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DEBATES
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PROCEEDINGS

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Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 11, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you canvass the House you'd find consent to move straight to Bill 218.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House to move directly to Bill 218? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 218—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants Who Own Pets)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 218, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants Who Own Pets); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation (protection des locataires qui possèdent des animaux de compagnie), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak at this second reading on Bill 218, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. I have brought forward Bill 218 for the benefit of Manitobans who own pets and lived in apartments, for their landlords—it is a benefit for landlords. It is a benefit for all Manitobans. This bill, commonly known as Fluffy's law, is a balanced bill. It protects tenants whose pets are cared for, are kept clean, cause no noise complaints and are safe, gentle animals.

Fluffy's law also cracks down on irresponsible pet owners especially where pets are dangerous, make intolerable noise or aren't cleaned up after.

Fluffy's law benefits landlords by allowing for guidelines and rules about responsible pet control and behaviour.

This is, in fact, a big plus for landlords because under the present NDP law now, the landlords don't have these rights to set clear rules about pets to ensure good behaviour of pets and good cleanliness of pets or to deal with the allergy issues. So this is a big plus for landlords and the fact is that this kind of legislation works, as we know in Ontario where it's been in place for a number of years. And in Ontario, out of thousands and thousands of complaints every year, less than 1 percent now are about pets because they have a situation where pets are allowed in apartments. In fact, there's no pet clauses like Fluffy bill, but the landlords are able to set rules and—for good pet behaviour, and it works.

Public support for this bill in the press, on-line, and here today has been remarkable. We have collected over 6,000 signatures on petitions and have over 4,500 supporters on our Fluffy's law Facebook group. Here in the Liberal Party we recognize the many emotional and health benefits to pet ownership. A major reason for bringing forward this law is to improve the health of Manitobans and to decrease health-care costs.

Countless studies support this. Pets improve our psychological well-being. Pet owners are less lonely and report less stress, depression, isolation and anxiety. Pets help improve our physical well-being. Pets reduce blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol and decrease our risk of heart attack.

Pet owners recover from surgery faster, have fewer doctors' visits and use pharmaceuticals less than non-pet owners. Pet owners have higher levels of fitness and activity. Pet owners suffer fewer ailments and report fewer stress days. Owning a pet provides educational benefits to children, teaching them responsibility and empathy, and in instances sometimes of children with ADD it can be a huge benefit in improving their behaviour. Seniors who own pets have better health and less stress than seniors who don't.

Simply put, pet ownership means improved health for Manitobans, and that translates into cost savings for taxpayers. With fewer ailments, fewer missed days from work, fewer doctors' appointments and healthier citizens, we can save millions each year.

You may hear dissent and misinformation from some landlords who care only about their pocketbooks, but Liberals care about the public purse, and as a Liberal I'm always looking for cost-effective ways to reduce government and taxpayer cost, and I believe that pet ownership can trim our provincial health-care budget.

There are large public cost savings on health care when pet owners are allowed to keep their animals and have improved emotional and physical health. The quicker getting out of hospital is only one example, and we had testimony earlier today of a specific person who got out quicker because she had a pet and saved thousands of dollars to Manitoba.

An Australian study showed that increased pet ownership would improve cardiovascular health and create an opportunity to save 5 percent of their national health-care budget. This year our government has budgeted over \$4.5 billion in 2010-2011 for health care alone. A 5 percent reduction would mean a savings of 25 million. And the stories that I've heard from people—in fact, it may be much more because there're likely to be savings in other areas, in Child and Family Services, in Justice, et cetera.

And for those who say the economic situation should get more attention right now, let me tell you the story of a man who was laid off and his testimony that the pet was the—his pet was the only thing that saved him from a severe depression. Today is the time to act; it is not the time to delay.

*(10:10)

Fluffy's law is more than just letting responsible pet owners keep their pets in rental properties. It's about recognizing that pets play an integral part in contributing to our well-being and our quality of life, and encouraging pet ownership is better health for people, and that will cut health-care costs. It's a win-win situation for all Manitobans.

Now, the Liberal Party cares when thousands of pets are rendered homeless, sometimes euthanized, each year due to unreasonable no-pet policies in Manitoba. We recognize that the pets themselves suffer greatly from anxiety and their health

deteriorates when they're torn from their owner and put in a shelter. Now, we stand by and support shelters, like the Winnipeg Humane Society. We care when it's overloaded with pets. We care when our gentle, harmless pets are euthanized, when tenants are forced to evict their pets.

And since we've introduced Bill 218, I've heard an incredible number of stories of the hardships and difficulties under the present situation in Manitoba.

An elderly woman called our office to talk about Fluffy's law. She lived in a house with her bet cat—pet cat for 16 years. She became disabled, and had to sell her house and move into an apartment. She and her cat settled into the apartment together. A year later, the landlord decided he didn't want pets in his building. For one year, the woman and her cat had lived in that apartment. There'd been no complaints. The cat was clean and quiet, and caused no allergies. And the woman had no family in Winnipeg. She only had her pet, which she dearly loved. She couldn't find a home for her cat. So after 17 years, facing threat of eviction, she watched her cat be euthanized. It was heartbreaking. She was devastated by the loss of her cat, as are many others.

Another woman wrote in to me: I suffer from mental illness. I'm forced to move due to unrelated reasons. And now I have to get rid of my dog, who is one of my greatest supporters. It's just causing me more anxiety and driving me into a deeper depression. I don't know how I'm going to cope without him.

Another writer wrote about the situation at Manitoba Housing at 110 Marion, where the landlord, who happens in this case to be the government, is forcing tenants to get rid of their pets. And residents are so concerned about the impact of the loss of their pets, and this is so devastating, that I hear that there could even be suicides.

Pets are vital for pet therapy for those who are sick. One woman spoke to me of the incredible difference it made having a pet when she developed cancer. Another man with cancer was so sick he rarely even smiled, except when a pet came to visit. One woman wrote to me: I have pets because they help me cope with mental illness and keep me away from the drugs and booze that is everywhere around me.

These stories are numerous. A boy with ADD and anger management issues was recommended by his health-care professional to get a pet. He now has

a pet and in three months his behaviour has turned completely around. It's an incredible improvement—transformation. And then, guess what? Just in the last few days, he received word from his landlord—in this case, again, the NDP government—that he must get rid of his pet. Is that what the government wants, to destroy the hopes and dreams of a family and a young boy?

Pets are incredibly important to people. They have a huge impact on people's health and well-being. As one writer said: A day with animal companions is like a day without sunshine. I ask all members in this Legislature to think carefully about this bill, and to support this bill. Let us have some sunshine in Manitoba.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak on this bill, as the relatively new Minister responsible for the Residential Tenancies Act and the relevant legislation.

This debate in the House, and in our community, of course, began in the last session when the government listened to pet owners in Manitoba and considered the issue of pet ownership in apartments across the province, and some of the inquiries and requests for greater latitude among the tenant population and landlords in Manitoba to allow pets to live in more apartments.

So the Province was rightly responsive. We certainly are aware not only of the anecdotal information, but I think, everyone, every family may be aware of the importance of pets in a family. And I think even the word "pet", perhaps, doesn't send the right understanding of the importance of a pet to a family. It is a member of a family, and a pet can be a vital part of the well-being of individuals, and, I think, disproportionately, individuals who live on their own. I certainly know of that in my family, that a pet—a cat in this case—can actually be not just company, but give some purpose in daily life and provide great companionship and, indeed, there are health benefits.

But, of course, what we discovered in this Legislature as a result of this debate is that, in fact, the health benefits that come from pet ownership are not universal. And, as a result of our discussions here and in committee, and hearing very compelling stories from the various approaches, the Legislature almost unanimously decided to attempt to strike a balance. We have to admit that there are compelling and emotional arguments on both sides of this issue,

and that really does compel us, then, as legislators, to look to see how we can rightly strike a balance—and I want to address that in just a moment.

But we also heard, as a result of the discussions around the legislation that was introduced last year, and then I'll talk about concerns from tenants, so this isn't just about tenants versus landlords at all. And we understand the strong views of landlords wanting to protect their properties and their ability to make decisions, indeed, on the ability of tenants to have pets in apartments.

But tenants themselves were telling us, very strongly, that the health benefits that may accrue to some individuals could be life threatening to others in terms of allergies, even not in the same building at the same time, but perhaps tenants coming into a unit after a pet has been there. So there are a number of competing interests that are at play here.

