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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 13, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

*PRAYERS***ORDERS OF THE DAY****PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to canvass the House and see if there is leave to deal with Bill 212 this morning.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to deal with Bill 212? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**Bill 212—The Pension Freedom Act
(Pension Benefits Act Amended)**

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou), that Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act (Pension Benefits Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: It brings me great pleasure to put a few comments on the record in regard to Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act, a bill that is long overdue in coming, a necessary bill that deals with an issue that has been a concern to many seniors in our province. It is an issue that has been developing over the years as people start to head into their retirement years and find out that, if they are in a defined contribution plan, upon retirement they are allowed to take 6 percent of their pension per year. There are very few avenues to get any further money out. I believe they are allowed one or two emergency draws of a little bit more than 6 percent, but basically their money is locked in.

Over the last couple of years, we have been approached by many seniors, thousands, whether through e-mail, whether it be by letter, by phone call, and certainly having met them have indicated to us

that this is a problem for them. We have heard in a lot of instances where individuals either had to go and take out a second mortgage, had to go borrow money to be able to facilitate a sudden illness. In some instances, we heard cases of a loved one had passed away, whether it was an emergency house repair or if it was a vehicle, and as we know, the first 10 years of retirement are the first 10 heaviest draws on a person's pension and thereafter it goes down on a sliding scale.

* (10:05)

So the first 10 years tend to be difficult. That is when there is a need for that money and yet the most they were allowed was 6 percent. In fact, there is one individual, John Klassen, who has gone on the record on numerous occasions, raised the issue with the Premier (Mr. Doer) outside, saying that he would have to live a little bit more than 120 years before he would be able to draw out his entire pension.

We know that that is not reasonable. In fact it is a punishment for those individuals who have taken a lot of time, sat down and looked at what their needs will be when they retire. There is a misnomer about all this. You are allowed to invest your own money in a defined contribution plan, which means that you put the money in and you decide where to invest it. But then, upon retirement, you have no say in how much money you are allowed to take out. In other words, you are qualified to take care of all the investments, but you are just not allowed to touch more than 6 percent a year after that.

Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act, deals with that situation. We believe it is an idea a long time in coming and we know that it has a lot of support across Manitoba and we believe it has a lot of support in this Chamber. I believe and certainly my leader, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray), and my fellow colleagues believe it is important to debate it here in this Legislature. But even more important is that this bill go to committee and we give all of those Manitobans who are affected an opportunity to come forward. Let us hear the debate.

The Premier has quoted all kinds of sources to the contrary of this bill. Let us hear them. Let us

have them come out and make their case because this is an important issue. Saskatchewan has moved ahead on it; Alberta and British Columbia are supposed to move ahead on it. If we do not deal with this, Manitobans before they are going to retire will move to other jurisdictions, retire there and then free up their pension. Again it is just a loss to Manitoba, not just in population but in tax dollars afterwards when those monies are withdrawn.

I would encourage this House to have a good look at the bill. It is time to pass this legislation; it is long overdue. Let us have a debate in this House. I know members opposite in the NDP caucus are waiting to get up and speak, so I will keep my comments short. Let us have a debate on this and let us move it on to committee and see what Manitobans have to say about this.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I would like to put a few words on the record, obviously, in support of, I believe, a very important bill, Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act that was introduced to this House by the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

I believe that it is a very important bill and I hope that the Government will agree to support this bill because, Mr. Speaker, I think it really sets out a principle of what we do as legislators in this House. Regardless of what political stripe is the government of the day, there is always a belief that you bring forward legislation hopefully to correct something that may have been wrong in the past, or alternatively, something that will address an issue that has not been addressed for some time.

Clearly, the issue of some seniors experiencing the fact that in their retirement age they have to deal with pensions that are locked in is really a punishment against them. It is not something that they believe helps to serve their purpose in their golden years as they retire. They want to have the ability to control their own income on an annualized basis. I think all of us in this House would agree that that is the right thing to do. It should not be locked in so that they can only access around 6 percent of their pension.

So we believe on this side of the House that it is important because we have listened to Manitobans. We have listened to them on this issue. It is an issue of great importance, and I was delighted to have the

opportunity to have this issue brought forward to my attention by Mr. Peter Long and Sabina Long, Mr. Speaker, two constituents of mine who referenced the Saskatchewan legislation that was a couple of years ago. I understand that it was introduced in the Legislature by an NDP government.

The Saskatchewan Party, I believe, supported it and it went through very quickly with a few people speaking on it, but it passed through their legislature very, very quickly.

* (10:10)

I would hope that we should move this to committee as soon as we possibly can because I think that Manitobans want this to go through, and it is an opportunity for the public, particularly those seniors who are affected by locked-in pensions, to have the ability to come forward and express their support for The Pension Freedom Act.

Amending our act would do two things. It would amend the current Pension Benefits Act to enable a person to replace a pension benefit with a registered retirement savings plan or a registered retirement income fund that is not locked in. It would also provide that a person who elects to transfer their pension benefits to a life-income fund or other prescribed arrangement may subsequently choose to make withdrawals of money from that fund or arrangement.

We know that there has been some mention from the government side that they would be looking at something, perhaps in 2005. We do not think that is soon enough. We think that when you hear people like the Longs, Mr. Long who took early retirement because his wife has Parkinson's disease. They want to spend time together, but because his pension is locked in, there is an issue about affordability of drugs for them. We think that The Pension Freedom Act addresses Mr. Long's case as well as thousands of other Manitobans out there who are frustrated under the current government's situation of having their pension locked in.

We, on this side of the House, as I say, I reference the honourable Member for Springfield who introduced this private member's bill, Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act. We hope that we can refer this to the committee of the House so that all Manitobans have a chance to come forward to give

their recommendation that, ultimately we hope, the Government will adopt, and we hope that we can move this process forward.

I just wanted to put a few words on the record of encouragement to the Doer government to do the right thing, Mr. Speaker, to support Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act, so that those seniors who are experiencing locked-in pensions will have the ability, as their own, it is their money, to decide what their annual income is. We believe that is the right thing to do. I look forward to comments from committee, and we look forward to what we hope will be passage of Bill 212, which is The Pension Freedom Act.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in debate in regard to Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act. It amends The Pension Benefits Act.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important piece of legislation to many Manitobans, not only ones that are approaching retirement in the next couple of years but even those of us at my age who are looking to the future and wanting to have the flexibility within the monies that we have set aside. Personally, I am not a member or individual that has a defined contribution plan, but there are many that do. Those that participate in accordance with the co-op, the mutual insurance companies, as well as the credit unions, all of those individuals are contributing to this style of plan which effectively needs and would be modified by this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Government, in debate, upon introduction and questioning, stated on the record that they support needed change in the current Pension Benefits Act to allow for more flexibility. I believe members opposite would like to see this type of legislation go forward. In fact, they spoke, as did the minister responsible for this particular act on the government side of the House, in questioning, that she would like to see more public consultation before decisions are made. Seeing that she is in support of further public consultation, what better way to seek that out, that public consultation, than to see this piece of legislation go forward to committee, Mr. Speaker, allowing the public to participate and to put on the record their need for changes to the legislation.

*(10:15)

Mr. Speaker, I know we spoke of individuals that need some of their pension monies in order to provide for medication or supports for health conditions and wanting to have the quality of life in their retirement that they have experienced earlier in their lives, but if they are not able to get the medications or supports that they need, then that quality of life is significantly diminished. What good then is it to have all of the money stashed away for that retirement period when one does not have the quality of life in order to enjoy those fruits of their labour all through their working careers?

Mr. Speaker, in other considerations, when one retires, one also wants to change lifestyles a little bit from the working years and perhaps afford oneself a condominium or a cottage at the lake or a second home in perhaps a little sunnier clime as some people have done, whether it be Mexico or a Caribbean Island or perhaps southern U.S. If one is unable to access pension monies, then this is not available. Why would one want to have to go out and borrow money so that the large banks can take advantage through interest rates and service charges when those same banks have all of our retirement monies. I mean, they are hitting us twice. Why then, in that particular situation, would the Government stand and say that this is the right thing to do?

