

Billy Barty was an actor who was three foot, 10 inches tall. Born in 1924 he first appeared in a Hollywood feature in 1927 when he was three years old. He played a number of characters, including

some outrageous ones, like a wizard in the movie Willow, a German spy in Under the Rainbow, a suspected stalker in Foul Play and an agent in Day of the Locust, and he was in many, many more films, radio broadcasters—broadcasts, and so on.

Billy Barty fought for dignity and respect for little people with dwarfism who were, in his day and, to some extent still today, severely mislabelled and misunderstood by most of society.

* (10:10)

There were 21 people at the original meeting of the Little People in America. The organization now has chapters all over North America with the Little People of Manitoba being—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: The Little People of Manitoba was formed as an organization in 1981.

Samantha Rayburn Trubyk, who is the president of the Little People of Manitoba, who is here or will be shortly—here she is. Welcome, to everybody.

We really appreciate your involvement and your advocacy, Samantha, and all the others who are part of the Little People of Manitoba. We think it's a great credit to you and to everyone else. I had the pleasure, along with others, to come to your Little People of Manitoba event not very long ago and saw how engaged and how happy everybody was to be there. It was a great afternoon, and you have a wonderful organization, and you're doing a really good job promoting awareness about dwarfism. And now we need to take this message province-wide.

Samantha is the human resources manager for Price Industries. She's an energetic and engaging public speaker, and she's becoming increasingly well known in Manitoba for her role.

Samantha, or Sam, as she's known, recognizes the challenges that she and other people face, too often including stigmatization and discrimination. Many aspects of our society are designed without consideration of those with dwarfism, including, as examples: the placing of light switches a little too high; or garage door openers; or wash basins in public washrooms; sinks and so much more of how we design the space that we live in and that we work in has not adequately adapted or been designed to work for people with dwarfism as well as for everybody else.

We need to be able, as Patrick Falconer and many others have, to increase accessibility, and there is a move to increase accessibility now and to set new standards and rules to have a greater, accessible Manitoba. And it's very important that we include in the design and thinking about standard accessibility for people with dwarfism and make sure that they are comfortable and able to operate and work well in Manitoba, wherever they are.

I think it is important to recognize, at the same time, that as we do this and make that accommodation, as we change the designs for the places where all of us work and play, that in adapting this to a more universal design for the space that we live and work in, we're following on a good tradition in Manitoba, a tradition which has seen the change in the Chamber to adapt to our MLA in Assiniboia and others who may be in wheelchairs. And I think that as we make changes continuously from time to time in the Legislature, that we need to be conscious of designing it for universal accessibility, and I'm sure that that's a direction that we're going to be going as we step-by-step move into the future.

I hope that you will all support this resolution to have October 25th Dwarfism Awareness Day in Manitoba.

Following our debate today, Samantha Rayburn Trubyk and the Little People of Manitoba will hold a reception in the Golden Boy Room from 11:30 to 12:30. Everyone is invited to come down and visit and talk and meet. I think you'll be pleased and excited to be able to meet Samantha and the other little people and their friends and supporters.

People with dwarfism are really no different than the rest of us in so many, many ways. People with dwarfism are living and working throughout Manitoba, often operating businesses and volunteering and being part of our community just like any other Manitoban. Often, a well-placed stool can be a big help. But designing a province and setting standards for accessibility which includes those with dwarfism is needed, and that's one of the reasons why we need this dwarfism awareness day.

I should add that, globally—this month—October is often considered dwarfism awareness month, so it fits right in to have dwarfism awareness day as part of that month.

I hope you will all support this. Thank you for being here and for being involved in this debate. Merci.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): I'd like to thank the member for River Heights for bringing forward this resolution and, can he share with us, what are some of the things that the public can do to make life more inclusive for the Little People of Manitoba?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Well, I think, fundamentally, the first and foremost is just treat people who are little people just like others. Have respect for them, recognize that because they are short doesn't mean that they have other characteristics that would be any different from the rest of us and that we need to make sure that we recognize them; we don't dismiss them because they are small, but we incorporate them in our conversations, we give them opportunities if they are speaking publicly to make sure there is a stool there, for example, that we're there to help and support.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Yes, first of all, I'd like to thank Samantha for being here on behalf of the Little People of Manitoba, and our caucus will certainly be supporting this special day that we're going to hopefully have decided upon today so we can celebrate it tomorrow.

But my question to the member would be, in terms of our accessibility legislation, have you had the opportunity to talk to any of the municipalities about how—what they can do to increase accessibility and make the lived environment, the designed environment that we all operate in more accessible and more suitable for people of all different backgrounds and abilities, including dwarfs?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, what I have been involved in is a conversation with Patrick Falconer about accessibility during our campaigns, recently. For example, we had to talk about accessibility and what our plans would be and how we're making our campaigns accessible.

I let Patrick Falconer know, with Barrier-Free Manitoba, that this debate was going on today and, you know, have communicated to him the importance of including people—little people in any discussions that are related to reducing barriers for accessing Manitoba.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I, too, would like to welcome Sam and the people who have joined her here today, as well. Sorry, I know I turned away from the microphone, there, Madam Speaker.

To the member from River Heights, I would just like to ask him, taking a look over the last few years as far as legislation that he and his party have brought forward and—in regards to private members' bills and resolutions and those various things, I'm just curious why the member from River Heights today would bring forward a resolution as opposed to a private member's bill.

Mr. Gerrard: I mean, there was a choice between a resolution and a bill. I have a bill before the House at the moment which deals with providing—or putting physical size and weight under the Human Rights Code. We actually met. I met Samantha around discussions around that bill.

*(10:20)

So I am hoping for a vote on that bill, and, hopefully, the more recognition of the importance of non-discrimination against people who are of different physical size and weight will lead to passing of that bill. So I was hoping for this resolution and that bill to follow.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights—or—sorry—St. Boniface.

Mr. Selinger: I just wanted to ask the proponent of this resolution today, can you think of anything the federal government can do to assist in the efforts we're making here to have increased accessibility, to recognize the little people across the country, and what we can do to ensure that they have full access to all the goods and services that the rest of us enjoy?