And given, though, the propensity of the government to try and facilitate greater pet ownership in apartments, the legislation was introduced to bring into Manitoba the pet-friendly deposit which would allow landlords, then, to have an added deposit up to another half-month's rent assessed in order to provide an incentive for more landlords to take in pets. That legislation will come into force next month.

At the same time, an action group is coming together so that we, in fact, can have, not just the legislation, but a pet-friendly apartment strategy in Manitoba that has several components. And the action group, which will be comprised of representatives from rescue centres or shelters, from landlords, the medical community, perhaps animal services, will examine options that we are very interested in seeing fleshed out, including a new pet's welcome form so that there is a standard form that can be attached to the tenancy agreement so that there is a clear understanding of the pet that is involved and what the mutual obligations of the landlord and tenant are.

Second of all, we want to see a greater awareness so that landlords do not act on the basis of only presumptions when it comes to pets, but can do more individual assessment of the nature of the pet in question and provide landlords with information on how to manage pet issues.

Also, a guidebook for tenants on how to make sure it works. There, I think, are some tools that tenants can be better equipped with to guard against

problems in tenancy arrangements when they have pets.

And, as well, we'd like to see a Web link on the Residential Tenancies Branch to the Humane Society's pet-friendly apartment list.

But there are other ideas that we think we could generate from pet lovers, and including, perhaps, the role for references about pets themselves. For example, tenants could come when they apply to apartments and perhaps, landlords would then be open to looking at the—at perhaps some references about the behaviour of the particular pet.

* (10:20)

So those are just ideas that we want the action group to report on by this fall. But we also, of course, have just made a decision in this Legislature, in fact, a decision—a considered decision after listening to the respective views in committee and, of course, in this Chamber, came to a near unanimous decision that this Legislature did not want to ban pet-free apartments because, of course, that is the essence of the legislation currently before the House.

The Legislature—again, near unanimously—decided that that balance should be sought and that is where the pet-friendly apartment strategy is going. It is about better informing both tenants and landlords and making sure that we do not put tenants offside, in terms of their right to quiet enjoyment of their property or to have allergy-free accommodations, while at the same time moving ahead the government's interest in having more pet-friendly apartments across this province.

I should just add, as a footnote, there has been some misinformation, I understand, about the Québec—or the Ontario legislation. The Ontario—and I'm aware first-hand of the Ontario legislation. There are pet-free apartments in Ontario. In fact, if you look in the ads in the Ontario papers, on any day, I think between 10 and 20 percent of the ads say no pets allowed. So I think the member should be careful in terms of his information about the Ontario legislation. It does have an impact that, I think, is different than what may have been talked about by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

So with that in mind, it's the intention of the Province to move ahead with the proclamation of the pet-friendly deposit, and the action group to conclude a strategy that will back that up, so hopefully we can have more Manitobans continue to enjoy their pets as they move to apartments.

You know, we've heard from people—and it is, indeed, heartbreaking to hear the stories when people have to give up their pets when they—when there's a landlord that doesn't want to accept the pet. And we hear from shelters and from rescue centres, first-hand, of course, because they see that. So I think that the intentions are important here that we back that up with a strategy that moves Manitoba forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, Interesting, in listening to the minister's response and, quite frankly, I think the government can do much better.

I believe that the government is actually doing a disservice to recognizing how important the legislation that we have before us could potentially be, and the benefits of the legislation. If the minister had reservations in regards to why he believes that this legislation would not work, all he needs to do is to look to the province east of us, in the province of Ontario, where they have legislation of a similar nature, and it has proven to be very successful, very successful to the degree in which there are thousands, literally thousands of complaints every year, and a very small percentage of those complaints to the equivalence of a residential tenancy board, very small—I believe it's less than 1 percent are related to pets.

And I think that if the government recognized the value of the legislation that they would see the merit of allowing it, at the very least, to go to committee. I suspect, Mr. Speaker, if the government was to open its collective mind and allow it to go to committee that what you would see is responsible pet owners, tenants and landlords come before the committee to express what they believe is in Manitoba's best interest. And I suspect what you would see is that there would be support to have this legislation pass.

You know, the minister made reference in terms of the value of a pet, and I have had—as I'm sure all members have recognized that the bond that is built between pets and their owners is very significant. In many ways, a—whether it's a dog or a cat, will often become like a member of the family. And I'm always amazed—like, I guess, maybe I'm not necessarily the most pet-friendly person, as an individual, but I can tell you my daughter loves our cat, and you would think that that particular bonding couldn't be as strong as it is. You know, when she was in Saskatchewan attending college, one of the things

that she constantly asked as she was talking to my wife was how was the cat. She put the cat ahead of myself and my son, and, you know—and I believe that she was very sincere in wanting to make sure that the cat was being properly fed and properly attended to.

And when I think of the individuals over the years and the special relationships between those animals and the owner, I've always been amazed in terms of just to what degree that sense of family is heightened. You know, pet dogs, whether it's the little Chihuahuas or whatever it might be, and the bonding that takes place and that whole protectionist attitude and love and care that is expressed between animal and human is something in which for me, you know, I see it, I see it probably on a fairly regular basis, but I try to be sympathetic to those needs and that emotional tie, and I recognize that it is very real, and that is the reason why, yes, I—you know, initially in discussions with my leader in regards to the bill I did have some concerns. But I believe through the discussions and having an open mind that I now feel that this is a bill that should be supported, because I have seen the benefits, Mr. Speaker.

I have listened to what people actually have to say about the bill and have been convinced that this Legislature would be doing a wonderful service to all Manitobans. We can narrow it down by saying, well, the pet and the pet owner are the biggest benefactor of the said legislation that's before us, but I would ultimately argue, based on the presentations that I have heard, that it goes far beyond that, that, in fact, our society as a whole would be better if, in fact, we had legislation of this nature. And to belittle the legislation I think is wrong because if you take a look at it, the greatest expenditure that we have in the province today is health care, and there is no doubt; no one would question that particular fact.

And we always talk about prevention. What are we doing in order to minimize the actual cost of health care and how can we put some of those valuable resources into the whole area of prevention? And I listen to the Leader of the Liberal Party's argument as to why it is that this is a good piece of legislation, and I think that we need to recognize the value of health-care prevention. And, given that we spend billions on health care every year, I would ultimately argue—and I don't have the staff resources to be able to give you an actual dollar figure, but I would guesstimate that it would be into the millions of dollars that potentially could be saved every year in health care if we adopted more pet-friendly policies, and this is, in fact, one of those policies, a

piece of legislation that could, in fact, enforce that pet-friendly government policy.

And, as a direct result, Mr. Speaker, ultimately I believe, based on the arguments that I have heard, that not only would the individuals that own the pets benefit both socially and in other ways in terms of having their pet, but so would the taxpayer, because there is an endless pit of money that could be invested in health care—when we see the benefits of this, I would ultimately argue, well, why not?

* (10:30)

I have watched seniors, in particular. I have, in the past, visited personal care homes and it's interesting when a little puppy is brought into a room and the reaction that you'll see on the faces of our seniors in personal care homes. You know, we have seen on—I was about to say, CBC—television documentaries when the whole issue of pets and seniors are brought up and how it makes so much better the feelings within that room.

You know, I have knocked on doors and witnessed first-hand that special bond that many have and it's not just our senior population, Mr. Speaker. You know, interaction between kids and animals, I have found so rewarding to be able to see and to say that, you know, the moment that you find yourself, for whatever reason, having to relocate into another premise that where there's a landlord and it's automatically, you know, that no pet allowed on the contract, I think has a fairly profound impact in many different ways. And, ultimately, I believe that this legislation will ensure that more fair and reasonable actions are taken to ensure that pets and their owners are not being separated and, ultimately, it's far more than just the social component that we need to be aware of, even though that in itself could be the justification in passing this legislation.

But surely to goodness we should need to take into consideration the health and well-being of our population and the benefits of allowing this legislation to be passed or, at the very least, open to having feedback at the committee stage so that members such as the members that we have here this morning are able to make presentation before the Legislature and give their opinions as to what they believe is good legislation or opinions on what they believe would even make pet ownership that much better in the province of Manitoba.

So my request this morning is to the government: Give the people of Manitoba the chance

to come down to the Manitoba Legislature in a formal way and make presentation about what they feel in regards to pets and pet ownership. Allow this bill, at the very least, to go to committee. Don't adjourn debate on it. Allow it to go to committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I really am pleased for the opportunity to speak to this bill because, I think, for two reasons: No. 1, I have worked in health care for 30 years prior to this job and I'm—I can't argue with the comments about the emotional impact of pets on families. I've always had one myself and, secondly, because I have—well, because I worked in health, I'm also aware of adverse effects of allergies and emotional trauma. I've worked in both psychiatric and acute care hospitals.