I know members opposite are concerned as well. Their party counterparts in Saskatchewan indeed passed this type of legislation. I know that they look to Saskatchewan for their lead in many areas of legislation, and I would like to see that trend continue in this regard.

I know, Mr. Speaker, my time is short this morning, but I do support this legislation, and I would like to see this go forward. I know the government side of the House would like to see it go forward as well.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in the House and speak to Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act, and I am disappointed that we have not heard comments from members opposite, members of the New Democratic Party. Clearly this does not seem to be an issue of importance to them. They do not want to speak to this issue. They do not seem to value the concerns that have been coming in, the many, many faxes and the many, many calls that have been coming in through members who are seniors, people from

credit unions throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. It is disappointing that members opposite, members of the NDP do not seem to want to listen to the concerns of Manitobans on such an important issue as their pension.

I would like to give credit to the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), give credit to the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), who has been very much a driving force in bringing forward this bill and responding to the concerns that have been raised by seniors in Manitoba, by employees of credit unions throughout the province. I would like to give recognition as well to the many, many people in my own area, the many seniors who have written me concerned about the fact that they cannot access their pension, the portion that they have paid in.

Some of them are experiencing hardship. Some of them just simply believe that it is their money and that they should have access to the money that they have saved over the years. They have been good stewards of their money, and I would say that residents of the Steinbach constituency generally are very, very good stewards of their funds. They save for emergencies. They save for their retirement and they do it very diligently, knowing that there will be a time when they will need that money.

* (10:20)

I think it has come as a surprise to many of them who are now in this locked-in pension plan that, when it is time for them to either access the money out of need or simply because they are at that time of their lives where they want to do some of the things they have saved for, for these many years, Mr. Speaker, after working and having contributed to our great economy in Manitoba, they want to access that money in their golden years and use it as they wish, they cannot.

I think that that has come as a surprise to many, many people. In fact, I have had, I would say, over 200 to 300 letters just from credit union employees within my area and many from the Steinbach Credit Union who have written me and expressed their concerns that those employees are also in this plan and cannot seem to access their money.

Of course, many of the individuals who work at the Steinbach Credit Union and credit unions across the constituency are in the business of money

management. I think that there is an irony there. They spend each of their days trying to coach people in terms of how to invest for their future, how to ensure that they will have money in their future and how to invest that money wisely. While they do that for a living, now the Government, the Big Brother NDP, the Premier (Mr. Doer), who thinks he knows better than everybody else, steps in and puts up his hand and says, "No, no, I know better than you do in terms of your pension. I am going to stop you from using the pension that you have accumulated through stewardship and through good money management."

I would say to the members opposite that I have a great deal more trust in the employees that have written me from the Steinbach Credit Union and other institutions to manage money than I do for any member on the government side for money management. We have seen how they manage money. We have seen how the rainy day fund has been depleted over the last number of years. We see how Crown corporations have been raided for money, and then what happens?

Now, when they look at somebody else in the province, they look at individuals who have done their diligence and saved for their retirement. They point their finger at them and say, "Well, we know better than you in terms of managing your pension. We know better than you in terms of managing your money."

I say what a strange position for the Government opposite who has run up deficits over the last four years, who, according to the Auditor General, put the books in the red for the last four years, to have the nerve, to have the audacity to stand up in this House and say, "We know better than those people who have spent years saving for their pensions, those people who have done their jobs in terms of making sure they have money for their future."

So I think members opposite need to take a look in the mirror, to examine this particular position and ask themselves why they think they know better than other individuals who have done a good job of saving for their future. Why do they think that they know better and that they should be the Big Brother in this scenario and rule over with an iron fist how other people use their own money? If it is purely ideology, and I suspect that it is among members of the New Democratic Party, I think they need to give their collective heads a shake and realize that this is

not what is good for Manitobans. It is not right and it is not fair.

In conclusion, I do want to encourage members of the NDP to stand up and speak to this issue. They all sit in their chairs there and are not paying much attention to the comments that are happening from members on this side almost as though they do not care. If they do not care, I say shame on them because there are many, many Manitobans whose lives are being affected day after day after day because of this uncaring government.

I would like to, again, thank the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) for bringing forward this important initiative and also thank the many, many residents of the Steinbach constituency who have contacted me through phone calls and letters. I appreciate their concerns. We work on behalf of all Manitobans unlike members on the other side.

* (10:25)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I am very pleased to speak today to Bill 212. You know, it is good to see that the Conservatives are continuing to support their friends, the big banks, the big brokerage houses. We remember what they did with MTS when they turned over public assets at half the value so their friends in the brokerage houses could make big commissions. They sold the telephone system at \$13 a share, lent the people who bought the shares half of that, and now the shares are worth \$35 a share. That is their approach to public assets. Now what they want to do is they want to turn over the seniors' accounts of this province to the investment dealers so that they can encourage the seniors to invest with them, to buy some Nortel, to buy other stocks. Why do you think we have the pension rules we have right now? We have them there to protect the investments of the seniors so that they have money for their whole retirement.

I listened with interest to the Member for Springfield when he described that defined pension funds, it is allowed that the locked-in money can be withdrawn at 6 percent a year. He talked about special cases, that special cases can be made. I do not see anything wrong with that. That is flexibility right there. There is flexibility in these plans. If anything, at the very most, I could see opening the door slightly, just a little bit, for maybe a medical usage. But to open it up so they can buy cottages, as the

Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) is advocating, it is unbelievable. He does not really know what the pension system is all about, what pensions are really for.

Mr. Speaker, this is not some toy for the investment community to make more profits, to make more money churning accounts, and I am really surprised that the credit union is so upfront about this. I do not see the banks driving the issue. I do not see the investment houses right to the fore, even though they are the people who are going to benefit the most at the end of the day. The credit unions are heavily involved in this issue.

But, nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I am waiting to hear from people who support the status quo. I have to admit that they have a populist issue here. They have been driving it for all it is worth. But the other side is going to come to the fore, which is why I support this bill to get it into committee and allow people to come forward. I think, over time, we will see people will come to the fore, will make the presentations, and will support not necessarily 100 percent the current system but certainly not what the member's bill is advocating on the other side. I want to know what he is going to do, what that caucus is going to say five years, six years, ten years down the road when we have got a tremendous amount of citizens coming back to us who have no pension funds left, who have, maybe, mishandled the money, maybe through no fault of their own.

You know, in markets, the real estate market right now is a good example of a market that is not operating on any rational basis. People are over-paying for houses. People are not putting the cautionary restrictions on their offers that they should be because they know, if they do, the vendor will just take one without any conditions. We know with this kind of heated market what happens when it shakes out in two or three years when it busts, and we have all these people with overpriced houses, and they are walking away because the interest rates are high and they cannot afford to make their payments because they are unemployed and the economy goes down. Then, as politicians, we are sitting here having to pick up the pieces of that hot economy. What these people want to do is they want to create that. I am talking about what we have to do to respond to a market that is already out there, the investment market of a couple of years ago, the real estate market today.

But you are talking about creating a problem. You want to actually help it along. You want to create a problem that currently does not exist. This is not as severe a problem as you want to make it out to be. So I want to caution the members that they perhaps need a little bit more time from the Saskatchewan plan to see how many people actually do come back to the Government without any pension benefits, looking for social assistance, in the long run. In addition, too, you have to recognize that if a person has the flexibility of taking out all their pension funds, then what happens to the annuity market?

* (10:30)

Currently, the insurance companies will give a payment based on how much money is in the fund, but if you are (a) not prepared to lock your money in for a long period of time, and (b) if you do not have a lot of money there to begin with, what are your chances of getting any kind of annuity that pays out a good monthly payment? They are just not going to exist.

So you are really, really taking some chances here, and I hope you are going to be prepared at the end of the day to live up to the negative aspects of what you are advocating. But, of course, you will not take responsibility; you are going to blame the Government. If things do not go right at the end of the day, you are going to walk away and say, "Oh, but you know, it was the Government that did it. We did not really believe all those things we said. We just made it up as we went along. You know, it sounded like a good argument at the time, so we just went ahead and made it. It is that rotten government over there that went ahead and opened up these funds and we didn't, we weren't there to protect the seniors who got mixed up in bad investment deals. You know, once again, that is the Government's fault."