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I thank the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) for his question. And I agree with the member that it's something that we can take to the federal level and see what we can do. I think that in creating some awareness here and an awareness day, we can look, and maybe we can take this national. But I think we're at the stage now where we need to be a little bit more organized in

what we're asking at the federal level, but I think that's the direction we're moving.

Mrs. Mayer: The Little People of Manitoba organization does such important work raising awareness and increasing public knowledge on this important issue. Can the member please explain to the House other amazing work that this group does?

Mr. Gerrard: Sure. I think that one of the really important things is that the kids who have dwarfism and that when they get their start in life—there are a considerable number of these kids with dwarfism who are born to parents of normal height. It's just the way things go for genetic and other reasons. There are some families in which the genetics are such that the dwarfism may be passed from parent to child, and you may have children who are of mixed—some of normal size, and some with dwarfism.

So, in—one of the things that the organization has done is to have sessions in which whole families get together and share—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I will be supporting this resolution, of course. And I recall over the summer, at Kildonan Park, there was a relay race, second annual relay for dignity. I wonder if the member could tell us a little bit more about that relay and the people that were there.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. If I remember, the relay—which I think the member was at, which was started at Kildonan Park and went to The Forks—was put on by Manitobans for Human Rights, which is an organization which is promoting human rights. I am not sure whether there were little people who were there—Samantha is saying yes, and very much a part of—the Little People of Manitoba are involved in the promotion, broadly, of human rights because they see how important it is for them as well as for others.

Mr. Ewasko: Again, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, we are going to be supporting this resolution, but it is—it's interesting to me that the member from River Heights—I know that he does have another bill in front of the Legislature as well, but there are three members in his party, and I was wondering why they wouldn't, you know, push this to make this a priority, to bring it forward as a private member's bill.

But that being said, that wasn't part of my question. The member from St. Boniface actually stole part of my question, and I was going to ask of

some of the other communities or organizations that he—that the member from River Heights has consulted with about this resolution, and he's already answered a little bit about that, but also with his national party, it's interesting that you haven't—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I think it's—there's a natural step-by-step process, and we're taking this forward here. And, if we succeed here, and I am thankful for the support that's being spoken about on both sides—on all sides of the Chamber.

So, yes, I think that the—we have, in the process, interestingly enough, of working on the bill which puts physical size and weight under the Human Rights Code, I've had the opportunity to talk to many people about people of different physical size. And so it's really become more and more apparent in those conversations over the last year in particular that it is important that we recognize the position of people with dwarfism and have a better—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Selinger: To the member from River Heights, I just wondered, have you had, in your conversations with the president—Samantha—any discussion about how we can increase employment opportunities and opportunities to 'emper' the—enter the labour market, training supports, all of those things that would help people live more independently in our community?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. You know, this is part of what we want to do in terms of the awareness day to create opportunities.

I had the occasion, probably about three years ago, to listen to a talk given by an individual who has dwarfism who works nationally for a major franchise chain, and he points out that people with dwarfism, for a variety of reasons, are very good employees; they are steadfast and loyal, and that he has found that employing them is a particular benefit to his company. And so I think that's an interesting message and one that we should promote.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is now open.

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): I rise today to speak to Resolution 23, titled Dwarfism Awareness, and that outlines the dedication of October 25th as dwarfism awareness day.

I would, however, like to start by congratulating the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), his colleagues and the Manitoba Liberal Party on electing their new leader this weekend. I haven't had an opportunity to congratulate you on that and I think it's important to acknowledge all leadership candidates in the work that they do, and I wish you all the best.

Billy Barty, a well-known American actor and champion for the equal rights of little people once said: mine—the name of my condition is cartilage-haired—hair-syndrome hypoplasia, but you can just call me Billy. This quote encompasses the message being conveyed time and again from the little people I have met. Height—or forms of dwarfism—is a part of who they are, but certainly does not define who they are, Madam Speaker.

With roughly one in 40,000 infants being born with dwarfism, typically to average-height parents, and over 200 identified forms, it's important that people continue to be educated about dwarfism. By marking October 25th as dwarfism awareness day we are helping to ensure future generations of little people are celebrated for their uniqueness and treated with kindness and respect. Throughout his life, Mr. Barty fought for dignity and respect for the little people community who were severely mislabeled and misunderstood by society.

Over the summer, I had the good fortune of meeting with Samantha Rayburn Trubyk, president of Little People of Manitoba, and Debbie Winters, their vice-president, and can tell you that this was absolutely a wonderful and dedicated organization. I wish to convey to them how much this meeting meant to me and to thank them for taking that time.

Although a little person may think that the first thing they are recognized for is their height—and I can assure you that the first thing I recognized when I met Samantha was her vibrant personality and willingness to share her journey. I wish to thank her for her open and understanding dialogue about the great work of LPM and what they are doing.

The Little People of Manitoba is a non-profit organization whose mission is to create awareness to educate the general public about dwarfism; to promote a positive image for people of short stature; to provide social, emotional, and educational support to people of short stature and their families; to encourage lifelong acquaintanceships, which I know that I have done in meeting this organization, and to

enhance life opportunities for all little people in Manitoba.

* (10:30)

This mission supports our government's vision of a fully accessible province where all abilities are valued, diversity and independence are celebrated, barriers are removed and human rights are protected.

LPM is a part of a global network with many little-people organizations existing all over the world. I'd like to applaud LPM for striving to improve the quality of life for people with dwarfism and taking the time to promote public awareness through open and thoughtful information sharing.

I won't soon forget having the opportunity to meet families who are part of the LPM community at their summer barbecue. One young man, who happened to be Samantha's son, greeted me with a confident handshake and a hello, and I knew then that this organization is giving children with dwarfism the strength and support they need to succeed in a world geared towards average-height people.

A lasting memory that will stay with me are the bright smiles of the children that were in that room that day. Each one has their whole lives ahead of them, and it's clear that with the support of their parents and the LPM community, the barriers that they may face will be easier to overcome. After meeting with Samantha and Debbie, I was disheartened to hear stories about how culturally accepted discrimination is still occurring every day. I can hear it in my voice as I think back to the stories that they shared with me and how these precious children still today deal with these barriers.