Secondly, I feel I can be fairly objective because I also am a landlord, and I have been for close to 20 years and I've had many tenants. I have never said no to pets because I do believe that the importance and I've been willing to risk the damage that can be done. And I can tell you, there has been much damage; I've had to replace floors, I've had to replace carpets. But again, if you've got a good tenant, hopefully, it's just a few years and it's time anyway. People like moving into fresh things.

But I do also have a suite downstairs that I have had to turn away people because the current tenants suffer from allergies. So I think that the biggest part about this bill that I have trouble with is the strictness, the no-pet clauses. I think people need to be able to, as I do, use my good judgment and my values to deal with these situations as they're presented, and I like to have the choice. If I've got a good tenant coming in who doesn't have a pet, I don't base it on, oh, no, sorry, you can't come in here because you don't have a pet, any more than I would want to turn away someone with a pet.

So our position here—I don't think we're talking about the benefits of having pets. I think that that's—no, for me, because I value them, I think that's a given. What I'm arguing is the choice, the strictness of it. And I think that the position that our government has taken is a very wise one. And I also—in St. James, I think everyone knows, we have a majority of seniors, so I have heard from many seniors. And I have to agree, in some cases, it's really—it's unfortunate. But, again, I think our position is saying that we are encouraging more landlords to welcome tenants with pets.

When the new rules come into effect next month, landlords will be able to charge an additional pet damage deposit for rental units. I think that's more than reasonable. I've never had that option, and I'm quite delighted that we're doing that. Some landlords have already told us that, with this change, they will allow tenants to have pets in their apartments. So, again, the choice element—this is an economical thing for many people. And some landlords maybe can afford to absorb damages more than others, and I think we need to allow them to make those choices.

We are bringing together pet owners, landlords, health-care professionals and the Winnipeg Humane Society to develop a pet-friendly apartment strategy. Now that makes sense to me. We want to make sure that landlords know about the new rules, and that tenants can prove they are responsible pet owners. Now, from talking to the people in my constituency, I find that most of them don't know about this new legislation coming in. They don't realize that there's going to be, I think, a very fair, balanced approach to pets—the tenants will be able to have more choice—more chances of having their pets with them.

And I think part of the strategy will be developing a pets-welcome forum that can become part of lease agreements, create guidebooks for landlords and tenants to help them manage pet issues and be responsible owners. That's a critical piece, too. Education, information can resolve lots of problems. And linking the Residential Tenancies Branch Web site to the Humane Society's pet-friendly apartments page. I think that'll be a big help.

We're striking a balance between the desires of pet owners and those who want to live in pet-free buildings, often due to severe allergies, or fears. Again, I said I've worked in psychiatric hospitals, and fears are as serious as—the emotional trauma and fears are as serious as the health problems that allergies create.

We're also addressing the concerns we've heard from landlords that they need protection from damages that pets can cause. Well, a damage deposit seems to work quite nicely there, I think. And no province has a law that effectively bans pet-free apartments. Even in Ontario, where no-pet clauses are unenforceable, on a single day, in the *Toronto Star* rental section, between 10 and 20 percent of listings prohibit pets.

It's common for landlords to refuse to rent to people with pets. Landlords will still have the

opportunity to choose whether to allow pets, but are being given an incentive to do so, in the form of an additional deposit. The provisions will also ensure that housing continues to be available for tenants who want to live in complexes where there are no pets.

Everyone agrees that pets are wonderful to own, and make life full and enjoyable. And, unfortunately for some, allergies make it impossible to own pets, or to be around them. Tenants with severe pet allergies, who deliberately rent in pet-free buildings, should not be exposed to potentially life-threatening situations because landlords are required to accept pets. We must balance the wants of pet owners and the medical needs of other people.

* (10:40)

Many landlords do allow pets, and many renters have the enjoyment of pets in their apartments. And hopefully with the bringing in of this law—this legislation—there will be even more so than there are now.

And according to the Public Health Agency of Canada, high exposure of susceptible children to airborne allergens, such as pets, is a risk factor for adopting—developing asthma. According to the agency, asthma is a chronic health disorder affecting a substantial proportion of children and adults worldwide. I know I have—one of my daughters has asthma, and she chooses to have a pet and deal with it. And again, I think choice is the key here.

Once a pet has been in a unit, carpet cleaning alone is often insufficient to remove pet dander. New tenants moving into the unit can still suffer serious allergic reactions. Health and safety must be first, while recognizing that pets add warmth, comfort and safety to our lives. Apartment living is much like a community; we live together, share common space and have the right to quiet and enjoyment and safety in our own place.

Pets can be part of this environment if health needs are addressed and if pets are well managed. Pet owners should have a range of living options, including houses and apartments. People with allergies or people who do not want to live around pets must also be afforded the same options. Many people want to live in pet-free buildings. While these tenants are not as vocal as the tenants who are pro pet, their concerns are equally valid. Compelling landlords to take pets will greatly reduce healthy living options for people and will reduce the options

for people who simply don't want to live next to a pit bull.

Well, again, even though this bill will include guidelines about which animals make reasonable pets and which are inherently dangerous, that, I can see, is just an incredibly contentious issue. Who says a pit bull—talk to a pit bull owner—thinks that they're less or more inherently dangerous than a German shepherd? And what if a child has been bitten by a poodle? I know someone had their lips ripped off by a poodle. Now, is that not an inherently dangerous pet? And who's going to decide that? I think this is fraught with problems.

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

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise to add my comments to Bill 218, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, pets in apartments, sponsored by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). And I'd like to thank the honourable member for giving us the opportunity, by the way of his introduction of this bill, because it gives us a chance to talk a bit about some of the initiatives that our government has taken with respect to the rules—residential tenancy rules—in this province with respect to having pets.

Now, I first want to start, Mr. Speaker, in saying that I've listened very carefully to the comments that were made by members opposite and by members on the government side of the House as well with respect to this proposed piece of legislation. But I first want to start putting my comments into context about pets and what it has meant to people that I know and, in fact, to family members with respect to owning pets and to the consequences of that.

In my life, Mr. Speaker, through my adult life and even in through my childhood, I have been an owner of pets of many—and many varieties of pets—cats, dogs, birds, fish, rats. We had—I think we've had them all in our family home while I was growing up and as an adult. But I do know that in my life I've encountered folks in my own community and elsewhere in this province, that have had very serious reactions to different types of allergens. I know that there are some folks in my own community that are personal friends of mine, that react very severely to the presence of any nut-type products, peanuts, cashews, walnuts, anything like that that will cause them an allergic reaction. In fact, someone who I know fairly well, living in this province and has a

business in my own community, had a son who died as a result of a very severe allergic reaction.

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, allergies and people that are susceptible to certain types of allergies that can take many forms. Some folks just get a stuffy nose and perhaps a few sniffles and a wheeze from time to time.

But I know in my own home, as a result of allergens that were present—from a variety of causes, I suppose—and we have done testing of our own children in my family. My sons have allergies and they can—it can be very serious. And I can remember my own son, as—one of my sons, quite young, having to have an air pump to allow my child to continue breathing, so my child didn't have to be hospitalized and put into an oxygen tent as a result of allergies that were caused by something in the environment of the family home.

At that time we had pets, and of course, since that time—and my sons have obviously grown older, their allergies have somewhat lessened—and during that time, we didn't have pets in the family home because we thought that they were the cause of some of these allergic reactions. And so, as parents, we took the steps necessary to try and protect the health of our own family members.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as a result of those changes over time—and I know in my own circumstances, having some allergic reactions to different allergens in the environment—one can grow somewhat desensitized to these allergic reactions and that they can, perhaps in some small way, outgrow these reactions. And I know that to be in my own personal circumstances, but my children, of course, as they've aged as well, they've become somewhat desensitized but not totally.

And I know in the last year or so, we've—because we didn't have pets for the first 25 years of our children's lives—in the last year we've brought a dog into our family home, and have my children started to suffer reactions as a result of that? Yes, they have. They have had reactions to that and my son is now using his puffers more as a result of the allergens that are present in the family home.

But he is somewhat desensitized as a result of being involved with friends that have pets and—but I'm not saying that everybody that will be able to become desensitized, so that we have to have some latitude in this province to make sure that the living arrangements are acceptable to people that do not

become desensitized to the allergens that are in their environment, whether they be pet-created or some other causes that would be occurring naturally in the environment.