So, it is great when you are in opposition. You can have it all ways. You can make irresponsible statements. You can say one thing in the morning and the opposite in the afternoon and get away with it, and this is what you are—

An Honourable Member: Your NDP friends brought this in, in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Maloway: Now the member wants me to get off course here, but I am not going to do that. I am not

going to do that, Mr. Speaker, but the Premier (Mr. Doer) the other day mentioned that there were some statistics available from England when pensions were deregulated a couple of years back when Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister.

There are some, evidently, negative statistics coming out of that system. I think we have to look at that, we have to look at that option and see what the history is there. I do not know whether the members opposite did much research in this area before they went and proposed this bill. They are jumping on Saskatchewan.

The leader was not even sure when the Saskatchewan bill was introduced, but they only have two years, in Saskatchewan, of experience on this issue, so perhaps we should leave this for a little bit longer period to more fully assess the positives and negatives of what has come out of the Saskatchewan experience, so that we should not be just rushing headlong into this proposal.

So, once again, I think that the Opposition should spend a little time looking at what pensions are all about in the first place, what the pension is there for. The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurchou), especially, really fails to understand what the pension system is all about in the first place, that it is not designed to be cashed in to be buying cottages.

That is not the reason for it. That is tantamount to the real estate market being given a bit of incentive about 10 years ago allowing people to take money out of their RRSPs for down payments on houses. I mean, it did not make a whole lot of sense at that time, and we are mixing up pension issues. Pensions are designed to be there for the whole entire life of the individual.

The last thing you want is to be 80 years old and have no pension money available, and if you follow what the Opposition are advocating here, you are going to see increasing numbers of older people in their seventies, in their eighties with no money because they bought cottages when they were 65 years old, rather than retiring with all their money intact.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I think we have just seen in this House a clear demonstration of what it is like to be a socialist and what it is to be

an entrepreneur and what it is to have the rights and freedoms of individual decision-making compared to what it is to collective decision-making. I think the honourable member has just demonstrated what their philosophies in the NDP party really are, and I think we have seen a true display today of the difference between the Tory party and the NDP party in allowing individuals rights and freedoms of personal decision making.

Mr. Speaker, I think what the honourable member forgets is that these funds that are collected in employee pension funds are there because they were contributed by individuals into those funds and matched by employers. Those funds are then set aside for the retirement ages.

But this member clearly has demonstrated that he and his party, the NDP party, simply do not believe that individuals at the age of 55, 60 or 65 would have the ability to make decisions on their own to take their money, invest it in whatever funds or pensionability kind of vehicles that are there on their own, that they could make that decision on their own. They believe it must be done by government control, and therein lies the difference between our philosophies and the NDP philosophies.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this bill really gives the right to those people that have worked all their lives and have put money aside all their lives into a special fund that, when they retire, they were under the impression that they would then be able to use those funds to support themselves in their retirement, that they would have the right to make the decision what to do with that money when they retire.

The honourable Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) clearly has demonstrated how truly he believes that those people do not have the ability when they retire to make decisions for themselves, to make the decisions where those funds should be invested, how they should be invested, and what those people would have the right to do. I would suspect that the NDP party is finally, truly showing its colours. Not only in this piece of legislation, they are truly showing their colours in a number of other pieces of legislation.

I think we have The Water Rights Act, we have The Municipal Planning Act, and many of those other bills we have just seen the minister announce,

that they are going to hire 28 more policemen to police the agricultural community. That is very clear, and I think that is going to be layered on top of the federal policemen that we have running around the province under our oceans and fisheries.

Clearly, it is control, control, control. We believe that people should have the rights to make their own decisions, especially with those monies that they have put aside, put into special funds over the years of their employment. At retirement, if those people choose to draw on those funds, it is their money. It is not government's money and government should not control it. So we say, those people should have the right to withdraw those funds invested and invest it in vehicles that they choose and have it drawn on their own terms or be able to draw on them because they are private funds. They are not government contributions, they are not Canada Pension Plans, and those kind of vehicles. These are privately owned pension funds contributed to by individuals and by the employers, and when they retire they should have the right to those monies and should have the right to invest those monies the way those individuals see fit, that will last them their lifetime and give them the kind of life that they choose during their retirement years.

* (10:40)

I think each and every one of us that is close to that age or reaches that age appreciates what this member is trying to do with Bill 212, and I would truly hope that the NDP would support this bill, truly recognize that we are still in a democratic society, that we still believe in giving the individuals the right to make decisions. So I support this bill, and I hope all members in the NDP government will support this bill as well.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few short words on the record in regard to supporting this bill, Bill 212, The Pension Freedom Act, which was introduced by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

Through my career here in politics, I have been closely associated with a lot of the seniors groups, previously in the government as Minister responsible for Seniors, and as now critic in opposition in my party right now. I have, over the years, got to know quite a few seniors, quite a few seniors' groups, and I know that this issue of pension reform is something

that has been very, very high on their agenda as to what they have been asking for.

We have been lobbied very, very heavily by the seniors in this particular area that have pensions that are locked in. In fact, I think it is around 180 000 people that are affected by the pension rules that are in existence right now here in Manitoba. So they are looking for some sort of breathing room, if you want to call it, Mr. Speaker. They are looking for the ability to access these pension funds so that they can enjoy some of the qualities of life that they want to enjoy now that they are retired and they are able to maybe look at things in a different light, whether it is to have something, possibly medication that they maybe need, or some sort of programming that they may be looking at.

We think that it is very, very commendable that they launched a letter-writing campaign, and I am sure that members from the Government received just as many letters as we received from our constituents in regard to trying to bring some sort of change or an attitude of recognition by the government of the day to change these pension restrictions. This same type of action was taken in Saskatchewan. We referred to that in some of my colleagues' speeches as to the changes that have happened in Saskatchewan. They have not seen any type of great adverse reaction to the changes that happened in Saskatchewan. It made it happen, in a sense, that there was the ability for people to draw on some of their pension.

We have to look at this as a situation where government should not be the controlling factor as to how people think, how people act, and how people want to plan their life. There is a role for government, and we agree with that in some certain incidences. But in the ability for people to have a quality of life that they worked very, very hard for, they have saved for, they looked forward to retirement, if you want to call it, in a sense of doing some of the things that they may have forgone during their life when they were raising a family or putting their children through school, or paying off their bills and their mortgages, their homes, and the situations they found themselves in with debts, and now they have come to a point in their life where they want to enjoy it. Unfortunately, some of these people have hit some problems, possibly with their health conditions, and they need maybe additional funding for some of the health crises that have come along, and they cannot get at their money.

We have heard of stories where people have had to literally sell their homes, mortgage them, too, so that they can get an access to funding so that they can get by with quality of life and the medication that is required for certain diseases. These are very, very tragic situations. They do not have to do that if they could access partial or all of their funds in regard to their locked-in pension.

So, Mr. Speaker, the advocacy that has been brought forth by our party to try to make this Government look at this in a very, very realistic manner and be proactive, it is a very, very innocuous type of addition to The Pension Benefits Act. All it does is enable the person to replace a pension benefit with a Registered Retirement Savings Plan or a Registered Retirement Income Fund that is not locked in.

The bill, also, further provides that a person who transfers his or her pension benefits to a life income fund or other prescribed arrangement may later withdraw monies from the fund or the arrangement. It is very innocuous. It is a minor amendment, in a sense, to the bill but at the same time it is a huge difference to the people that are finding themselves in need of the ability to make decisions regarding their money.

So I think, with those short words, I know there are other members of the Government who would like to speak to this.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 212. We, the Manitoba Liberal Party, would support very much this bill going into committee. We see tremendous merit in terms of having public input. We have received a great deal of correspondence, a high level of interest from Manitobans, regarding this particular issue and we want to be able to respond to the need for change. We recognize that there is a need for change.