Recognizing and eliminating the usage of offensive terminology is one step that can be taken towards equality and respect. The term midget has long since been linked to dwarfism and takes us back to a time when little people were put on display and in fact not treated as people at all. Even today, the word midget continues to be used for identifying an age group in minor hockey. This term is insulting, Madam Speaker. It's outdated and has no place in today's society. I ask those who are listening to my words today to remove that word from their vocabulary. Like many words that we refrain from using, this word is simply unacceptable. There's an importance in shedding a light on a type of discrimination that is too often overlooked and in some cases accepted as appropriate behaviour.

Our government is opposed to discrimination in any form. We realize the work—or, that there is still a lot of work that remains on the road to equality, but progress has been made. We want to ensure that vulnerable Manitobans who need our help the most feel supported. A priority of our government is to offer social support for all groups of people in our province, including the little people.

Currently, we are working towards accessibility in government, ensuring that all departments support accessibility initiatives, including among the agencies, boards and commissions with which they work. Our government launched and posted our accessibility plan, and we are taking significant steps to ensure all 75 public sector organizations meet their deadlines. As recent as this past September, the Department of Families staff has provided training to the majority of small municipalities in Manitoba that require to prepare an accessibility plan. These initiatives are removing barriers to daily living experiences by approximately one in six Manitobans, including little people.

Our government is committed to working with stakeholders to increase opportunities to create awareness for a person with dwarfism. Our government believes that all Manitobans should feel included as we work to build a better Manitoba for all. We are working to address barriers to employment that can keep Manitobans from learning and applying for new positions and from being hired and reaching their first full—their full potential.

Collaboration with public and private sector organizations will help the government achieve our vision of a fully accessible Manitoba. We recognize and appreciate the efforts of organizations like LPM as they are dedicated to creating awareness by prominent issues affecting people with dwarfism and providing social support for the little people of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for bringing forward this resolution, as it brings up an important issue in creating a more equal society for all.

I'd also like to thank LPM for their years of work that they have dedicated and how they deliver awareness to inform children, teens and parents of the experiences of being a little person.

Advocates for equality want to leave this world a more acceptable and supportive place than when they found it. And I look forward to continuing to be part

of a government that will remain focused on achieving equal rights for everyone.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to support resolution 23. Thank you very much.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): First of all, I'd like to thank the Little People of Manitoba and their president, Samantha, for the advocacy work they've done over so many years. And I'd like to thank the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for working with them and bringing this resolution forward today.

It's so important, and I'd like to start by saying that I found it instructive today to hear the comments made by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Mayer) on language and how we continue to have to evolve a more inclusive language, and all of us can learn from that, that's part of the journey that we go on is finding language that respects the dignity of every individual in our society whether it be in Manitoba, whether it be in the country, whether it be around the world.

And so I find that this resolution to have this awareness day will help us continue to find the right words to acknowledge the basic humanity of every individual on this planet, and that's really what we should all be about in this Legislature.

We value diversity. We value inclusiveness. We value human rights. We value the right of people to be able to participate fully with all the abilities that they bring to the table in our society and make a contribution, whether it's in our schools, in the labour market, in community, as parents, family members, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, we want all of those people to be acknowledged and recognized for the gifts that they bring to each of us in our communities, in our personal lives. And I know that myself having a niece who's a person that has been very active in the Little People's organization in Saskatchewan, and has for many years been an advocate for these causes and has done it with great enthusiasm and success in her life.

I know that some people might think that this is a minor issue, but it's not. The advances we make for the little people and anybody who has a need for accessibility of any kind are really advances for all of us because it's just the lottery of life what conditions we are born into, what conditions we have to address as we make our way through this world. And it also can be a situation that changes for any of us. Accessibility benefits us all. We can see that today.

I've been in parts of the world where when you step off a curb it's at least 12 inches high, and in Manitoba we now take it for granted that when you're on a sidewalk that there's a way to get over that sidewalk without any major impediment to any person's disability or any person's limitations whatever those may be. And I've been in cities where if you wanted to get on the subway you had to go down literally hundreds of stairs. Some of the most famous cities in the world are also one of the least accessible cities in the world, and make it impossible for people experiencing certain conditions to have access just to the basic services in their neighbourhood.

And we've made a great deal of progress in this province on what we've done with our transportation systems, what we've done with our sidewalks, what we've done with entrance into retail operations and public facilities. But we have a long way to go.

We have a long way to go in terms of what we can do to encourage people to fully participate in the labour market, to have accessible and visitable housing to ensure that in education that they are giving the full benefit of being part of every regular classroom situation, to share their experiences, to learn from other people and to share their point of view with the rest of the world so that we can be more respectful of each other.

So I think this resolution today will do a lot to move that agenda forward, and it looks like it's part of a global context, which is a good thing for all of us to be part of that as well, because what we do here allows us to connect to the rest of the world and be part of that great trajectory.

As Martin Luther King said, the arc of history tends towards justice. But we know that only happens if we make it happen. There's nothing natural about that. There's nothing organic about that. There's nothing predetermined about that. That arc of history only bends towards justice, equality and inclusiveness if we make it do so. And I know today in supporting this resolution we are doing one little bit to make that arc of justice bend in the right direction. Thank you.

* (10:40)

Madam Speaker: For just information of guests in the gallery, I would just ask that there be no applause from the gallery because that's participating in the debate on the floor. So I'd appreciate your co-operation. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and my colleague from Riding Mountain, as well. He's appreciating the fact that I'm standing up and being able to put a few words on the record today.

I, too, would like to give my thanks, and again on behalf of the PC caucus, I appreciate the words from my colleague, the member from St. Vital, so I'd like to thank the member from River Heights for bringing forward this resolution.

Of course, again, I can't help but give you a little bit of grief on the fact that we're not bringing this forward as a bill, but, that being said, we are supporting this and we are going to see that this resolution does pass rather swiftly this morning.

I would like to thank all the work of Sam and Debbie and the rest of the Little People of Manitoba organization for bringing awareness to not only us here in the Chamber, which we're going to be sharing in a little bit of a reception at 11:30 this morning in—I believe it's in the Golden Boy Room. So I'm looking forward to that, Madam Speaker.

As a teacher, I know that education is absolutely the key for moving anything forward, and awareness on accessibility is, again, key, not only for the Little People of Manitoba, but for all Manitobans in making sure that this is a very accessible province.

