

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 17, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on a point of order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to change my comments in debate on Bill 4 from yesterday to remove any reference to another MLA or to a constituency.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to change the comments of the honourable member for River Heights during debate on Bill 4 from yesterday to remove any reference to another MLA or to a constituency? *[Agreed]*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): I wonder if there is the will of the House to proceed to Bill 208, The Remembrance Day Awareness Act and Amendments to The Public Schools Act.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to proceed directly to Bill 208? *[Agreed]*

We'll now call Bill 208.

Bill 208—The Remembrance Day Awareness Act and Amendments to The Public Schools Act

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I moved, seconded by the honourable member for Assiniboia

(Mr. Rondeau), that the Bill 208, The Remembrance Day Awareness Act and Amendments to The Public Schools Act, be now read a second time and referred to committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to present this bill to the House.

Manitoba has a long, storied history of military involvement. Thousands of Manitobans have participated in armed conflicts, most notably World Wars I and II, the Korean War and the war in Afghanistan, with honour and valour.

Many of these Manitoba servicemen and women have been endowed with some of the highest military distinctions, including the Victoria Cross, medals of Military Valour and the Order of Military Merit. In fact, the most decorated serviceman in Canadian history is William Barker of Dauphin, Manitoba, who was awarded the Victoria Cross and many other military awards for his valiant service as a pilot during World War I. Local newspapers detailed in August 6th and 7th of 1914 that some of the darkest days in Manitoba—for-in—for Manitoba in the war effort—it was detailed that 30 men from Portage la Prairie signed up and 60 men from Virden.

On September 4th, 1939, local newspapers detailed a thousand Winnipeggers signed up to contribute to the war effort. The war effort helped to build an air force base in Portage la Prairie, CFB Shilo, the Kapyong Barracks, Minto Armoury and many other military infrastructure projects that brought the war to Manitoba and to the rest of Canada.

Training and education was done in this country while the war was contained to Europe. The Winnipeg Grenadiers were the first Manitobans to engage in the war effort in Japan—*[interjection]* Excuse me.

The—Winnipeg is still home to the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, 735 Communications Squadron, 17 Service Battalion, 17 Ambulance, 13 Military Police Platoon and the Fort Garry Horse Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, and the HMSC

Chippawa Naval Reserve Division. The 2nd Battalion of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry is currently based out of Shilo along with the First Regiment of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, the 26 Field Artillery Regiment and the Royal Canadian Artillery. The RCA Brandon's Reserve Unit and 38 Canadian Brigade Group and CFB Shilo is the home station of the Royal Regiment of the Canadian Artillery.

During World War II, approximately 159,000 Manitobans enlisted in the Armed Forces, 4,200 of whom never returned home. Similarly, of Canadians 500—of Canada's 516 casualties from the Korean war, 37 were from Manitoba. During the war in Afghanistan, a list of Manitobans killed in action totalled seven.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we recognize that the new and young Manitobans don't always understand the work of the veterans to preserve and protect our free democracy as well as a greater understanding for all Manitobans in every walk of life. The—our younger generation have—do not have the same connect that perhaps my generation does. My son and my daughter don't have the same connection that I do, and my grandchildren have less of a connection because they don't personally know any of the people who were in the conflict.

The freedoms and the dignities enjoyed by Manitobans are preserved by those who serve and have served in the Canadian armed forces. Our schools today are required to hold a Remembrance Day service on the last day of Remembrance Day—the last school day before Remembrance Day—and it's important that the schools and communities continue to hold Remembrance Day services. But because that is by regulation, and we know that when I was a young man going to school, we sang "O Canada" and we said the Lord's Prayer and we sang "God Save the Queen", but as time goes on, some of these things are dropped from the curriculum and that's at the will of the school boards and those that are elected to the school boards. And if there are no—if there's no connection with the generation that's younger than me and with my—the generation of my grandchildren, then I can foresee in the future where some of these things may be dropped from the school as well.

I also—so the purpose of the bill was to raise awareness and continue to raise awareness for this particular day, and at first I thought that if it was a statutory holiday that that would be the way to go.

But after consultation with a number of veterans, they made it clear that it wasn't a holiday and it wasn't a day that they wanted people to look forward to, that they could go on a long weekend to go fishing. It wasn't a holiday what they did so that we could preserve our freedoms and our dignities that we enjoy here today.

* (10:10)

Many of the immigrants that come to Canada, and particularly to Manitoba because we are a large recipient of immigrants, have no idea of what our history is, or they don't—they probably do have a historical knowledge, but they don't have that same connection that we do to our veterans. And so it's important that we celebrate that day the way we have been and continue to do it, and the best place to start that is to make sure that it stays in the schools.

I had the opportunity in 2010 to be in London, England, on November 13th, and I was early when I got landed. I'd been awake for 36 hours and my hotel room wasn't available yet, so I went walking. And what I found was the streets were full of armed people, bobbies, all carrying guns, and I thought, what on earth is going on here? And so then they told me that it was a Remembrance Day celebration that would be happening that day, and that if I wanted a ringside seat to watch the Queen lay a wreath at Trafalgar Square, that I could go to a certain spot and, if I was willing to wait for four hours, I would be one of the closest people there.

Well, as most of you know in here, I have trouble sitting still for 10 minutes. And so I went walking and through my walks I ended up meeting a warden of James park, who informed me that there would be a service, also, at 2 o'clock at the Canadian War Memorial.

So I did see the Queen from a half a mile away, but I also saw 20 to 30,000 people pack the streets in London. We don't see that here in Manitoba. We should see that here in Manitoba. We should see it in Winnipeg. We should see it in every community that we have because the freedoms that we enjoy today are directly related to those people that put their life on the line.