In listening to the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) I believe was the one that was speaking, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), from her seat, said, "Well, this is not a savings account."

Then we had the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) stand up and talk about how this bill was all about supporting the big banks and questioning whether or not a senior's account should even be

turned over to investors, Mr. Speaker, that members of the Opposition are being irresponsible is what they are referring to.

These types of comments, whether it is from the seat or from a member of the Government standing up, cause individuals such as myself to have grave concerns. There is a need for significant change. We have a province, in Saskatchewan, that has opened it up. I can tell the Government I have had individuals, at least two people, one of them that came by McDonald's and said, "Look, Kevin, I am not going to stick around in Manitoba if Manitoba is not going to look at what is happening outside of the province," that they are prepared to leave the province over this issue.

Mr. Speaker, this particular individual, I believe, has a lot to be able to contribute to our province well into the future. I can tell you I have had over a dozen letters regarding this issue. I have had phone calls regarding this issue.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue which Manitobans want Government to pay more attention to. It is really disheartening hearing some of the comments. I was surprised when the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) had indicated that this is not a savings account we are talking about.

I think we have to have more faith and trust in our seniors, in them knowing what it is they want to be able to do with the funds that they actually contributed. They are the ones who stockpiled those funds. I do not think the Government is doing a service to Manitobans by having a closed mind on the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I would appeal to the Government, if they are not prepared to look more into what Saskatchewan and other provinces are doing, at the very least consider what Ontario has done. I know the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) did open the crack, albeit a little, but he did open the crack on that. As opposed to hearing it from me, this is a correspondence that was sent to me and they are referring to the Ontario legislation, and it says under the regulations in Ontario there are six circumstances where an individual may apply to withdraw money from the lock-in plan due to economic hardship. I do believe, Mr. Speaker, there is merit for it, and it lists off six. I will not list the entire six but—

An Honourable Member: Why not?

* (10:50)

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, the Member for Elmwood is requesting that I do. I will list the six of them.

Mr. Speaker, these are the ones which I think have a phenomenal amount of merit: to avoid eviction due to a creditor's claim secured on the property of the owner; to avoid eviction for rent owing by parties noted above; to pay first and last month's rent; to pay for medical expenses of parties or dependant noted above; to renovate a property to accommodate a personal illness or a disability or parties noted above.

Those last two points, I think the Member for Elmwood did at least open the door to. I think, Mr. Speaker, if you have someone that has been put into a situation in which maybe their mobility is not where it could be or where they would like it to be, so they want to put in some safety measures, make their home a little bit more user-friendly, if I can use that term, for them to be able to access that, I do not see a problem with it.

I see that as wonderful and that is why I am glad to see the Member for Elmwood at least left the window open on that. The sixth point was to increase a low income if the expected person's income before taxes for the next 12 months is less than the sum of \$27,000 in the year 2004-03-15. That would be, I guess, March 15.

Mr. Speaker, one could debate in terms of what that threshold might be, but the point is that we find that there are seniors that are quite often put in a position in which they need to be able to have more money coming out in order to have a better lifestyle.

So, even if the Government says no outright to Saskatchewan, I would hope and trust that the Government would be open to having some sort of modification made to the act that would at least allow them to have more access to those funds. This Big Brother mentality or that socialistic mentality is what really offends me and I believe offends so many people.

I am concerned, as I started off, when I hear people that are saying that it is in our best interest to leave the province, Mr. Speaker, because of an issue

of this nature. I think that there are other things that we can be doing, that the Government does need to approach this issue with a more open mind, and that is why we believe the Government needs to allow this bill to go to committee so that we can hear firsthand as MLAs what the public have to say on this.

I would appeal to the Premier (Mr. Doer) and especially to the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) to have more of an open mind regarding this issue and we trust that this bill will go to committee. With those few words, in conclusion, we want this bill to go to committee and ask for the Government, if they are not going to speak on it, to allow it to go to committee even as early as today.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I move, seconded by the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Government House Leader, I believe there may be agreement to bring forward Bill 300 at this point in time. After some rather brief consultations with the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach), I believe that may be acceptable. Certainly if the Liberal member would be agreeable, we could then move to this bill, which was scheduled to be discussed later on this morning. We can, I think, bring it forward.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to revert back to second reading of Bill 300? Is there agreement in the House? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 300—The Winnipeg Foundation Act

Mr. Speaker: So now I will call Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick).

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Act; Loi sur la Fondation dénommée "The Winnipeg

Foundation", be now read a second time and referred to a committee of the House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), seconded by the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

Ms. Brick: The Winnipeg Foundation is Canada's oldest community foundation, established in 1921. It is Canada's second largest community foundation with current assets under administration of approximately \$321 million in more than 1500 different endowment and managed funds established by donors who now number in the thousands from all walks of life.

All funds held at the Winnipeg Foundation are pooled and invested, and the income earned, Mr. Speaker, is distributed as grants that support community projects.

The foundation maintains the purchasing power of funds entrusted to it, achieving the maximum returns consistent with prudent investment and ensuring sound financial management practices. It approved grants to more than 500 different charitable organizations of \$13.6 million in 2003, and during its more than eight decades of history, the foundation has distributed more than \$125 million to charitable organizations in our community.

The foundation makes grants based upon a needs assessment to local and national registered charities in the areas, Mr. Speaker, of arts, culture, heritage, community service, education, health, recreation and the environment.

The current members of the board of the Winnipeg Foundation include Chief Justice Richard Scott; Board Chair, Gregg Hanson; Treasurer, Dr. June James; Bill Norrie, Gerald Reimer, Justice Guy Kroft, Sister Lesley Sacouman, Lawrie Pollard, plus the Mayor of the City of Winnipeg and the Chief Executive Officer, of course, is Richard Frost.

The Winnipeg Foundation is seeking to replace its existing act with new and proposed legislation that is before the House. The reasons for these changes, and the reason that the act is before the

House, include: a restructuring of the existing act for both ease of reading and reference; modernization of outdated or antiquated language carried forward from previous versions of its act; the adding of additional powers—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 12 minutes remaining. Is there will of the House for the member to continue to finish and then the second hour we will deal with resolutions? Is that the will of the House? *[Agreed]*

* (11:00)

Ms. Brick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the members of the House for leave.

—required by the board of a large charitable foundation in order to allow it to carry out its duties and responsibilities in accordance with current marketing requirements.

Also, it is important to take into account present-day requirements with regard to investment and expertise and the formal ability to delegate these powers to obtain high quality professional advice.

The existing act refers to an investment standard that was statutorily repealed more than 10 years ago. The clarification of the foundation's position in managing funds entrusted to it by other charitable and non-profit organizations. This is most often employed to be of assistance to smaller organizations that do not have the expertise or size of asset base to make effective investments with their funds. Based upon the economies of scale, the foundation is able to invest in a much wider range of investments, both fixed income and equities, while being charged a smaller investment management fee due to the amount of the total assets being managed and to generally modernize the corporate governance of the foundation, including the potential for a larger number of directors, the making of by-laws and other matters that are generally undertaken in the running of a corporation.

The bill was modelled on the newer acts of the Vancouver Foundation, passed in 2000, and the Calgary Foundation, also passed in 2000, both of which were modernized and modified and their acts

have been changed. These are the two community foundations in Canada that are closest in terms of size, being first and third largest in Canada respectfully to that of the Winnipeg Foundation. While the bill was changed quite a bit during the drafting process with Legislative Counsel, the substance intent remains the same in regard to the two acts.

The following is a brief summary of the more important changes: The language has been changed so that it is more updated and it reflects current contemporary standards. Another change is that it has increased the maximum number of board members from nine to twelve which provides greater flexibility, community representation and the number of individuals has been increased to deal with the greater complexities of a larger organization. Mr. Speaker, circumstances when a board member will cease to be a member on the board is reflected in clause 3. Old powers are replaced; the new provision begins by providing that the foundation has the capacity, rights, powers and privileges that would normally be accorded to a natural person.