I know that currently we're celebrating Dwarfism Awareness Month here in October, which, I believe, is nationally, if not internationally, and that I don't for sure know—is it nationally or internationally?

An Honourable Member: Internationally.

Mr. Ewasko: Internationally. I've gotten some people from higher up let me know that it is internationally, so I appreciate that.

Madam Speaker, we, on this side of the House, have been working very hard to make sure that the province of Manitoba continues to feel—to be safe and to make sure that Manitobans are feeling safer and stronger in this great province of ours and in this great, great country. We continue to work on accessibility to various services and in a more timely manner.

We realize that there's much work to be done, as I know that many people are very much aware that we've inherited quite the situation here in Manitoba from the previous government.

And so, on that, it's very nice for all parties to come together today on a non-partisan issue and show that we can work collaboratively and make sure that we're pushing forward a very important resolution as the member from River Heights has brought forward, to recognize tomorrow, which is going to be October—which is October 25th, as Dwarfism Awareness Day here in Manitoba.

The proposed legislation is talking about a very important issue in creating a more equal society for all, and I know that as we continue on, on this side of the House, as far as the government side, we are looking to working with various stakeholders and support groups within government and outside of government to help us move a lot of these very important initiatives and values forward.

Our government supports all the work that the Little People of Manitoba have done already to create awareness, and some of the things I'd like to list off as far as what they've done as an organization: They're educating the general public about dwarfism; they're providing social, emotional, and educational support to people of short stature and their families; they're encouraging life-long acquaintanceships to enhance life opportunities for all little persons in Manitoba in a non-profit, non-sectarian and non-political fashion.

This mission supports our government's vision of a fully acceptable—accessible province where all abilities are valued, diversity and independence are celebrated, barriers are removed and human rights are protected.

As we've seen, since we've come back into the Chamber from the summer, from all the hard work that we do during the summer and the early fall in our constituencies, we've come back to a new and improved Chamber, which has increased accessibility to people experiencing various barriers.

Is it absolutely perfect? Maybe it isn't, but Madam Speaker, I'd like to also commend you on the hard work that you've done to bring the Chamber to where it is today, and—as you, and our previous Speaker as well, have put in countless hours into making sure that this Chamber is accessible to all potential Manitobans who wish to look to be sitting in this great House of ours.

The previous government had brought in some legislation, but unfortunately—and this will be my only non—will be my only partisan comment—for now, anyways—but they had no implementation plan

in regards to making sure that various accessibility—the accessibility legislation was actually carried out. And I'd like to commend our Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding), the MLA for Kirkfield Park, for making sure that his staff is—was available to provide training to the majority of our small municipalities in and around Manitoba who are, and were, required to trade some accessibility plans. These initiatives are removing the barriers to the daily lives experienced by approximately one in six Manitobans, including the Little People of Manitoba.

I'd like to just end on a quote. And this quote, Madam Speaker, was—I'm quoting the president, Samantha Rayburn Trubyk. And in quotations: there's a lot of unacceptable behavior exhibited toward people like me. But I prefer not to focus on that. I chose to focus on—or I choose to focus the positives rather than the negatives. If you take away anything from this article, please let it be this: above all else, treat people with kindness and respect. Being unique in life adds perspective, so own it and be proud of it. I am. End quotations, and that's the president of the little peoples Manitoba, Sam, who said those words.

And to echo a few of the words of some of my colleagues here in the Chamber, we talked about—they spoke about inclusive language, and Sam, that was just an absolutely great message that I think all of us, and I do truly believe the vast majority of us in this Chamber try to uphold those pieces as far as the respect in treating others the way that we'd like to be treated.

And so with that, Madam Speaker, again thank you to the member from River Heights for bringing this resolution forward. Congratulations to the Little People of Manitoba, I know that we're going to celebrate tomorrow, October 25th, being the first Dwarfism Awareness Day here in Manitoba.

So thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? *[Agreed]*

I declare the resolution carried.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wonder if it could be made unanimous, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to consider it unanimous? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): I'm wondering if we could pursue—move on to the next item of business outlined previously, the resolution 24 by Mr. Saran. I guess to do that we'd need to—I'm sorry, for the member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), thank you. I believe we need to seek leave to call it 11:15 in order to do so.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider it 10:53? *[Agreed]*

And is there leave to move, then, to the next resolution, the Establishment of Private Members' Entitlement Equity? *Agreed? [Agreed]*

* (10:50)

Res. 24—Establishment of Private Members' Entitlement Equity

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I move,

WHEREAS all Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) equally perform constituency and provincial services irrespective of their party affiliation; and

WHEREAS the Independent Members' mandates and accountability to their constituents are as equal as those of the Opposition Party Members in the House; and

WHEREAS Independent Members' legislative duties and office management needs are of equal nature and merit not unlike other Members in the House; and

WHEREAS parliamentary privilege entitles Independent Members to equal rights inside and outside the Legislature; and

WHEREAS constituents demand that the Independent Members represent their voice by asking equal number of questions in proportion of the number of Opposition Members; and

WHEREAS constituents demand that the Independent Members be treated equally and equitably, and be entitled to ask equal number of questions in the committees by proportionate distribution of questions among the Opposition Members; and

WHEREAS the Independent Members hold equal right to speak, and submit statements by proportionate distribution of the same between the Opposition Members; and

WHEREAS the Independent Members hold equal right to receive automatic distribution of their entitlements from the Legislative Assembly rather than requesting each time; and

WHEREAS Independent Members should have the right to attend meetings in which Provincial Government and Official Opposition House Leaders meet to discuss Legislative Assembly related issues; and

WHEREAS the Independent Members hold equal entitlement to receive efficient office management services from equal number of staff allocated by proportionate distribution of staff among the Opposition Members.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to take the necessary steps to entitle independent members with equal number of questions in the House and committees, statements and speeches, and meetings as well as allocation of equal number of office staff in proportion of the number of opposition members.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have a seconder on that motion?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Saran: Yes. I don't need—

Madam Speaker: Okay. I'm sorry, the—it is fine without a seconder.

Motion presented.

Mr. Saran: I stand today to introduce the resolution of the Establishment of Independent Members' Entitlement Equity.