Now, I do know that the member opposite, the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), said that there will be huge cost savings for health care as a result of this, and I don't doubt there will be some cost savings as a result of having pets, the mental health costs obviously. And I do know that now that we have a dog in the house—in the days prior, when my children use to run and greet me at the door when I came home in the evening—now it's the dog that seems to be the only one that comes to greet me at the front door. So, I mean, it's added to the quality of my life and has made my life much more pleasant when I go home every evening, to have someone greet you at the door of the family home. And not to say that my family doesn't love me, but obviously the dog is showing me great affection.

So—but I have to recognize that there are consequences of having pets in environment and you have to weigh out very carefully the circumstances that you have and not to put people at risk. And that's what I think this proposed legislation does. It can potentially put people at risk without having the opportunity for landlords to make judgment calls with respect to whether or not their particular building or structure that is open for rental purposes will have pets or not have pets.

And I do know that as a result of the fact that we have allergies in our own family, there have been cost increases as a result, health-care cost increases for my family as a result of having to go back and make health-care product purchases through the pharmacies. And so, while you can save on health-care costs on one side, you don't necessarily save on another side, so there are risks there as well. And I say to the member that while you save on one side, there can be, for other folks in our province, increased health-care costs as a result of having pets or other allergies—allergic reactions in our homes, in our family members and people that we know.

So I think we have to—this legislation that we have before us here today for debate is, I think, is not—does not meet all of the needs. And I think you need to have a more balanced approach with respect to the legislation we have and the decisions that landlords can make in conjunction with the Residential Tenancies Branch of our province.

* (10:50)

And I think the Residential Tenancies Branch—and I'm hoping most landlords in our province will take a very balanced approach, as I know our government has tried to do through the legislation that we has brought—that we have brought forward, that the member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) has referenced, that will take effects—take effect in the next month or so. And it will allow for landlords to add to the rental down payment, so to speak, with respect to buildings that will have pets in them, and it will allow—and I know in my own home, pets or young—having young children in your home, from time to time there are accidents that occur and whether it be the draperies or the carpet or the furniture of the building. I think everyone in this Chamber know having pets or young children, there can be accidents from time to time that occur.

And, of course, in a rental accommodation, that is going to be an increased cost, if that tenant who's in there and has a pet or a young family, there's accidents. And if the carpet or the draperies are ruined, of course, there's going to be costs associated with that. And, of course, those costs, then, should be borne perhaps by the tenant and not so much by the landlord, for those costs that would be occurring as a result of the rental accommodations provided by the landlord.

So I think the legislation that we have put in place is balanced and that we have put in place because there are no provinces—my understanding is there are no provinces in Canada that have a ban on pet-free apartments and Manitoba doesn't propose to do that. We have, with respect to the health and safety, of course, that has to be the primary consideration for the Residential Tenancies and, of course, for this government, as well, with respect to people that have—that rent out units in this province, living units in this province.

But, at the same time, we want to make sure and have health, safety and security for the people that are renting these buildings, so that if you come into the rental accommodations and you have an allergy, that you have to be very clear, you have to know very clearly up front whether or not pets are allowed in this province in the rental accommodations. And I think, in fairness to the people that want to rent and the people that are currently renting, they have to have some clear understanding with respect to whether or not pets are allowed in those particular buildings.

And I think because people live side by side, you can't say because you live in a rental accommodation next door or across the hallway from another apartment that you aren't going to be subject to the allergens—some of them airborne—that will obviously travel in the hallways and into other rental accommodations. I think that could put folks at risk, and I think we do not want to do that.

And by saying that under this proposed legislation, this Bill 218, that you're going to say that the Residential Tenancies or the court cannot rule on this, that there would be no balance then. How do you protect the people that have these allergies, whether they be airborne allergies or other allergies, for a person that would be vacating that suite for which a person may want to rent?

So I must say, Mr. Speaker—and I know my time is running out here—that I think this legislation that is proposed here doesn't strike the right balance, and I think the legislation our government has put in place does that.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, there's a part of this bill that resonates with me because I've been trying to help a friend, whose name is Jim Burgess, a senior, to find a seniors' apartment that allows pets. And so I got my assistant to do some research and to look for seniors' accommodation that allowed pets.

And what we came up with, after examining quite a long list that was provided by a seniors organization, was one apartment building in the downtown area in the for-profit sector that was much too expensive for him to afford to live there, and the other was a seniors' apartment in the St. Boniface area that was subsidized housing, affordable housing, and they did allow pets, but there was a four-year waiting list. And so I realized that there is a need for more pet-friendly accommodation, particularly for seniors.

However, we have been listening to people in the community, and our government has already acted on this demand for more pet-friendly apartments. And so in, as recently as June, 2009, we amended The Residential Tenancies Act to encourage more landlords to welcome tenants with pets. And when the rules—new rules come into effect next month, landlords will be able to charge an additional pet damage deposit for rental units. And some landlords have already told us that with this change, they will allow tenants to have pets in their apartments.

And I would like to share some of my experiences with drafting—well, not so much drafting, because I've never been a legislative draftsman, but having input into legislation. When I came to this place in 1990, I really was kind of a single-issue person, except that I had two single issues. One was housing and the other was poverty issues. And I was really focussed on those two issues and didn't really care about other issues, but I very quickly came to learn and appreciate that we have to be concerned about many, many different issues here, and we can't just harp or complain or lobby about any one issue.

And my experience, before I got elected, was actually quite helpful in changing some of my views, because, back about 1984 or '85, I was part of a tenants advocacy group, and we had a demonstration in front of the former Landlord and Tenant Affairs Branch office on Edmonton Street and, very quickly, the government responded, either because they felt the heat or because they thought it was a good thing to do to take our concerns seriously. And they appointed a working group to review The Landlord and Tenant Act and The Rent Regulation Act. And, initially, our group appointed a tenant representative, but that person was unable to attend meetings, and so I was appointed to represent tenants in the city of Winnipeg and, indeed, the province of Manitoba. I was the only tenant representative on this working group, and there was a representative of the landlords association, and the property managers association, and the committee met for two or three years to review the two previous acts.

And it was a very interesting experience because, of course, there were things that tenants felt very strongly about that we thought just had to be in the new act or an amendment to an existing act. For example, we thought that a condition report should be compulsory—that landlords could require a condition report of all tenants because we thought that protected tenants because you had to list what the condition of the suite upon rental and upon moving out, and that provided that some sort of proof of what damage there may or may not have been during the residential tenancy's time.

Landlords, they had their list of things that they thought that they wanted, and I don't remember what they were, but one sort of long-standing issue with landlords is that security deposits aren't high enough. And I think they were asking for a full month's security deposit rather than half a month. And I don't remember what the issues of the property managers

association was but I remember they had a very good representative.

And so what happened was there had to be not only consultation—and we had to listen to the other representatives—but there had to be trade-offs and there had to be compromises. And, eventually, the new act came in. In fact, it came in after 1990, and so I was here to speak to The Residential Tenancies Act, and I was here when it was voted upon. And I think it was supported by all parties because there had been extensive consultation and co-operation with landlords and property managers and tenants.

And so when the government is looking at a private member's bill, we have to take a broad perspective. We have to consider the interests of everybody. We can't just consider the interests of tenants who, yes, have a desire to have pets in this case, but we also have to consider the interests of those people who might have allergies for whom living in a suite where there's previously been a tenant with a pet doesn't work. We have to consider the interests of landlords and property managers who are going to say, yes, there's going to be a lot more wear and tear on these units, and there's going to be more expenses, and that's a problem and a concern for us.

And so I think there is a middle way or a moderate way, and that is to make it voluntary, and that where landlords want to have—allow tenants to have pets, that, yes, that's a possibility, and we've taken that into account.

So we—and we are bringing together pet owners, landlords, health-care professionals and the Winnipeg Humane Society to develop a pet-friendly apartment strategy. And we want to make sure that landlords know about the new rules, and that tenants can prove they are responsible pet owners.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster, on a point of order?

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

Mr. Speaker, according to our rules, at 11 o'clock debate would remain standing if it's not concluded, and I'm wondering if, in order to keep with the rules, that if the government still has more people that would like to speak on the bill, that we would be prepared to offer leave so that the government can continue to speak on the bill in

hopes that, ultimately, the government would allow us to see the bill go to committee today, if possible.

So I would ask if maybe there would be leave so that we would be able to go beyond this particular rule.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister for Innovation, Energy and Mines, on the same point of order.

* (11:00)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Oh, yes, Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I'm a bit surprised—I'm quite surprised by the reaction of the member because we had agreed to this arrangement as House leaders, that, in fact, we divide up the time and allow people to speak on this matter and to vote or not vote, and we allowed bills to come forward, like the member—we allowed by consent for the bill to come forward to allow for that debate, and now the member is standing up and wanting to change the rules.