A reference is made in the existing act to the Canadian and British Insurance Companies Act, which was repealed years ago. Mr. Speaker, this has been replaced by the notion of an investment policy that is consistent with the requirements set out in The Trustee Act in Manitoba. New provisions also reflect the current practice of the board in applying a fixed percentage of assets under administration, distribution and in determining the amount of funds to be distributed in each year as opposed to the notion of an actual income.

The powers of the board are also replaced, but not without any substantive changes in content. The old clauses 9.4 and 9.5 are repealed and they will be replaced. Substantively, Mr. Speaker, this foundation is still very much the same and the act is very similar to what it was before. What is happening with this revision is that we are going to be having current practices much more accurately reflected in the new act.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I move, seconded by the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 2—Aboriginal Veteran Thomas George Prince

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move on to private members' resolutions.

Resolution No. 2, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), Aboriginal Veteran Thomas George Prince.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), the following resolution:

WHEREAS Aboriginal soldiers have served in the military since the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, seldom receiving the recognition for their years of service; and

WHEREAS the service often resulted in the loss of treaty and Aboriginal rights and alienation from the Aboriginal community; and

WHEREAS Thomas George Prince was one such individual who voluntarily went beyond the required duties of soldier to receive 10 medals, including the Military Medal and the U.S. Silver Star for his efforts in the Second World War and the Korean War; and

WHEREAS Mr. Prince was the most decorated Aboriginal soldier in Canadian history; and

WHEREAS Mr. Prince went on to fulfil roles as a lobbyist, leader and advocate for treaty and Aboriginal rights in his life, becoming actively involved in the struggle for increased opportunities for Aboriginal people, he also fought for improved access to public schools and for education of Aboriginal children; and

WHEREAS sadly, like many Aboriginal soldiers, upon returning from action, Sergeant Prince found many doors closed to him and had a difficult life; and

WHEREAS the family of Thomas George Prince raised funds from various sources to purchase medals at an auction so they may be placed at the Manitoba Museum as part of a permanent display which opened in September 2003; and

WHEREAS, through the efforts of private citizens, the memory of Sergeant Prince has been commemorated by a bronze plaque, three murals, and a stone memorial at the corner of Selkirk Avenue and Sergeant Tommy Prince School in Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS many plans are underway for the creation of a Thomas Prince Memorial Park on Flora Avenue in Winnipeg;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba congratulate the people of the Brokenhead First Nation, home community of Sergeant Prince, and Sergeant Prince's family on their successful acquisition of his medals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Legislature thank the Aboriginal groups, private citizens, veterans groups and corporations involved with the establishment of the Sergeant Prince Memorial; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly honour and recognize Thomas George Prince for his contribution and sacrifice to both Canada and to the province of Manitoba; and

BE IT RESOLVED that this Assembly direct the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly to send a copy of this resolution to the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the motion, I just want to confirm with the honourable member, for example, in the—one, two, three, four—fifth paragraph, where it starts off: "WHEREAS Mr. Prince went on to fulfil roles . . ." the word "integrated" was left out by the honourable member.

Also, where it states, "WHEREAS, through the efforts of private citizens, the memory of Sergeant Prince . . ." at the bottom line it should read, I think, anyway, I ask the honourable member, "corner of Selkirk Avenue and Sgt. Tommy Prince Street." The honourable member said "school." So, should that be "street" or "school"?

Also, on the last page on the top line, "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly . . ." "Manitoba" was left out, and also, on the last paragraph, "Be it . . ." "further" was left out. So

would the honourable member wish to have those words included in his resolution?

* (11:10)

Mr. Dewar: Yes, of course I would, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, it has been moved by the honourable Member for Selkirk, seconded by the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale),

WHEREAS Aboriginal—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to be able to rise to present this resolution to the Chamber. I would encourage members of the House if they chose, and I hope some will, to comment on it, and ultimately I encourage all members to accept this resolution.

As I have stated in my opening comments, the Aboriginal soldiers have served in the military since the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, Mr. Speaker, regrettably seldom receiving the recognition that they deserve.

Only recently, the Aboriginal veterans' needs have been seriously addressed at a national level and I want to commend the National Aboriginal Veterans Association for their dedicated work on behalf of Aboriginal veterans. I want to congratulate the local chapter here in Manitoba for the work they have done.

Tommy Prince distinguished himself as one of the bravest, most remarkable soldiers in Canadian history. Mr. Speaker, he was an excellent marksman. He possessed expertise in crossing open country. He had excellent tracking abilities and was known for his leadership qualities, his quick thinking and his initiative.

He was a recipient of 11 medals, including the Military Medal and the American Silver Star. He was one of Canada's most decorated non-commissioned officers.

Thomas George Prince was born in 1915 to Henry and Arabella Prince in Petersfield, Manitoba.

He has been associated with the Brokenhead band just north of Selkirk. He was one of 11 children and he was a direct descendant of Chief Peguis.

In the late 1930s, Aboriginal people in Canada who went to enlist in the Canadian military were often turned down simply because of their race. In fact, Sergeant Prince was turned down many times even though he was well-qualified to be in the military. He was a cadet during his school years and was also an excellent marksman.

Mr. Speaker, he was very determined to be accepted into the army and he persisted and continued to apply for Canadian military service and was finally accepted in 1940 at the age of 24. He took every advantage of the opportunities that came his way in the military and he embarked on a remarkable military career in which he excelled.

He began his overseas service with the First Canadian Corps Field Park Engineers in a guard duty role and was promoted to lance corporal in 1941. In 1942, he was promoted to sergeant and served with the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to Mr. Prince, many Aboriginal servicemen received promotion to non-commissioned ranks because of their demonstrated ability. In sharp contrast to their previous lives, many Aboriginal servicemen taught and led other men during the war years.

Sergeant Prince's quick thinking, initiative and bravery were also qualities that could not be taught. His value to the military was enhanced by the extensive training he received, and as I said, he had excellent marksmanship skills and tracking abilities.

Mr. Speaker, Sergeant Prince was among a group of Canadians who was chosen to train with an American unit of 1600 men who possessed an array of specialist skills. This combined unit was officially designated the 1st Special Service Force and the enemy would know them as the Devil's Brigade, which was a famous brigade in the war.

On one mission in World War II, Prince spent three days reporting activities of a German encampment. His communication line was severed by shelling so he donned civilian clothes, utilized a hoe and in full view of German soldiers, mimicked the local farmer weeding his crops. He slowly inched his

way along the lines until pinpointing the damaged section. While appearing to tie his shoelaces, he repaired the connection, Mr. Speaker. His reporting resumed and more damage to enemy artillery posts resulted. In total, four enemy tanks were destroyed by these special services thanks to the efforts of Sergeant Prince.

For this action, he received the Military Medal and the citation reads, "Sergeant Prince's courage and utter disregard for personal safety were an inspiration to his fellows and a marked credit to his unit."

After the battles in southern France subsided, Sergeant Prince was decorated by King George VI at Buckingham Palace with both the military medal and, on behalf of President Roosevelt, the Silver Star with Ribbon.

Mr. Speaker, could you call for order in this House. I am having a hard time hearing my address. The members are speaking on both sides. Could you call them to order?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members. Decorum is very important and all members need to hear. I also need to hear in case there is a breach of a rule. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Dewar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was mentioning, Sergeant Prince received his Military Medal and his Silver Star from King George VI at Buckingham Palace. His desire was that his achievements reflect glory upon his people, and he never failed to remind fellow soldiers that he was an Indian. He talked about his home reserve when he had the opportunity to receive his medals from King George VI. He did talk about his home reserve and his life back in Canada with the King. Joining him as well at that time was his brother Morris, who was also an Aboriginal soldier in World War II.

Mr. Speaker, two important goals that drove Sergeant Prince throughout the war and afterward were to help his people regain pride in themselves and to gain the respect of all Canadians. Not content with battlefield equity, he strove to be more than equal but not only for himself. Aboriginal veterans fought and lost their lives in three wars and various military actions on behalf of Canada. Many were decorated as heroes, but upon their return home, they

were unable to find the same benefits which other veterans enjoyed. Further, these veterans had to extinguish their Aboriginal rights, preventing them from returning to the communities in which they once lived.