I present this resolution to you because my time as an independent member has opened my eyes and made the lack of equity in how we operate here very clear to me. Sometimes you must live through something to see it clearly. I see the inequity among members' treatment very clearly now. This lack of equity among MLAs diminishes our individual roles and destroys our collective role, which is to represent all the people of Manitoba.

I am an elected member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, just as all of other members are sitting here today. I was elected by the public in the constituency of The Maples to serve them as a representative here. As the Legislative Assembly fact sheet states for all the public to know, quote, as a representative of his or her constituency, a member may voice concerns on behalf of constituents,

represent viewpoints or intercede and assist in problem solving. Yet, as an independent MLA, I am not being given a fair and equitable opportunity to do that for the people of my constituency.

In the previous session, I used to get my turn every second week on Tuesday to ask questions. It was the 8th question. Now, with the new official opposition and government House leaders, this has been changed to Wednesday to ask the 10th question, which we all know leaves not enough time to actually get a word in. As proof of this, on Wednesday, October 11, I did not get an opportunity to speak or ask any questions for my constituents because the 40-minute question period ended before I was to get my turn. Even previously, I was arguing that this system is not fair. As an elected MLA, I should get time proportionate to the other MLAs for turns in the speaking and asking questions.

There are 18 opposition MLAs; 13 being NDP, three Liberals, and myself and the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher). All the privileges should be proportionate among all opposition MLAs. It just makes sense, and it would create equity of voice among opposition constituencies.

Again, I must remind you that we are here, voted into these roles, to collectively represent all the people of Manitoba. But instead of equity of voice in question period, I am being forced to ask a question in committee meetings to the Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine). Also, official government MLAs always have the ability to discuss and ask questions to the ministers in their caucus meetings, while opposition MLAs, and especially independent MLAs, don't have the same opportunities.

So the proportion of time to ask a question should be set according to the number of MLAs in opposition. In addition to this equity of question period and speaking opportunities, there is inequity of staff support for the role. For example, the caucuses have support people to research and write their questions and speeches, while independent members don't have that provision.

Independent members needing the support of staff must spend money out of the constituency budgets while caucus members are provided these supports out of caucus budgets.

I argue that the constituents of The Maples and Assiniboia and any future constituency that has an independent MLA will not get the same privileges as

other constituents because of systemic discrimination in the present precedents. These precedents need to be changed. There must be equity for the constituents.

So I introduce the resolution of the Establishment of Independent Members' Entitlement Equity to ensure equity among MLAs and, therefore, for the representation of all our constituents.

All MLAs are—equally perform constituency and provincial services irrespective of their party affiliation. Independent members' mandates and accountability to their constituents are as equal as those of the opposition party members in the House. Independent members' legislative duties and office-management needs are of equal nature and merit, not unlike other members in the House.

Parliamentary privilege entitles independent members to equal rights inside and outside the Legislature. Independent members should represent the voice of constituents by asking an equal number of questions in proportion to the number of opposition members.

Independent members should represent the voice of constituents by asking the equal number of questions in the committees by proportionate distribution of questions among opposition members.

Independent members should hold equal rights to speak and submit statements proportionate to all opposition members. Madam Speaker, I want to emphasize, all opposition members, not all the members.

Independent members should hold equal rights to receive automatic distribution of their entitlements rather than having to request it from the Legislative Assembly each time.

Independent members should have the right to attend meetings in which provincial government and official opposition leaders meet to discuss Legislative-Assembly-related issues, and independent members should hold equal entitlements to receive efficient office-management services from the equal number of staff allocated by proportionate distribution of staff among opposition members.

Enough is enough in how this Legislative Assembly is operating with a lack of equity for elected independent members and their constituents.

The constituents of independent MLAs are deserving of equal opportunity to be heard here and independent representation should be encouraged to enhance the democracy. This is very important. To enhance the democracy, people should be able to speak their mind and should be able to represent their constituents.

If you do not take this initial step to accept the private member's entitlement to equity, you—and when I say, Madam Speaker, with respect, when I say you, I mean all the members of the Assembly—you determine the legitimacy of the electoral—you undermine the legitimacy of the electoral system. You tell those constituents with independent MLAs that their vote and their voice are less important than some other electoral riding.

This system is fundamentally flawed right now, but we can make an important correction with this resolution. I urge you to do so.

Thank you very much.

* (11:00)

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party, any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties, each independent member may ask one question and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Can the member for The Maples tell us why he feels that his entitlements are the most important issue facing his constituency?

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I thank the member for asking that good question.

I guess I understood that question, why this is important to have equal representation from the constituency. I think all the wards should have equal weight. And my constituency—constituents deserve the same kind of rights and privileges that any other member, irrespective of their party, irrespective of their status within the Assembly.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Can my friend from The Maples share with us how many of his constituents have contacted him to express concern about how many questions he can ask, his office budget, or his office staffing?

Mr. Saran: I think it's very clear, and I thank the member for asking that question, but we all know these questions are not asked directly, how many questions you ask. These questions are—you are observed, how many questions you asked. You are observed, how many issues you raised in the Assembly, and those people go back, then people are judging your performance. And to—this is our job. To give a performance, you must have to speak, you must have to act, you must have to raise the issues.

If you don't have that opportunity, how you will do that?

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I want to thank the member opposite for bringing this forward. It raises some good points and gives the opportunity for an important discussion.

My question is, does the member realize—I—there's maybe a sense of irony that he would not be able to bring a resolution forward today if he were not an independent member. So my question is that we're discussing the restrictions on independent members and using a mechanism to allow independent members to raise these issues, while discussing the fact that they can't raise issues.

So my question is: Does he realize he wouldn't be able to do this if he wasn't an independent member.

Mr. Saran: I thank the member for raising that question. It's a very important question.

I think the member should know, because he has been a House leader, how many resolutions you can bring in one session. And I think you can bring only one resolution. If you are a party member, you can bring as many you want, depending on the party. So you are left with no choice, just one resolution or one bill in one session. That's not good enough to represent your constituency.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, what we've just seen is an illustration of what the member from The Maples is trying to bring up. We just had three government members ask rapid-fire questions when other people wanted to ask questions.

My question to the member is, why does he get penalized for being an independent member? Why?