That sounds to me—I don't think that's appropriate because in our House discussions we're trying to be—allow private members' bills to be debated and to not be political, but the member is standing up and saying something that's totally contrary to the discussions and the agreements that we had arrived at.

And the agreement was, yes, we'll allow the Liberal Party to bring forward resolutions and to have them debated, and we'll let them to be debated, and that was the agreement. And now the member's trying to change the rules in that agreement. And, Mr. Speaker, that's—I'm quite disturbed by that—that seems like a tactic, and that really breaks the spirit of the compromise we had all agreed to, to allow bills and resolutions to come forward and allow private members to speak.

So, in fact, it's not a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and it's against the very agreement that I negotiated, personally, with the member from Inkster and with the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Hawranik). So I don't think that's an appropriate point of order given what we agreed to, unanimously, to allow these things to be debated.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, our normal practice is that at 10 we deal with second reading of public bills and 11 o'clock we deal with resolutions that are on the Order Paper.

And so the honourable member does not have a point of order, but he did ask leave if there was the will of the House to extend second reading of this bill and delay the commitment that we have for 11 o'clock to deal with resolutions.

So I have to put it to the House. Is there leave to deviate from—*[interjection]* No? There is no leave? Okay, so now—the hour is now past 11, and when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) will have four minutes remaining.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: And the hour now being 11 a.m., we will now deal with resolutions.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 8—Manitoba Arts and Cultural Organizations

Mr. Speaker: We'll deal with Resolution No. 8, the Manitoba Arts and Cultural organization.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, prior to putting the resolution, I'm—I would like to ask leave of the House to delete one of the WHEREASes.

I would like to delete the: WHEREAS Manitoba's extremely competitive cost of living combined with excellent public service make it a perfect place for the creative class to live and work.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to delete the: WHEREAS Manitoba's extremely competitive cost of living combined with excellent public service make it a perfect place for a creative class to live and work.

Is there agreement to delete that one clause? *[Agreed]*

So now we will recognize—or I will recognize the honourable member for St. Norbert.

Ms. Brick: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe),

WHEREAS Manitoba has a long and storied tradition of vibrant arts and cultural organizations; and

WHEREAS our province boasts a wide array of wonderful cultural festivals including Folklorama, the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, the Winnipeg Jazz Festival, Festival du Voyageur, Folk Fest, the Gimli Film Festival, and the Fringe Festival; and

WHEREAS an impressive number of renowned artistic institutions have long called Manitoba home, including the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Winnipeg Contemporary Dancers, the Manitoba Opera, and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra; and

WHEREAS our province's lively literary community is a bastion of young talent and has produced writers who are read around the world including Margaret Laurence, Miriam Toews, Carol Shields and David Bergen; and

WHEREAS Manitoba artists of all backgrounds and who work with almost any media are developed and supported by many different programs and grants, many of which are provided by the Manitoba Arts Council; and

WHEREAS 2010 is Manitoba Homecoming, a year long drive to bring former Manitobans home to experience some of the many special events and festivals that will be happening throughout the year; and

WHEREAS Winnipeg is the official 2010 Cultural Capital of Canada, a designation which bestows a number of special events on the city throughout the year.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue to support art and cultural organizations that enhance the tourism opportunities and livability of our province.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe),

WHEREAS the Manitoba—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Ms. Brick: It really is my pleasure to bring forward this resolution to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. This resolution calls on the Legislative Assembly to urge the provincial government to continue to support arts and cultural organizations that enhance the tourism opportunities and livability of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I listened with some amazement this morning to the radio on CBC as I was driving in, and they were talking about Rendezvous 2010, which is a national tourism conference that is happening here in Winnipeg this week. It's been well

attended and Manitoba has made a very positive impression.

A reporter from Germany was saying today that Manitoba has many positive things to offer, including fishing and outdoor opportunities. He followed that up by saying that if you're not an outdoor enthusiast, there's also many, many cultural activities that can be participated in and that those make our province one of the highlights of opportunities that are here in Canada. So I think, Mr. Speaker, that this resolution goes to talk about tourism and it also talks about how arts make for a strong community.

We know there's a strong connection between arts, culture and a healthy society. In supporting the arts, we build a strong community. Many health professionals talk to us about the positive impacts arts have on their—on the health outlook of their patients. We know, according to Statistics Canada, that the most recent figures, Manitoba's per capita spending on culture, is the second highest in the country. According to Statistics Canada, Manitoba's total spending on culture has increased 54 percent since 2004, which is really quite amazing, Mr. Speaker, when you think about it. That's a huge amount that we've gone up, and I think that it speaks volumes to the fact that we recognize that in supporting the arts and culture, we are actually supporting our province. We are building our province to be a powerhouse in terms of cultural organizations. Despite the economic downturn and the province's commitment to fiscal restraint, we've been able to maintain all our major grants to cultural organizations in 2010.

When we look at the film and video credits, they've helped to make Manitoba a place where film and video is recognized as being very important. Manitoba is the most competitive province in the country when it comes to attracting film productions, and that was from the *Winnipeg Free Press* on March 24th, 2010.

And I think when you take a look at film and video, we know that this is one of the new emerging types of art that is out there. I know that the young people take a look at it and they study it in school. They recognize that it's the new wave of art.

From Jamie Brown, the CEO of Frantic Films, he said that we are very pleased that the government has taken steps to ensure that Manitoba remains competitive in the multibillion dollar Canadian film and television industry. The decision that was made

today will maintain and create jobs and opportunity for Manitobans, and this was on the Manitoba Screen release of March 25th, 2010. Between 2003 and 2008, the film industry met or exceeded the hundred million per year spent on in-province production activity.

And when we look at one of the things, Mr. Speaker, I met with a Polish delegation who was here, and we talked to them about the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and they were quite pleased to see that that was something that is happening here in Manitoba. It's the first Canadian museum that will be developed outside of Ottawa, and it will have world-class exhibits, and it will make a significant contribution to our province's tourism sector.

*(11:10)

I was watching last night on the news when they were talking about it also being an architectural amazement, Mr. Speaker. They were showing how very difficult it is to make the walls, the curves of the walls, and how much concrete is going into it. It's going to be an architectural as well as a amazing museum. It's going to stand our province proud.

Our government has been a very strong supporter of the Manitoba Arts Council. The Manitoba Arts Council mandate is to encourage and help maintain and sustain the artistic community here in Manitoba. They met with our caucus in March of this year, Mr. Speaker, and it was really quite amazing to listen to them talk about rural Manitoba. We had a lady there from Steinbach and she talked, thanks, in large part, to the Manitoba Arts Council projects, we boast a thriving arts community in Steinbach, which is something, you know, Mr. Speaker, that we might not necessarily think about. We think about Winnipeg as being the cultural capital of the country but we don't necessarily think about some of the rural and some of the northern communities.

And the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) here is reminding me of the Brandon Folk Festival which is in July and I think he's doing a little promotion here, as I'm standing here. *[interjection]* Manitoba summer fairs and some of the great things that are happening.

But just to get back for a moment, Mr. Speaker, to Steinbach, where the individual who was there told us that there are 60 art programs and events throughout the year in Steinbach and that, across the

entire province last year, there were 48 artists who visited 185 schools in 90 communities across our province last year and, you know, it's in sparking this interest in students and young people in the arts that we see that they are going to have a culturally rich life as they move forward.

And I'm very proud of our province for ensuring that the Manitoba Arts Council can continue the good work they do and, in particular, they talked about some of the projects that they're working on this year and they said that three of their funding priorities are currently projects in the north, in the inner city, and in rural Manitoba. And I want to congratulate the Manitoba Arts Council for some of the great work they do in ensuring that projects, for example like the Graffiti Gallery, are able to maintain the good work that they do.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to talk about some of the work our government has done in introducing legislation to establish Upper Fort Garry as a historic site, and securing the future of this historic and culturally important piece for Manitoba. The Province will invest \$2.5 million in the Upper Fort Garry site and that will go towards acquiring land, and site preparation, and making sure that we can secure this as a provincial heritage park.

I have a provincial heritage park in my constituency and that's the Trappist Monastery and it's a very well-visited site and I was very pleased to see that our government was able to invest over a million dollars and—last year—to maintain the integrity of that site to make sure that it's there for people to visit and that the monastery ruins are kept in a condition—as they were deteriorating—to make sure that they're a condition that people can come, can visit the site and they're safe and that the—there was a problem in that the bricks were starting to fall down, Mr. Speaker.