Prince went on to fulfil roles as lobbyist, leader and advocate for treaty and Aboriginal rights in his life becoming actively involved in the struggle for increased opportunities for Aboriginal people. He fought for improved access to the public schools and for the education of Aboriginal children. In 1946, he was elected chairman of the Manitoba Indian Association. He devoted a great deal of time to working with governments to improve the lives of our Aboriginal people.

In 1950 he re-enlisted in the Canadian Army and fought with the UN troops in Korea. He was reinstated to his previous rank of sergeant and he was part of the first Canadian regiment to arrive in the war zone.

Mr. Speaker, he was awarded the United States Presidential Unit Citation for Distinguished Service. Adjusting to civilian life was not easy for Sergeant Prince. With painfully arthritic knees as a result of long, harsh conditions during his military life, his capabilities were limited. Add to that the discrimination against native people and his life became increasingly difficult towards the latter part of his life.

He passed away on November 25, 1977, at the age of 62 at the Deer Lodge Hospital and was interred at the Brookside Cemetery. His family and others raised funds from many sources to purchase his medals at an auction so that they could be on display at the Manitoba Museum. I was pleased to represent our Government at the unveiling of his medals in 2003. I want to congratulate the people of the Brokenhead First Nation, his home community, his family and all the community members who worked hard for their successful acquisition of his medals.

Thomas George Prince has been described as an educator, a lobbyist, a statesman, an entrepreneur and a visionary, and was one of Canada's greatest and most highly decorated Aboriginal soldiers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite all members to join with me in honouring and recognizing this individual.

* (11:20)

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the private members' resolution being presented to us by the honourable member from Selkirk.

Aboriginal people have a long and proud history of service in Canada's military. One of Canada's most decorated soldiers was Tommy Prince, a man born in Manitoba on the Brokenhead First Nation.

Tommy Prince is symbolic of thousands of First Nations men and women who risked their lives so that Canadians and those throughout the world could enjoy the freedoms that most First Nations were being denied at the time.

In 1940, at the age of 24, Tommy Prince voluntarily launched into what would become a distinguished and outstanding military career. He did not hesitate to respond to duty. When a call went out for volunteers, even though First Nations were exempt from war, he joined the Royal Canadian Engineers and was stationed in London for two years. He became a lance corporal in 1941.

He returned to Canada in 1942 and, at the age of 26, joined the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. His natural abilities for taking advantage of cover and being a crack shot enabled him to be among only nine out of a hundred volunteers to gain their jump wings.

The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion then was attached to the American 1st Special Service Force in which Prince wore the American uniform. The unit he joined, the Devil's Brigade, was tagged the best small fighting force ever assembled on the North American continent.

Tommy became a sergeant at the age of 27. Tommy displayed valour, daring and courage. He fought once without sleep or food for 72 hours and was part of a force that saw over 1000 enemy soldiers captured. At the close of the war, Tommy was honourably discharged.

The Americans awarded Prince the Silver Star for his role in the battle that captured the 1000 soldiers. King George VI pinned two medals on

Sergeant Prince in honour of his legendary war efforts.

With the outbreak of the Korean war, Tommy again volunteered. He was now 34. On November 17, 1952, Sergeant Prince led 14 men into enemy territory, and though wounded, still carried a fellow soldier on his shoulders back to base. Again, Prince led the charge. Prince is an outstanding role model for the Aboriginal community. He epitomized the spirit of bravery and was a true warrior.

Back home, however, things were different. Mr. Speaker, there were many First Nations people who volunteered to protect Canada and her citizens during World War I, World War II, as well as in the Korean War. There were so many Aboriginal volunteers for the wars, in fact, Mr. Speaker, it has been written that on a per capita basis the Aboriginal community had more volunteers for the war than any other group in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this is a remarkable contribution for any group to make. We as Aboriginal people everywhere today are proud of what our fathers and our grandfathers did for Canada. Like other groups, Aboriginal people made a supreme sacrifice for their country. Many of our people never came back.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps other Canadians may also not be aware of the fact that in order for First Nations volunteers to be accepted by the Canadian military, they had to relinquish their treaty status. Another fact that other Canadians may not be aware of is that, upon returning from war, Canadian soldiers enjoyed the benefits that the Canadian government was making available.

The returning Aboriginal soldiers received nothing. Other soldiers were able to access housing and land, for example. The Aboriginal veterans were not eligible, even though they had just returned from the war. For some Aboriginal Veterans it was two wars, where they were fighting side by side with other Canadian soldiers who were receiving benefits for their war efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly support this resolution and I humbly ask other members of the House to do likewise.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I would like to put a few comments on

record with respect to the resolution that the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) has brought forward with respect to Thomas George Prince or Tommy Prince, as we refer to him.

Clearly, he was a highly trained soldier, a marksman, an expert at tracking and making his way unseen around the enemy. He gained many of his skills apparently, Mr. Speaker, growing up on the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation reserve north of Winnipeg. I think, for Tommy Prince, like most young men in Canadian Reserves, World War II meant the chance for a job and three square meals a day.

However, Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to note that even at that time when a country was at war that Aboriginals were routinely rejected for health reasons but also because of their race. Tommy was turned down several times despite more than meeting the requirements for recruitment. He persisted and finally was accepted on June 3, 1940. He was assigned to the First Field Park company of the Royal Canadian Engineers. He accepted every single challenge that came his way and he excelled as a soldier.

By 1942, Tommy was a sergeant with the Canadian Parachute Battalion. He was posted to the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion and was among a select group of Canadian soldiers sent to train with an American unit to form a specialized, 1600-man assault team.

They became the 1st Special Service Force or the 1st SSF, known to the enemy as the Devil's Brigade. The name was adopted by Hollywood as a title of a 1968 portrayal of the elite unit. Tommy was portrayed as "Chief."

The 1st SSF soon saw action in Italy. Tommy volunteered to run a communications line 1400 metres to an abandoned farmhouse less than 200 metres from an German artillery emplacement. Tommy set up his observation post in the farmhouse and for three days reported on the activity in the German camp.

On February 8, 1944, shelling severely severed the wire. Tommy, disguised as a farmer, found and repaired the break in full view of the enemy while pretending to tie his shoes. His courage resulted in the destruction of four German tanks that had been

firing on allied troops. He was awarded the Military Medal for exceptional bravery in the field, and rightly so.

Tommy continued to distinguish himself in the summer of 1944. The 1st SSF entered Southern France. Tommy walked 70 kilometres across rugged, mountainous terrain deep behind German lines and went for 72 hours without food or water to locate an enemy bivouac area.

He reported back to his unit, led the brigade to the encampment, resulting in the capture of over 1000 German soldiers. He earned the Silver Star, an American decoration for gallantry in action, as well as six service medals.

Tommy was honourably discharged on June 15, 1945, and came home to Canada. He returned from fighting Nazi racism to a country that denied him the right to vote in federal elections and refused him the same benefits as other Canadian veterans.

The business he had entrusted to a friend failed in his absence. Facing unemployment and discrimination, Tommy re-enlisted and served with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. During two tours of duty in the Korean War, he won the Korean Canadian Volunteer Service and United Nation's service medals. He was wounded in the knee and was honourably discharged on October 28, 1953.

Tommy Prince is known as Canada's most decorated Aboriginal war veteran. He was also a brave and remarkable man with an impish sense of humour, a man who beat his own demons, including alcoholism.

Tommy had a strong sense of civic duty and a fierce pride of his people. He said, "All my life I had wanted to do something to help my people recover their good name. I wanted to show they were as good as any white man." Clearly, Mr. Speaker, he did. He dedicated himself to attaining increased educational and economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples and Tommy, a true Canadian hero, died on November 25, 1977, at the age of 62.