Mr. Saran: Yes, I think when people elect you, they want you to be—speak up your mind on behalf of

your constituents. Sometimes that's not accepted within the party status and they want to control you, but you have some issues, some ideas that you want to bring forward. And sometimes you have strength. Because of your strength, they want to minimize your strength and then you have to be independent. And I think that kind of situation is created and you become independent.

Doesn't matter how it happens, you should have every right these other MLAs have.

Mr. Nesbitt: Does the member from Maples think that maybe this might be better discussed at the rules committee for resolution?

Mr. Saran: Well, I thank the member for asking that question because it's very important. We—I was never invited to that committee where I could be heard and I can bring those issues forward. So that's why I had to bring this resolution over here. At least we start this discussion and we can—fair equity for asking questions on everything else. Thank you.

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so there's been a lot of talk about what independent members can and cannot do. I'd like to know from the member for Maples if he's ever been prevented from using YouTube, as an independent member, if his freedom to use YouTube has ever been stopped because of being an independent member?

Mr. Saran: I don't think—I thank the member asking that question about YouTube, and I'm totally illiterate about YouTube. I don't use it. But I can use other opportunities. If I have enough funds, I can send letters. I can do—put ads, but it should be enough funds, then the one way or other people have different choices and they can communicate in that way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any other questions?

The member—the independent member only has one question, so you've actually asked your question.

So is there any other questions in the House?

Mr. Curry: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very important to use.

I want to know if the member for Maples realizes that—he mentioned he could spend money on advertising—that out of his budget he can spend money on having staff instead of advertising and, also, there's opportunities at local schools, such as Maples Collegiate, where there are high school

students who are very happy to work in offices of many ranges, and he could have, say, a high school student work for free, as part of a high school program, for him in terms of the complaints about having staff. Did he realize he doesn't have to spend ad money, he can have staff instead?

Mr. Saran: I thank the member asking the question. That just came out of—for example, an ad. But I think that's not really—I mean, I think there are many, many ways you can communicate with your constituents. There are many ways you can help the constituents. There are many ways—the member said help the students, and I wouldn't mind, if I have enough funds, I would not mind to hire some student and help them to become familiar with the system we are working and maybe become politically motivated.

An Honourable Member: On a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A point of order from the member from Assiniboia. A point of order?

Mr. Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, so—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a point of order?

Mr. Fletcher: Yes, on a point of order.

We have members from the—individual MLAs standing up over and over and over and over again asking questions, but when it comes to independent MLAs they can only ask one question, apparently? I think that makes the member from The Maples's point—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Sorry, I'm going to have to repeat it again, my speaker was off.

The House leader, on the same point of order.

* (11:10)

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): I just want to take a moment to draw attention in this House to the fact that a point of order must reference a rule that has been breached. And, in the alleged point of order raised by the member from Assiniboia, no rule was referenced; no breach was referenced. There was a scant allusion to some perceived—something that was unfair or whatever, but that's not a point of order. A point of order has to reference a rule, has to demonstrate that rule has been broken, and that is what constitutes a point of order. So, in this case, there's no point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The ruling on this point of order: there is no point of order. This specifically says that independent members who already asked one question, and it's under rule 33.6(b), each independent member may ask one question. And that's basically what we say before the question period is that each independent member has one question on that.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker I rise on a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member from Assiniboia on—member—a matter of privilege. And we're going to be looking into this.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): There's a prima facie case that has just arisen through the proceedings where freedom of expression, freedom of speech has been violated. The ability of the opposition people to ask questions has been violated. The past practice on other issues that have arisen have been that the government may ask a question and then the people who are not in government ask a question. Back and forth. And that's the way it has operated in the past.

To narrowly view the rule as one—it says may—one—an independent may ask a question. One question. It doesn't say they can only ask one question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, this is—in this case, this is not a matter of privilege; it's a point of order. And, in this case, it wasn't a point of order because these are the rules that we have agreed upon. And, as an independent member, you have one question.

Okay, I'm going to read—okay.

I would like to inform the House that a matter concerning the methods of which the House proceeds in the conduct of business in the matter of the order is not a privilege. Joseph Maingot, the 2nd edition to the Parliamentary Privilege in Canada, states that—in page 14—the allegations of breach of privilege by a member of—in the House, the amount of complaints about procedures and practices in the House are their very nature matters of order.

He also stated on page 22, 23—the same edition—the breach of standing orders in—or a failure to follow the established practice would be evoked at point of order rather than at question privilege. On this basis, I would therefore rule that the honourable member does not have a prima facie matter of privilege.

Mr. Fletcher: I'd like to—I didn't get to say my motion, and—but I'd like to challenge the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You can't debate it unless you have support of other—four other members. You can't challenge it unless you have support of four other members in the House.

Is there support in the House for the challenge?

The honourable member for The Maples—no, sorry. No. *[interjection]* Okay. It's not a debatable challenge. We want members to rise. Who is in favour of the challenge? Would you please rise. Stand up.

There's no support. So, sorry, but it can't be challenged.

Questions (Continued)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We'll continue with the question period.

Mr. Curry: I'd like to know from the member from Maples—brings up a lot of points here about rights and privileges in this House.

I'd like to know if there's any right or privilege he thinks he does have, or is he claiming he has no right at all to be an MLA?

Mr. Saran: Well, I think that there are many privileges all the other MLAs enjoy, I am enjoying: have constituency funds, have representation funds, all the other funds and all the other things I claim, but still it doesn't bring me equal to the other MLAs when other MLAs have a right to ask a question—have a right to whenever they want through their chair.

I don't have that flexibility. I have to beg. I have to ask the question to the House leader, can I ask this question, can I speak now?

So I am kind of—in that way, I am not independent, I'm a kind of a slave of the two House leaders—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Curry: Mr. Deputy Speaker, another question I'd like to ask the member from Maples, as I try to digest that response, has more to do with his abilities to ask questions in question period, and I'd like to know if, when he was a member of whatever party he was a part of before—it's so long ago I can't really

remember, but when he was a part of that party, was it something where he was being asked to ask every question in question period, maybe once a month?

What kind of dynamic, where he was being begged to ask questions in question period, because, honestly, I can't even remember the last time he did ask a question in question period.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Saran: Well, I thank the member for asking that question. Actually, I used to be—ask questions, at least one question, for sure, every week, but it depended upon the urgency of the—if you feel something to ask, and maybe you can ask it twice, two times a week, three times a week, depends upon the issues.