In 2008, in regards to things that we've done and we've done—we've looked at the Upper Fort Garry site. We've also encouraged additional work in terms of work on the UNESCO World Heritage site which is going to be a designation that, once achieved, will mark our province as a destination for eco-tourism from across the world.

Mr. Speaker, we've also done work on the Winnipeg Art Gallery. We've put \$1.5 million to support an upgrade to the gallery space and, as many people know who have young children, the Children's Museum has recently received \$1.25 million to support 12 innovative galleries, and

I can remember when I had young children visiting that Children's Museum and enjoying it immensely. Having something that's specially geared towards children in an interactive fashion I think is really a positive for our province.

We've also put money into the Stonewall Quarry Park Heritage Arts Centre, \$1.35-million contribution to the construction of the visitors centre. Money towards the Panjab Cultural and Seniors Centre, \$250,000 towards construction, and also to the Jewish Cultural Centre, the Lubavitch Centre, \$320,000 towards the construction of a new building. Also, Mr. Speaker, the Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium has received a quarter of a million dollars towards facility upgrades.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that Winnipeg is Canada's 2010 cultural capital and that we also have the Homecoming 2010, that is helping us to attract more people to come back to Manitoba. There's going to be a huge socials across the province organized. We know that there's one here in Winnipeg. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the resolution. I think it's an important resolution, and it's certainly one that we're very supportive. I have to say that I am a very big fan of the arts, so I'm very, very delighted to be able to speak to this resolution. And I was really happy to hear that a lot of my colleagues feel exactly the same way, and we have many of them that are very, very interested in speaking to this.

And I'm really glad to see that that kind of support from our side of the House for this, for the importance of the arts scene in Manitoba and the cultural scene here. I believe that arts and cultural are extremely important to the fabric of our communities and to our lives. And whether we're involved personally or as someone on the sidelines, there is so much benefit we can achieve from either of those aspects.

I think our lives are very, very much enriched in so many different ways through our vibrant arts and culture community here in Winnipeg and in Manitoba. I also find that Winnipeg itself, even though we're a smaller city, we have a world class—or we are a world-class centre for both the arts and culture. And it's always amazed me and I've always

wondered what is it that makes Winnipeg tick in terms of being able to pull off some of the events that we can pull off here. And what makes Winnipeg tick, where we can have such talented, talented people: talented artists, talented behind-the-scenes people, that can actually make us thrive in this area of arts and culture.

And I don't know if I've ever had a fulsome reason come to mind, but certainly the people in this province have an incredible ability to make a lot of this happen. And I think we've got a lot to be very, very proud of here in Manitoba and the kind of environment here that nurtures the creativity that we see here. I think Manitobans are fortunate that there are a multitude of countries and ethnic traditions represented in our province. And each cultural group has its own unique history and customs that can enrich the lives of others when they are shared. And there are also a wide variety of artistic organizations that contribute to both the tourism industry and the lives of all Manitobans. And there's so many to mention that, unfortunately, we won't have a chance to mention all of them. But, you know, when you think of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Festival du Voyageur, the Gimli festival, there are so many organizations that continually support art in its many forms throughout the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think nurturing arts and cultural institutions in Manitoba encourages our province to celebrate diversity and experience a variety of artistic expressions and cultures. And when we are open to learning from other cultures or to discussions spurred by art, or to participating in new traditions, we take down a piece of the barriers that separate us.

I have had the pleasure on many occasions to attend the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and I'm thrilled that I have a pair of Evelyn Hart's ballet slippers at home that I was fortunate enough to win in an auction. And, you know, I look at these on many occasions, and they're so tiny and they're so worn, and it reminds me all the time of watching the gracefulness and fluidity of Evelyn Hart as she danced. And she was just somebody that was mesmerizing to watch. My cousin's daughter is a dancer with the Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers and again, another form of dance, another form of art that is enthralling in its own right.

* (11:20)

Manitoba Opera—I mean, our operas that we put on in Manitoba, where they continually strive to put

forward the best, you know, in terms of traditional and innovative opera performances, are, indeed, another massive benefit, I think, to this province. I think back to one of my favourites, which was *Madama Butterfly*, and I recall the opera. I recall it, you know, bringing tears to my eyes. And I think, you know, when music can reach your soul like that, it, indeed, is doing the job that it was meant to do. And Manitoba Opera is a leader among Canadian opera companies in featuring Canadian talent, with special emphasis on artists and technicians from Manitoba. And we should be very, very proud of that.

You know, we've mentioned the Gimli Film Festival. And I was just looking at a picture the other day in a tourist magazine of the Film Festival, and the people sitting on the beach watching this. And what a uniquely Manitoban event. And, you know, to have an ability to sit there under the stars and look at the water and listen to the water and watch movies on this giant screen is, really, a unique aspect of this province.

You know, when we look at the cultural events, Mr. Speaker, we see Folklorama. And every year, when we have the privilege of attending all of these events, it, again, just draws my attention to the fact that we have so many people in this province that are so hard working. They are so innovative. They are so talented and artistic. To be able to put on an event like Folklorama, year after year, that is a major challenge, I think, for a lot of the cultural communities. And yet they continue to do it because of their great pride in their culture, but—and their great commitment to their culture. And I am just so grateful to them, because I think they open our eyes to a lot of aspects about their culture, and we learn so much. I would note that 2010 marks the 40th anniversary of Folklorama and I look forward, once again, to attending that, and would note that we now have over 400,000 people attending these pavilions every year.

Festival du Voyageur—again, another great event in Manitoba. I love the aspect of the winter festival and the pea soup, and the fiddling and the dog races, and, you know, going back to our early days here in Manitoba to celebrate the distinct culture of the Franco-Manitoban community. And, again, a marvellous event that takes place across the province and emphasizes the beauty of winter and provides historical and cultural activities for everyone to enjoy.

There are so many events throughout the province, as well, not just in Winnipeg, but many, many different events throughout Manitoba that, again, showcase our province and the many things that Manitoba has to offer.

We also have a strong literary community producing authors of outstanding quality. And I thank God every day for writers, Mr. Speaker, because reading is my passion, and it allows me to escape some of the trials and tribulations of every day. And we have such a great group of writers that have either been born here or have chosen to live here. I look at Miriam Toews, Carol Shields, David Bergen, Allan Levine, and I just—I'm amazed at what they have put out, and how marvellous their work is.

We also have a vibrant visual arts community that has followers around the world. And I have to say that with the visual arts that I have in my home, I find it brings a lot of peace to me. I look at the art hanging on my wall, whether it's a—you know, a simple piece or something that's more substantive or sophisticated, and I love them all. And I find it brings such a calm to me when I have the opportunity to look at the art in my home.

And I would like to acknowledge that, you know, without the other groups that the—like the Manitoba Arts Council and other arts organizations, without their support, we would not see the kind of, I think, growth that we have been able to see in this area.

And I certainly want to acknowledge all of that, and the efforts of governments, whether it was the government in the '90s that recognized the importance of some of this, with film tax credits, and what this government has continued to do. I think that's very, very important because we have to nurture that.

And I think that Manitoba has a bright future ahead of it, and the arts and cultural organizations have a very, very important role to play. It is vital that such organizations are supported and encouraged to provide cultural education and outlets for creativity to every person in our province. And, hopefully, as our young people are growing up, they can enjoy all of this as well and find that they can benefit from the beauty of what all of this offers in this province.

So I'm very happy today to say that we're very supportive of art, music, dance, literature, all of these wonderful types—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: –of organizations in Manitoba.

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

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I thank my honourable colleagues for the warm welcome, once again.

I'm delighted to be able to rise today to support and to speak to this very important member's–private member's resolution submitted by my honourable colleague from St. Norbert. I think that this is an important resolution that builds, Mr. Speaker, on much of the work that our government has been doing to ensure that arts and cultural organizations are a central focus in Manitoba and, of course, encourages our government to go further. And I think that that's an important thing.

Right now, Manitoba is second highest in the country, Mr. Speaker, on per capita spending on culture, and this is something that's risen–this is spending that's risen over 50 percent since 2004 here in this province. So it's very clear that our government is a supporter of the arts and–our arts and culture in Manitoba.

I believe Manitoba has some of the most diverse and interesting and engaging local arts and culture of any province in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And it's these organizations that provide Manitobans with the soul of our province. And especially in this year of Homecoming 2010, I think it's important that our province now celebrate the cultural soul that we have with the Manitobans that are coming back to visit.

I just wanted to talk a little bit, Mr. Speaker, about my own experience with the arts and culture scene in Manitoba. Some of my experiences will be shared by many of my colleagues here in the House and, of course, with many other Manitobans, but perhaps there's some that are unique to my experience and specifically within my community.