* (11:30)

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make comment, a reference to another veteran, Mr. Don

Mackey, who has, I think, worked very hard to keep the memory of the great Tommy Prince alive. Indeed, I was delighted to be in the honourable Member for Burrows' (Mr. Martindale) constituency as they unveiled a monument and a mural that so aptly gives all of us a sense of the importance of Tommy Prince, and, of course, it is at the corner of Selkirk Avenue and Sergeant Tommy Prince Street.

It is a privilege and a pleasure to be able to speak about one of Canada's greatest heroes, and we certainly would support the resolution that was put forward by the honourable member from Selkirk. Thank you very much.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add some remarks to this debate on an important resolution by the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

I went on the Web and did a search, and I commend the students at Sargent Park School in Winnipeg for posting a history of Tommy Prince whom they call a Manitoba hero. They have many other Manitoba heroes there. I hope they learned a lot from doing their research. Because this is a very short biography, I thought it would be appropriate to read into the record.

"Tommy Prince's great-great-grandfather was Chief Peguis. He was born in Brokenhead, Manitoba, in October 1915. Prince went hunting when he was young and learned how to track. He attended Elkhorn Residential School and received a Grade 8 education. After school he became a lumberjack.

He joined the Royal Canadian Engineers in June 1940. He was promoted to lance corporal in February 1941. In September of 1942 Tommy Prince came back to Canada and joined the First Canadian Parachute Battalion. He was promoted to sergeant and then went for training in Montana. His unit was attached to the U.S. Special Forces. In 1950 Tommy Prince joined the Korean War.

Tommy Prince died at Deer Lodge Hospital, November 1977. He won 11 medals, two for service in the Korean War, namely the Korea Medal and the United Nations Service Medal. Tommy Prince also won the Military Medals in 1939 to '45, Italian Star, France and German Stars. He had also won the Defence Medal."

One of the things that I hope the students who wrote this biography learned was about the difficulties that Sgt. Tommy Prince had—well, he was just Tommy Prince at that time—enrolling, trying to enrol in the Canadian Armed Forces because he was turned down several times.

Also, the discrimination that he faced after the Second World War when he and other Aboriginal veterans were not entitled to the same benefits as other Canadian personnel who served in the Armed Forces.

This struggle continues today where Métis veterans are still trying to get benefits that were denied to them after the Second World War, including some of my constituents whom I have met with. It is really incredible that 59 years after the Second World War these veterans are still trying to get benefits that were not denied to other people.

There are many, many tributes that have been paid to Sgt. Tommy Prince. I think it is important to chronicle these and recognize them. For example, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation named their school the Sergeant Tommy Prince School. The medals, which had been sold many years ago, came up at public auction. Mr. Speaker, there was a concerted campaign of fundraising; these medals were bought and are now on public display at the Manitoba Museum.

In Winnipeg, Prince Street—actually in Burrows constituency—was renamed Sergeant Tommy Prince Street. A mural, as has been mentioned, was commissioned, and it is actually called the Tommy Prince Memorial Wall. It was created by Aboriginal artist Tiffany Seymour, dedicated in September 2002, and is located on the east side of a Manitoba housing complex building at the corner of Sgt. Tommy Prince Street and Selkirk Avenue. This mural was created to honour the memory of Thomas George Prince, better known as Sergeant Tommy Prince, Canada's most decorated Aboriginal war veteran.

His friend and fellow war veteran, Donald Mackey, Chairman of the Sergeant Tommy Prince memorial committee said, "Tommy never really received the recognition he deserved. This is why I wanted to do something like this as a tribute to him and to honour his memory and provide a role model for the kids in the area to look up to." I think we

should pay tribute at this time as well to Donald Mackey because he has been instrumental in a number of projects, for example, not only the mural but also the bronze plaque which is nearby. It is located at the corner of Selkirk Avenue and Sergeant Tommy Prince Street.

In addition, Don Mackey has been involved in efforts to create a park named after Sergeant Tommy Prince, and we hope that this comes to reality very shortly. It is located on land formerly occupied by Flora Place public housing. It will be called Sergeant Tommy Prince Park with funding from the building communities program. We hope that construction on that park starts this spring.

I look forward to attending an official opening ceremony there in the not too distant future. Also Donald Mackey is to be commended for being instrumental in the Sergeant Tommy Prince Cadet Corps of Aboriginal cadets. I have attended a number of their events.

Mr. Speaker, there are actually many other tributes to Sergeant Tommy Prince. For example, the Tommy Prince Barracks at Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, the Tommy Prince Drill Hall at the Land Force Western Area Training Centre in Wainwright, Alberta, the Government of Canada Sergeant Tommy Prince Army Training Initiative for Aboriginal recruiting, the Tommy Prince Award, an Assembly of First Nations scholarship and the Tommy Prince scholarship at Sault College, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

As you can see there are many memorials and tributes to this most-decorated Canadian Aboriginal war hero and all of those are very deserved. We can learn from his life and his history, not only about the contribution of Aboriginal veterans but also the difficulties that they had before the war and after the war, particularly giving up their Aboriginal rights and not getting the same benefits that others did. We hope that we learn from his experience and that of others, so that some of these rights are corrected because it is not too late. Some people are still waiting for compensation. We look forward to those injustices being corrected. We also look forward to the opening of Sergeant Tommy Prince Park in the Burrows constituency.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I am very pleased to put some remarks on the record with

respect to Tommy Prince and to honour his achievements on behalf of the residents of Lac du Bonnet constituency and, of course, from my caucus as the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs critic.

I am very honoured to support the resolution today with respect to Tommy Prince. He was a sergeant in the Canadian military with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. I was really impressed by the fact that, in spite of the discrimination that was going on at the time in the 1940s against Aboriginal people and in spite of the fact that he was turned down for military service a number of times, he was very determined to be accepted to serve his country. It was a voluntary enlistment. It was not one in which he was being compelled to enlist. He felt very compelled to enlist to serve his country. He was not thinking of himself. He was thinking of other Manitobans. He was thinking of all Canadians and he was thinking of the freedoms that we needed to defend during the Second World War and during the Korean War.

I am of course very impressed, as all other Manitobans and Canadians are, that he received 11 medals, including the Military Medal and the United States Silver Star. He has been touted as one of the best soldiers in Canadian history, and I think we would agree with that. He underwent many sacrifices during his term as a World War II veteran and, of course, a Korean War veteran. He had to leave his family, his friends, all for freedom that we enjoy today.

In fact, my father was also a Second World War veteran and he also served in the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. My father is no longer with us as well. He may have known Tommy Prince because he also served side by side in the Canadian military with the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. My father also received medals in the Canadian military, a total of eight medals.

* (11:40)

I think we have to celebrate the fact that he is the most decorated Aboriginal person in the military. He is also a Manitoban, one who was born and raised on the Brokenhead First Nation, just outside my constituency and nearby my constituency. He was a World War II and a Korean veteran.

His lifelong goal and service was really to his people and, of course, to all Manitobans. He

increased opportunities for Aboriginal people economically. He fought for education for Aboriginal people. He made the sacrifices for Canada, for Manitoba, for the benefit of all Aboriginal people, and of course, for all Canadians.

All veterans are proud of his accomplishments and it is, I think, incumbent upon us in honour of our veterans, and I know that members opposite and all members of our caucus, we attend Remembrance Day ceremonies every year. I have five within my constituency. I cannot be at all of them, but I make a point of being at at least one of them. I know that members opposite and all members of this Legislature do the same to remember our veterans and to honour our veterans.

So, Mr. Speaker, we, of course, enthusiastically support this resolution. I note that Tommy Prince passed away in 1977 at Deer Lodge hospital. He will be forever remembered for his courage and his resolve through the commemoration of his medals at the Manitoba Museum and I look forward to seeing them there.

He is a person who will be held up, I think, as a hero by all Manitobans, and especially by his community, Brokenhead River First Nation.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a few words on record on the resolution put forward by the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). Sgt. Tommy Prince was, indeed, a great Canadian and a Canadian hero.

I find it somewhat ironic, if Tommy Prince had been born in the United States and he would have done the same things he did for the Canadian people, I am sure he would have received a lot more recognition and they would have made more than just one movie about him, I am sure, in Hollywood.