If it is something about immigration going on, you—I used to be a critic—the immigration critic, and I used to ask all those questions, and I had flexibility. I have to ask the House—discuss within the caucus, I want to ask this question, but in this situation I don't have that flexibility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate is open for—open, and any speakers?

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for finally allowing me to speak on the members' resolution 24, establishment of private members' equity.

First of all, it's great to be back in the House to debate bills, resolutions, when we can and do what is best for Manitobans in a democratic fashion. I am very honoured and proud to serve my constituents of St. Norbert.

I am proud of being part of a government that is fixing the finances and repairing the services because of what we inherited from the previous government was a big mess.

We're kind of like a house we knew we were going to move into when we formed government. We knew it was going to be a fixer-upper, but once we moved in, we realized that there was a lot more fixing to do. So like a household, we had to prioritize and do what was best for the household.

As a government, we have to do what's best for Manitoba. This resolution is clearly not a priority for

Manitobans. The member from The Maples has served for 10 years, I believe, even was a minister, and now because he's all by his lonesome and cannot work with a team, he decides the rules have to be changed.

It was not our decision that put the member in his current situation as an independent. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the government side we work as a team and work collaboratively for all Manitobans.

He was a part of the previous government in the last years in government that were experts in in-fighting. Even as recently in their leadership contest there was no unity there, a former NDP government which the member of The Maples was a part of, experts in being diverse, divisive, and trying to play identity politics and, unfortunately, classic fear-mongering.

Even as recently as yesterday, the member from The Maples claims this assumption how our government favours the south end of the city over the North End.

Well, let's set the record straight. I had the pleasure of being present when our government announced a request for a proposal for the construction of four schools earlier this year, using the P3 funding model which they are ideologically against, for two schools in the north part or near his constituency.

One would be to place a kindergarten to grade 5 French immersion school in the Seven Oaks School Division in northwest Winnipeg with the capacity of 450 students.

And the second one, a kindergarten to grade 8 school in the Waterford Green subdivision located in the Winnipeg's northwest corner near—get this—The Maples, with the capacity of 600 students.

* (11:20)

The member for The Maples (Mr. Saran) has had his opportunity to somewhat describe himself as a champion representing certain communities who are less privileged, which is a complete myth.

Why? Well, the previous government—which the member from The Maples was part of—liked to portray themselves as the party for the diverse and immigrant communities, and yet they made families from those ethnic communities wait for years to have their families come under successful programs. The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program that a PC

government helped create—under people I highly respect, such as the former MLA from River East Bonnie Mitchelson and the former premier, and now his honour, Gary Filmon. This previous government, so-called champions for the poor, when they had the highest child poverty rates under his former party's watch—which he was a part of—and now, all of a sudden, he calls for independent members to receive the same speaking time and staff entitlement as other opposition MLAs.

All I can tell the member for The Maples: rules are rules. And as we all know—and he is aware—there are a number of privileges given to independent members that MLAs from government and recognized opposition parties do not have. The member from The Maples is also aware that every independent member has the right to speak to second reading on government bills and to ask a question during the Q and A period. The House will sit late to accommodate that right if necessary, as indeed we did on October 10th.

And I need to remind the member of The Maples that this right is not afforded to opposition or government members. Most MLAs will only be able to speak on legislation if time permits, and I should also remind the member of The Maples that each independent member may select one private members' bill per session to proceed to a second reading vote. The time to debate this bill is subtracted from the time that would be allotted to government-side MLAs.

Oh, and another thing: every independent member also is entitled to have one resolution debated per session. This also comes out of government time, as it does today.

The very fact that we're having this debate today is a consequence of this special privilege that the independent member of The Maples is afforded and which government and opposition MLAs do not have. This is fair, and again, these are the rules of the House.

May I suggest that the member of The Maples to conduct town hall meetings to bring real issues and concerns to the House. May I suggest getting feedback from the constituents from The Maples—see, town halls and prebudget consultations were never part of his party's—of his former party's repertoire. It is with us. And speaking of town halls, it is great to see my colleagues on the government side conducting these events to obtain feedback

whether they are at the local community centres or a telephone town hall. We certainly appreciate listening and engaging to Manitobans.

Manitobans are not telling us to call for independent members to receive the same speaking time and staff entitlement as other opposition MLAs, because Manitobans want us to fix the finances. They want us to repair the services. They want us to rebuild the economy.

The member from The Maples and his former NDP government—which abandoned him—allowed for our debt and deficit to grow. And, under the previous government, Manitoba spent the most on health care of any province and received the worst outcomes and wait times in the country—a government that the member of The Maples was part of. Last place, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We will not take lessons from the previous government, nor will we take lessons from the member from The Maples, who would rather talk about protecting his entitlements than real issues like health care. I guess I should remind the member from The Maples that health care is the largest spending item by the provincial government and record spending levels have not meant better results for patients, seniors and families. And, as I stated, Manitoba has some of the worst wait times in Canada.

It is a priority for our government to be the most improved province in family tax relief. However, recent reductions in federal funding have put a burden on the provinces, with hundreds of millions more per year now falling to the provinces to find as the federal government pays less of the overall health-care cost. Manitoba will receive \$2 billion less for health care from the federal government over the next 10 years, money our province will now need to find from other sources. Given the fiscal challenges we face, means either other government departments' funding will be affected or more revenue will have to be raised to meet rising health-care costs.

Oh, but wait. This is not an important issue for the member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), who chooses to use his one resolution to ask for more time and money. He does not choose to consult with his constituents on what real issues to debate in the House, whether we have consulted with our constituents on the government side. Consultations and town halls provide Manitobans with the

opportunity to share their views on a wide range of options.

And let me remind the member from The Maples and the opposition that under the previous government that he was part of, Manitoba provided the most funding to health care of any province and received the worst outcomes and wait times in the country. Winnipeg's emergency wait times were the longest in all of Canada and position recruitment stalled.

And speaking of emergency services, services were spread too thin across six emergency departments right now, so, eventually, by having three emergency departments it will allow ERs to have a larger concentration of specialists and diagnostic services in these centralized facilities resulting in better access, shorter wait times. It is a plan that we are following that the previous government did not want to follow.