But first I wanted to mention, Mr. Speaker, is, of course, our Winnipeg Folk Festival. And I know the member from Brandon was mentioning the Brandon folk festival; I haven't had an experience with that folk festival, but very–I've had quite a bit of experience with the Winnipeg Folk Festival. And, you know, I started going there, actually, as a very young man and, you know, and my experience was maybe as much for the cultural and arts component

as it was for the camping. But, you know, the point is that I was there and my family was there and my friends were there and–but as time went on, my experience with the festival, it only got better and better. You know, I became more engaged with the music, with the art that–you know, the art demonstrations and displays that exist at the festival and with the artists that performed there. And I got more and more engaged with that, and finally I sort of took that next step to become a volunteer with the Winnipeg Folk Festival and that's now been going on for a number of years. And I can say that I'm–now, I feel I'm even more engaged with the festival on–as a volunteer and as a patron, and with the spirit of the festival. And I really appreciate the–what this festival brings to our province.

And I believe that as my personal experience was getting better and better, it's also clear that the festival was getting better and better, and it's, of course, a tribute to the organizers and to the work that they do. But it's also due to significant funding from this government and from other levels of government to make the festival site itself a better venue for the performers and for the patrons, and also for funding for bringing in new artists and supporting them right from when they're young, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:30)

And attendance is way up at the festival. It's becoming more and more successful. I think this is the first year now that they've actually capped attendance at the festival. The site is sort of at its maximum right now, but that just goes to show the significance of this festival to people in our province. And, as well, Mr. Speaker, it also speaks to the festival's ability to bring in tourists and bring in people from outside of Manitoba to appreciate both our local music and the music that we bring to the festival every year.

One of my favourite activities at the festival as I'm taking the long walk from the campground to the festival site is to spot licence plates and to see, you know, where our visitors are coming in from all over the–well, from all over North America, frankly, Mr. Speaker, from as far away as California or Nova Scotia and everything in-between. And it's just an amazing experience to know that these people are coming to appreciate, as I said, not just the world-class music that's brought in but, of course, our local artists and our local music scene as well.

And, to that end, Mr. Speaker, you know, the effects of the festival extends much beyond those five days in July, as I'm sure most members in this House have also partaken in local concerts that are hosted by the Winnipeg Folk Festival and sponsored by the Folk Festival organizers. And, as well, the young performers program which I have—I've known several individuals who have come through that program from being very young and just getting started in the music industry and in making their own music, and now those friends are Juno winners and Grammy nominated world-class acts, and they're from right here in Manitoba. So they got their start here in Manitoba, and now they're sharing their cultural and their artistic talents with the rest of the country.

Another experience that I have, of course, Mr. Speaker, is with Folklorama, which is I think a very important part of the identity of the city of Winnipeg. I think when people think of Winnipeg and especially Winnipeg in the summer, which is probably our best time of year, of course, Folklorama is one of those things that's immediately recognizable as a Winnipeg thing. It's, you know—the nature of the festival is so very Winnipeg. It's volunteer driven. It's based in our communities and it's spread out, of course, across our city, and the nature of the festival is inclusive and 'diversive' and embracing of all the cultures that make up the mosaic of Winnipeg.

Of course, myself, Mr. Speaker, I'm maybe a little bit partial to the German pavilion and, you know, maybe just as much for the sausage and the beer selection as for the cultural significance for me, but it does feel like home to me and several of my friends and family.

But Folklorama is, of course, about experiencing new things, so, of course, I've taken in a wide selection of the 48 pavilions that are across the city, an appreciation for the rich cultural mosaic that makes up our province.

And this is one of the top tourist attractions in North America, Mr. Speaker, and it brings people, again, to—back to Winnipeg and to Winnipeg for the first time to experience our province and our city and to appreciate the work that we do here.

Just briefly, cultural celebrations don't end at the city boundaries, Mr. Speaker. This winter I had my first experience at the Brandon Winter Fair, and I say first experience, but actually I was there as a young child, but my memory is not quite that good and I—it seemed like the first time this time. But I think it's an

important celebration to bring together both the rural and the urban folk from Brandon, from Winnipeg, from all over the province to appreciate the rural lifestyle and some of the activities that they plan there.

And, also, another experience is the Gimli Film Festival, which the speaker before me mentioned, and I just wanted to mention very briefly to say that it is a festival that demonstrates that the smaller towns in Manitoba have as much appreciation for culture as anywhere else. It's a unique venue, as was mentioned, and it's a great way to appreciate good cinema, Mr. Speaker.

And, just briefly, then, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk about some local groups in my community that are promoting a cultural and artistic lifestyle to others in my community. I just had a—an experience over the last weekend to go to a local art show in the community and it was something that I have attended before, but I got to experience it through the eyes of somebody who's new to the community and just some residents who were walking down the street and got to experience the art that is produced by local artists and shown to other individuals in our neighbourhoods.

And I think that it's a way that it feeds—this is one of the ways that it feeds into the larger art and cultural scene in Winnipeg and in Manitoba, and I think that these are very, very important conduits for bringing the attention to the larger population.

So I just wanted to end, Mr. Speaker, by saying, you know, our government has shown that we're—that arts and culture are a priority, and especially in this, you know, economic climate. And with the current economic realities, our government has committed to holding fast on our funding and I believe that this resolution speaks to continuing that to support the arts and culture in Manitoba and support it going forward.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I truly appreciate the opportunity to rise and participate in the debate of the honourable member for St. Norbert's (Ms. Brick) resolution, Manitoba Arts and Cultural Organizations.

I say that very sincerely because I truly support the initiative of this resolution and recognition of our diversity in Manitoba, and the celebration of that diversity through the arts and cultural events that do take place year-round here in the province of Manitoba.

And I would very much like to recognize the organization in Portage la Prairie that, last Thursday, I had an opportunity to attend the celebration of the arts, An Enchanted Evening, that was a fundraising dinner and art exhibition and auction for the benefit of the Portage & District Arts Centre.

I'd also like to make mention of the persons that were active within the evening's event, that being the master of ceremonies, Mr. Chris Kitchen, who hails from Portage la Prairie and is an announcer on Mix 96.5—entertained us thoroughly throughout the evening. Mr. David Rodgers participated very actively as he auctioned off 13 pieces of art work from local artists for the fundraising efforts that evening. I also want to make mention of the venerable Norman Collier, who provided the grace for the dinner that evening. There was a very entertaining video that played throughout the evening's supper and that was provided by Mr. Dennis Wiens. We also had entertainment throughout the evening by Ed Goertzen who—a celebrated guitarist. Talia Pura, an aerial artist who brought a lot of oohs and aahs from the audience as she dropped from the ceiling on numerous occasions through her aerial display. And then there was quite a lot of activity throughout the evening as we gathered and enjoyed the company of almost 300 patrons that evening. We'll say that it is a very enjoyable evening that I have participated, in attendance, for more years than I can now remember.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

This particular year, though, we're missing one of the long-time patron of the Portage & District Arts Centre, and that being Mr. Perry Robinson, who passed away in the last year, who would be one that never missed the evening. And his wife, Janice, was there to be recognized and to be thanked for the many hours of true dedication that Perry Robinson contributed to the arts community in Portage la Prairie.

But the evening is one that is, indeed, a celebration of the arts and brings opportunity to enjoy not only the camaraderie of the evening's dinner, but to experience the talents and gifted artists of the central region and to—and, thankfully, they share that talent through their art works, donated for fundraising activities, and all of us had a chance to participate in purchase of the art work. And I will say that my office here in the Legislative Assembly, and in the constituency, are adorned with many local artists' works.

* (11:40)

Also, I would like to recognize that the new member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly that hails from Concordia did recognize that there is lots of activities outside of the Perimeter, but as an individual that has lived all his life outside the Perimeter, we do want to recognize the good work of organizations such as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet who, through their satellite program, provides instruction to young people and those not so young with programs throughout the province.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And—one particular jazz dance program that my daughter Katelyn truly experienced and rose through the various levels to a point where taking instruction here in Winnipeg was most enjoyed by not only herself but family members who had opportunity to view their—her talent and some of what the Royal Winnipeg Ballet had taught to her and many of her classmates through their satellite program in Portage la Prairie.