So we have our very own Canadian hero, but being true Canadians, we do not seem to always push too hard on this issue, and we are somewhat blasé about our own heroes, and that is just the Canadian way. We are a little low key, Mr. Speaker. In the States, they would have made this a much bigger event.

I was raised in Europe during the war, Mr. Speaker, so I am fully aware of what servicemen went through in Europe, and the Netherlands,

particularly, is closely tied with Canadian veterans and Canadian soldiers. So I am not sure if Tommy Prince ever came through my neck of the woods in southern Holland, but I know many Canadian soldiers did and many of them married Dutch girls.

In fact, I know some of the Canadian soldiers and some Aboriginal Canadian soldiers that married Dutch women. In fact, one of them is Rob McKay from Flin Flon. I know him and his wife and his children as well.

So Tommy Prince is one of those heroes that we are very proud of. I noticed that he did not only fight World War II or part of World War II, 1940 to 1945, he also re-enlisted again in 1950 to fight the Korean War. So that says something about the measure of the man.

In his career he had fought in several different locations, the Aleutian Islands, one of them, in Italy in the Battle of Anzio, in southern France, and I am sure he was also in Germany, probably Holland, and at times he had been in the United States and Britain as well, sure.

Tommy Prince had a sterling record for heroism and many of my colleagues have already mentioned some of those things. His legendary skills, his abilities in the battlefield, his heroism. I notice the heroism, not only the heroism in the Devil's Brigade and his own personal heroism, extended in his regular civilian life as well.

In 1955, he actually saved a man from drowning at the Alexander Dock in Winnipeg, which shows you that Tommy Prince was a hero in and out of the army. He was a man of legendary skills, and it is ironic that, when Tommy Prince came home, he should face a certain level of discrimination. There might have been equality on the battlefield; there certainly was not equality back home.

I can see how that would put a dark cloud over his life and I can understand the difficulties he might have faced later on because, no matter what you do, no matter how great a leader you are, no matter how heroic you are, you come home and you still face the same old prejudices, the same old ingrained fundamentalist-type thinking. I am sure it must have soured a large aspect of his life.

Tommy Prince, Mr. Speaker, is a symbol of many Aboriginal people who fought for this country.

I guess, if you could say on a per capita basis, I do not know if that is the correct terminology, more Aboriginal people lost their lives when you consider the size of the Aboriginal population than other people lost their lives considering that larger population, so proportionally they carried a much bigger burden. That makes it so ironic when you come home not to share in any of the victory or the rewards really. You did not get the land or you did not get the loan that you should have had. In fact you even have to extinguish some of your Aboriginal rights. You had to give up being an Aboriginal person in a sense, at least legally, and you were not fully accepted in the existing society.

It says something, Mr. Speaker, when we go to war and some people give their lives to fight for freedom and justice and come home and not find that freedom and justice. Those pockets of ignorance and I suppose superstition or narrow-mindedness and bigotry still exist in all parts of the world. South Africa is a fairly recent example where that has started to change but those pockets still exist. Racism still exists. It is everywhere. It is a little more subtle now, but it has to be fought, and certainly with such wonderful and courageous and heroic symbols as Tommy Prince, it should not be hard to fight that kind of racist stereotyping that often exists. Thankfully it exists less today than it did a number of years ago.

Mr. Speaker, all I want to say is that I am very proud of our own home-bred, if you like, Canadian hero, Tommy Prince. I think we should all look up to him. We should all be thankful and we should be thankful for the Aboriginal people who have made those sacrifices and a symbol for the Aboriginal people, which really is Tommy Prince. I am very happy that all kinds of places and schools and streets have been named after Tommy Prince. I think he really deserves that.

It is somewhat ironic though, as in the case of Louis Riel, you are never honoured when you are alive; it is when you are dead. Would it not have been much nicer if Tommy Prince could have been here today and we could, in an honest and heartfelt manner, say, "We are proud of you, Tommy Prince, and we are proud of the fact that you are an Aboriginal person and proud of you as a Canadian hero." It is too bad that, you know, he had to die under, I suppose, fairly bleak circumstances and never get that recognition while he was still alive. Let us hope it does not happen to other Canadian

soldiers and heroes and other Aboriginal heroes in our country.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to pay tribute to Tommy Prince. It is fitting that we have a resolution before us today to honour Thomas George Prince, a Canadian hero. Tommy served incredibly in the Canadian Armed Forces and performed some absolutely astonishing and incredibly heroic acts. It is for this and for the fact that he is a recognized, a well-known Aboriginal leader that it is fitting that we pay tribute to him today.

I have attended, over the last several years, a number of ceremonies to honour Tommy Prince, and it is quite clear that his name and his achievements are more and more being recognized in Manitoba. It is fitting that we today in the Legislature are adding to the list of tributes to Tommy Prince and his effort.

Most recently, Mr. Speaker, just a little over a week and a half ago, I was in Brokenhead First Nation. At the interpretive centre in Brokenhead First Nation, there is some memory, as one would expect, of Tommy Prince. It is set in a very attractive location along the Brokenhead River with some beautiful walkways, bottomland forest, and one can look out on the other side away from the river and see the buffalo. It is, I think, a tribute to the people in Brokenhead First Nation that they have put together this effort to have an interpretive centre to continue to recognize Tommy Prince among the other achievements of the Brokenhead First Nation and to develop this site which can be an important site not only for those in the First Nation but a site which can play a role in helping others to remember important events in the Aboriginal community.

* (11:50)

Mr. Speaker, I was there as part of an Epilepsy Awareness Walk. People like Niomi Spence and her family were there, walking from Winnipeg to Sagkeeng, and they stopped overnight at the Brokenhead First Nation.

They spent three days on this walk as part of an effort to bring greater awareness to problems like epilepsy and the fact that epilepsy is relatively more common in the First Nations community and something that needs to be brought to greater awareness and greater recognition so that there can be a better sensitivity to this issue.

I think that is something as well that Tommy Prince would have appreciated. It was good to be there and to hear, while I was there, the words of Chief Tina Levesque at the Brokenhead First Nation and to be able to join the whole group in emphasizing concerns in the Aboriginal community.

I would like to compliment people like Jim Bear and Bill Shead who played a major role in getting the medals back to Manitoba and the Brokenhead First Nation. Their role here, though sometimes difficult, was clearly successful, and they and many others in the Aboriginal community have been important in making sure that this happened.

Mr. Speaker, for me there is an interesting personal connection. Some of Tommy Prince's feats on the battlefield occurred at Anzio in Italy. My father was also in the Second World War, and at Anzio, and so I heard personally from my father the stories of the conditions there and have an appreciation for the difficult times that people were going through from somebody within my own family.

Mr. Speaker, it is, I think, very important that we are today saluting and recognizing the achievements of Tommy Prince, that we are recognizing in so doing the contribution of many Aboriginal soldiers who have fought in the Canadian army or participated in the Canadian army in one fashion or another and contributed in this way to freedom around the world and to the stability of countries around the world and to the democracy that we are so privileged to enjoy here in Manitoba and in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, let me close with just a brief recognition of the importance of recognizing people

like Tommy Prince and the achievements that he and others in the Aboriginal community have made.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution today. Just a few words I would like to put on record because I did have the honour and privilege of attending a dedication of a mural that he was recognized on. It was the Army, Navy, Air Force on St. Mary's Road.

I was very proud to be there and have the opportunity to meet his family and I must say the pride on their faces was a joy to behold. It occurred to me when I realized that he was a World War II veteran and went back to the Korean War that at that time he was a forgotten hero who went back to a forgotten war. It gives me just tremendous pleasure to know that both he and the Korean War are now being recognized, and that he plays such a vibrant part of it.

Mr. Speaker, I hope all members will support this motion to recognize the contributions of Aboriginal veteran Thomas George Prince.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is Resolution 2, Aboriginal Veteran Thomas George Prince. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Noon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it twelve o'clock? The hour being twelve o'clock, this House is recessed and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 13, 2004

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