You just have to look at the previous NDP's—government's—track record on health care. To even—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

I'm just going to—just remind the member to look at relevancy of the actual private member's statement that's being stated here.

Mr. Reyes: Okay.

You just have to look at the previous NDP's government 'trackord' on health care. And even think that the independent member for The Maples is in a position now to be giving our government lessons on real issues where they failed is absolutely ridiculous. The previous government—which the independent member was part of had 17 years to improve health care, and the opposite member served 10 years under their government and didn't do a thing and allowed ERs in Winnipeg to be in dead last in the country—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I just want to remind the member to—the relevance of this private member's statement—the resolution.

Mr. Reyes: Okay, okay.

Reference for bill—[interjection]

Well, I am talking about health care—because I consulted with my constituents—which is important to them.

We will get it right where he and his former NDP government failed. We need better care—better patient care, a sustainable health-care system for my parents, my children and future generations to come.

This is what Manitobans—

Madam Speaker: Again, I just want to—order.

I just want to—again, to remind you of reverence, okay—relevance, okay?

So I'll—again, I'll get the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes) to continue.

Mr. Reyes: In the resolution 24, as I state, this is not a resolution which calls for independent members to receive the same speaking time and staff entitlement as other opposition MLAs. That's their—that's his priority, but they're not the real issues.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Now, we do not agree with what the member for Maples has brought forward, but we do respect the right of this independent member to debate this issue in the House. It's his choice to do so, and this is the choice that he's exercising.

We do believe—I suppose, unlike the members opposite, based on the speech from the member for St. Norbert we just heard—we do believe that members of this House have the right to come forward and debate issues that they feel strongly about and that they care about, and every member's concern should be taken seriously and given the respect that each member of this Legislature—we are all honourable members—deserves. And every member has the right to advocate not for themselves—not for themselves—Mr. Deputy Speaker, but for their constituents.

Now, much like Joni Mitchell, I've looked at life from both sides now as former government House leader, now as the opposition whip, but also a period of time where I had my own opportunity to contemplate what life as an independent member of this House might look like.

And I want to make it very clear that the member is complaining about certain rules of this House, certain practices of this House, certain privileges of the House which in some situations may, in his view, not give independent members as much as he wants, but in other ways, which the member for St. Norbert did touch upon, actually

gives independent members more rights than other members of this House.

And the member for St. Norbert did touch upon a couple of those. I want to talk about just a couple.

We know that the member for Maples has the same constituency allowance as every other member of this House. He has the same ability to hire staff for his constituency office or have them work here at the Legislature as he wishes. He has the same mailing allowance. He can mail out three pieces to every single constituent in his riding. He has the same right to advertise, the same ability to do all the things as any other member of this House.

* (11:30)

As I've said, there are some rules that actually give independent members more rights than members of various caucuses. And, of course, we have a—certain rules now which allow the government of the day to allow bills to be passed and to move on at certain times. And this Progressive Conservative government has shown its willingness to game those rules, to try to limit debate on bills that are important to us as opposition members—perhaps even to their own members as constituents—and insist on certain rules then coming into play.

And we know that if the government fails to call a bill for second reading before a deadline, certain rules then apply on a certain date. And at that time, the minister gives a 10-minute speech, one member of the opposition caucus is entitled to give a 10-minute speech, yet every single independent member of this House is entitled to give a 10-minute speech.

Not only does the member for Maples have more rights than the—12 of the 13 members of the opposition caucus, the member for Maples actually has more rights than 37 of the 38 government members. And I would point out to the member for Maples he has the same right as any member of this House to ask written questions. And indeed, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) has taken advantage of that, and has some—asked some—frankly, some very good questions of the government, and we'll all be looking forward to the answers that will be uncovered from that.

We know, and it was pointed out, and—believe the question from the member for Kildonan (Mr. Curry)—that the member for Maples has an absolute right to have a private members' resolution debated in this House. There are 25—I think, by my

count—25 back-bench members of the government caucus and only 14 or 15 of them, I believe, will have the opportunity to have a private members' resolution debated in each session.

So again, I know the member for Maples has the right—and I do respect his right to bring this forward, and I don't want to minimize or belittle the strong feelings of the member for Maples. The fact is though, that there are rules of this House—they're decisions made by LAMC—there are negotiations that take place that give him as an independent member more than other members of this House from time to time.

So we do take this seriously. We hope that there will be further discussions and further resolutions to give every member the opportunity to fully participate, which the member for Maples, frankly, already has.

I could go—and I could go on a partisan path, as the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes) did until the Deputy Speaker quite rightly called him to order. But I'm not going to do that this morning because I know there are other members who wish to speak—although the one who said he wanted to speak is not listening at the present time, so I will just continue on.

We know that there were timelines used by the government to its own advantage. We know that there was a deadline for bills to be passed if they were brought in by a certain day. And we know that this government brought in eight bills on that very last day with the sole purpose of reducing the amount of debate. In fact, most—some of these bills were not even called for any debate until the time period that I said had expired.

But those are the rules. There are things that I think we can do to improve those things. I know the clerks have ideas coming forward for what we can do, and I believe we've already agreed the rules committee will meet this fall to see if there's ways

that we can better govern the way we do things in this House.

It is a rule that the government has the right to govern. And the House rules provide that over time, the government can always be guaranteed of having a vote on its legislative agenda. And that is done in such a way to allow the opposition time to leave more time for the debate of certain bills and more time for the public to become engaged. And we know—we're seeing that now, with more than 150 people very worried about Bill 30. And that's the way that it should work.

So I'm going to cede the rest of my time so that other members can speak to this resolution. Again, we don't necessarily agree with the member for Maples, but we do truly respect his right to stand up and make that argument in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Can I ask precisely how much time I have?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Approximately a minute.

Mr. Gerrard: Okay. Thank you.

I think one of the things that's important to say is that there's been actually a tremendous amount of progress in the rights of independent members, and partly as a result of the rule changes from last year. But I think that what's happening now is we need to pay more attention to that.

As we look at independent members, there has been a tradition that independent members have opportunities, but there's also been a recognition that where you have an independent member—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for River Heights has approximately nine minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 p.m., the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

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