This is indeed an opportunity to celebrate the diversity, as I had mentioned at the outset, of our province. And most of us have come to reside in Manitoba through past generations' decisions that—to move to Canada and to Manitoba from countries throughout the world. And I will say that the farming operation that we have in Portage la Prairie has displayed flags of many different nations that are from our native countries around the world. My ancestry is reflective of Denmark and Germany and Scotland and England and it is something I'm very, very proud of, and other members of our family come from other countries such as the Ukraine. I would like also to recognize the past support of administrations such as that of Mr. Gary Filmon who, indeed, wanted to celebrate the diversity of our province and some of the different organizations that the government had—has supported over the years.

One Portager of note I would like to recognize at this time is Mrs. Roberta Christianson, who served as chair of the Manitoba Arts Council for many, many years and has now retired from that position. But when anyone wants to speak of our diversity and the arts here in Manitoba, Roberta Christianson is certainly a person of note and very much celebrated for her dedication and commitment to Manitoba in that capacity.

I also want to recognize a most—another enjoyable event that we try and participate in, year in

year out, and that being Folklorama here in the city of Winnipeg. But outside the Perimeter, we also have a celebration of nations that moves from community to community around southern Manitoba, recognizing various countries of origin and through the cuisine that is enjoyed now here in Canada, but originally oriented elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

There—a new festival celebrated in Portage la Prairie, because of the number of migrant workers from Mexico that get their employs in Portage la Prairie through the summer season, have now come to celebrate their Independence Day in Portage la Prairie, and many of us have the chance to go out and enjoy Mexican cuisine in the evening and the dance and the music and the celebrations of the Mexicans on that particular day.

So it is a delight for me to have had the opportunity to participate today in the discussion in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly of the resolution brought to us by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), and I encourage all members of the Assembly to support this resolution and thereby recognizing the diversity and cultural depth of our province. Thank you.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of this resolution. This resolution is important to encourage awareness about different cultures, and I—according—of these—all these organizations are similar cultural organizations, they're part of—important. They play an important role to have an education about all these cultures.

I remember when I—in 1972, when one of my friend came from India, and at that time we took him outside and he was wearing a turban and the people were not aware of what kind of person he is, what he has and what kind of funny hat he has and kids were laughing at him. Now everybody know about the Sikhs, and because of these organizations we have—Sikhs have Nagar Kirtan almost every year about four or five thousand people. They display their culture and people are—become aware of other culture, people become aware of that, and that way it's bringing—these organizations are bringing these cultures close to each other.

We celebrate—the Sikhs celebrate Vaisakhi and that's a big festival and is enjoyed by all the other culture people, they come over there. Similarly, we also celebrate Diwali which is a festival of Hindus and Sikhs together and different culture people all

from different cultures, they go over there and enjoy their festival. So these organizations are playing an important role.

Also, we—these organizations have come up with the idea that we should have a Human Rights Museum and it's important to have this kind of museum so people could be educated. As Mahatma Gandhi's statue is supposed to be there, so that will make people think who Mahatma Gandhi was, what were his ideas and force them to read about him and, also, it will start a debate about a non-violent way of getting freedom during this time when there's lots of violence going all over the world, but it will also will force us to think further. If Mahatma Gandhi's statue should be in a Human Rights Museum, why not Guru Nanak's? Why not Guru Tegh Bahadur's from the same country? Why not Guru Angad Dev's?

Those people have fought for the lives of the lowly people about 500 years ago. At that time when the Indian society was divided in castes and the lower caste was not allowed to pray to God. They were not allowed to go to the mundas [*phonetic*], but at that time Guru Nanak allegedly was do not consider person by his caste. Consider a person what his ideas are, what his thinking is. Similarly, Guru Tegh Bahadur, who went to sacrifice himself for the sake of other religion, not his own religion, but other religion, about Hindu religion, so why his statue cannot be there? So this kind of debate will start by having the Human Rights Museum.

* (11:50)

So this provincial government has been a reliable and imaginative patron of arts and cultural institutions, festivals and groups. These arts and cultural institutions, festivals and groups contribute meaningfully to the quality of life in our province and to the strength of our local economies. This is a particularly appropriate time for this resolution because Winnipeg is one of Canada's official 2010 cultural capitals. It is also, of course, Homecoming 2010 province-wide.

According to Statistics Canada's most recent figures, Manitoba's per capita spending on culture is the second highest in the country. According to Statistics Canada, Manitoba's total spending on culture has increased 54 percent since 2004. Despite the economic downturn and the Province's commitment to fiscal restraint, this government maintained all major grants to cultural organizations in 2010.

Our government's enhanced film and video tax credit makes Manitoba an enticing place of the production of film and video with valuable economic spinoffs. Manitoba is the most competitive province in the country when it comes to attracting film productions according to *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 24, 2010. From Jamie Brown, CEO of Frantic Films: We are very pleased that the government has taken steps to ensure that Manitoba remains competitive in the multibillion dollar Canadian film and television industry. Their decision today will maintain and create jobs and opportunities for Manitobans. Between 2003 and 2008, the film industry met or exceeded \$100 million per year spent on in-province production activity.

Our government has contributed \$40 million to the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. Our government has introduced legislation to establish Upper Fort Garry as an historic site, securing the future of this historic and culturally important piece of Manitoba. The province will invest \$2.5 million in the Upper Fort Garry site towards land acquisition, site preparation and other expenses to help us secure the area as a provincial heritage park.

In 2008, our government introduced the book publishing tax credit to support and encourage Manitoba publishers.

Our government's Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism works closely with the private sector in efforts to promote our province as a tourism destination. Industry participation in Travel Manitoba's marketing and product initiatives has tripled in recent years to well over a million dollars annually.

This year, as always, our government is supporting a number of cultural and sporting events expected to attract tourists: Homecoming 2010, Memorial Cup in Brandon, Royal Bank Cup in Dauphin.

Our government is supporting the First Nations-led initiative to have the east side of Lake Winnipeg recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a designation that, once achieved, will mark our province as a destination for eco-tourists from across the world.

We also have Folklorama every year established by the Folk Arts Council of Winnipeg in 1970 as a one-time event, now billed as the largest and longest running multicultural festival of its kind in the world and one of North America's top tourism attractions.

Last year, Folklorama welcomed 442,000 visitors from around the world to 48 pavilions across Winnipeg. Folklorama administers Folklorama travel, Folklorama talent and Folklorama teachings.

The year before I tried to go to all of the pavilions, for all of the 44 pavilions. Unfortunately, I missed two. So I went to 42. But I want to set the record, but I don't know whether I will be able. I will try again, but we'll see what happens.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, given the time, I'll keep my comments brief and to the point in regards to—this is a resolution that, I think, is worthy of passing.

It acknowledges many positive attributes that the province of Manitoba has in terms of its arts and culture and preservation and promotion of what many Manitobans, if not all Manitobans, hold very dear to their hearts. When—in reading the resolution, things such as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the Winnipeg Symphony have done us so proud over the years in terms of opening Winnipeg up to the world. And many of our artists have gone on to become world-recognized individuals that have done our city and, in fact, our province very proud.

We have wonderful organizations and individuals that volunteer into the thousands, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that Manitoba is enriched with all sorts of activities. Two that come to my mind is the royal Brandon fair—winter fair, something in which I've had the opportunity to be able to participate in. And it's—I think it's a good example of a rural activity that has had a very profound impact in many different ways. Two—Folklorama is an event in which all members of this Chamber participate, which every year thousands of Manitobans and people from abroad. It's been recognized in North America as a first-class event and, literally, in order to drive the Folklorama, it requires thousands of volunteers on an annual basis.

And that is only a sampling of the different types of organizations that are out there. And we would applaud and acknowledge and thank those many, many, many volunteers that really express their culture, their heritage and add to our very social fabric. And it is important to recognize the year of 2010, and I think the theme of the Manitoba Homecoming is a wonderful theme, and those

individuals involved in the Homecoming of 2010 should also be applauded.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to see this resolution pass.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), Manitoba Arts and Cultural Organizations.

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

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, let the record show that the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the record will show that the vote was unanimous by all members of the House.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I think there might be a will to call it 12 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, is it the will of the House to call it 12 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour now being 12 noon, we will take a recess and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

CORRIGENDUM

On Thursday, May 6, 2010, page 1931, first column, third paragraph, should have read:

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would ask for leave of the House to move to Bill 204 for debate this morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 11, 2010

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Resolutions	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Res. 8–Manitoba Arts and Cultural Organizations	
Second Readings–Public Bills			
Bill 218–The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants Who Own Pets)		Brick	2047
Gerrard	2037	Driedger	2050
Mackintosh	2039	Wiebe	2052
Lamoureux	2040	Faurschou	2053
Korzeniowski	2042	Saran	2055
Reid	2043	Lamoureux	2056
Martindale	2045		

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