One of the things that is coming up on June 3rd and that will be lighting the candles at the Brookside Cemetery, where there is 12,000 military people buried, and there will be thousands of candles lit that evening. But if you'll notice, all of the headstones are grey Barre granite. And when I was in England—and

I did go to the 2 o'clock memorial service—there was a huge, huge block of grey Barre granite that does form a military memorial there. And so I—after the service I was invited by the High Commissioner James R. Wright to attend a reception at his residence, as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that there's many people here today that have things that they would like to put on the record. I encourage everyone in the House today to support this bill and move it forward to committee, where we'll—I'm sure we will have more people speak to the bill.

So thank you very much for the opportunity.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the next member, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, who is the former member for St. James.

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

* * *

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Yes, I, too, agree with the honourable member from Emerson about the importance of this day, and I like where we're going to proclaim November 5th to 11th as Remembrance Day week.

As a teacher over 33 years, I've seen the evolution of that day in school, and at the start of my teaching I remember the importance of it. We'd bring in veterans from World War I that were left and, of course, World War II. And as time went on, the students could see the importance of this and the sacrifices that the men had paid for during World War I and World War II. And as we lost these members, including my dad, who had fought in World War II, it seemed like the students were not taking it as seriously as when I was a student.

But I have to say, in the last five years in our high school in Flin Flon, instead of the teachers organizing Remembrance Day, the students have actually taken upon themselves to organize it. And I've seen a greater awareness, because it's not just recognizing or acknowledging people that went to war, but also recognizing the horrors of war, war throughout the world and the impact it has on everybody. And in our last Remembrance Day in Flin Flon, they brought some veterans, students—former students of mine, that went over to

Afghanistan and I have great respect for these students.

Some of them made a choice that changed their life forever because they were going nowhere and decided to join the army, and it, basically, put some discipline in them and they really believed in the cause that they were going over—went over and, basically, grew up and came back, though, a changed person. And we can argue changed for the better or worse, but they were a changed person when they came back. And when they talked to the students, the Hapnot students in Flin Flon, you could hear a pin drop because some of these guys, when they were talking about the experience the first time, basically, they shot at somebody, maybe killed somebody.

War is not something that we want to glorify and I think Remembrance Day is important that we distinctly say, that it's basically an anti-war week where we're—war shouldn't be—should be the last result where arguments or issues in the world are taken, and we've paid dearly for these wars.

I, personally, was over in Afghanistan in 1978 and '79 and remember travelling through Afghanistan, was one of the most beautiful countries in the world, Mr. Speaker, and I travelled throughout. And now I know, if you go to Afghanistan, everybody's got a Kalashnikov, people are blowing up, the Bamiyan monuments that were a World Heritage Site, that I saw, are blown up. It's a place with no law and—so there's been changes there.

And I'm sure if they had Remembrance Day, they would look back about their country and say, you know, this is what it used to be, here's what it is now, is war the right price to pay? And I guess that we all have to go through that.

And I think Remembrance Day is important because we can all sit back and talk about, you know, what is the price that we want to pay? What's the price we want to pay sending our troops, whether it's over to Libya and the millions of dollars it costs, what's the price that we wanted to pay sending our troops to Afghanistan and the soldiers that died there? And we, as a government, we're a small part, but we make decisions that we, maybe, pass on to our federal leaders, and they make decisions on whether Canada should send troops or whatever.

But I've noticed there's been an evolution; an evolution on what Canada, a country, is, and that—what that evolution is, is that we used to be sending troops for peacekeeping and now, all of a sudden, the

commander of the Libyan—or the forces that are in-sending bombers over to Libya, was a Canadian. And that just completely took me by surprise, because I thought we're a country that stood up for the rights of people and, you know, our way from invading countries, but, you know, times have changed, obviously.

I think Remembrance Day should really be when students sit back and acknowledge that the sacrifices the people that put in, like my father before, but also the sacrifices that young men are doing for—when they join up for the Armed Forces now. I mean, they join up, maybe it's just a gullible time and they join up, hey, I want to get into some action. But they're joining up because our country is asking them for their service and they're going into situations where they could lose their life, or they could be taking lives.

And I know the students that I taught that went to Afghanistan, one student sat in my class for a week, right beside me, and he just wanted to be with me, and he's changed forever. And he's a great guy, great person, but he's seen things that I'll never see, that I never want to see. But he talked to my class and to my students about the horrors of war; that when you go to war and you're carrying a gun, you better know how to use it, and when you use it you got to know the consequences.

*(10:20)

And it's sad, when you look at war, that something like three quarters of the people that die in war are civilians, okay. We're not even talking about soldiers, so we've got to remember that; the innocent civilians are killed in war.

So Remembrance Day to me is a time when we have to reflect who we are as Canadians, and, in the past, we've gone to World War I, in the past we've gone to World War II and to Korea, and I guess you could say maybe they were honourable wars; I don't know. But now we're sending, you know, troops to wars that, you know, people are questioning, you know, like Afghanistan, like in Libya, and, you know, now they're talking about Syria. And, like I say, this is a great step, maybe in the wrong direction, because, like, we're a peaceful country; we've always been known as peaceful country. And when I've travelled around the world and I wore the Canadian flag on my pack, people acknowledged that, that, basically, we stood up for the people, and I was proud of that fact. And when my daughters travelled to Europe three years ago, they had the

same experience, Mr. Speaker, travelling around, oh, you're Canadian. People would go out of your—out of their way to help us and knew—supposed that we weren't an aggressive nation.

But I see changes and I don't like to see that. I want to be the nation that Lester B. Pearson made us into, and that was a nation of peacekeepers. And I don't like to see the direction that we're going in, and maybe we have to address that, as a provincial government, as a federal government. You know, like, we're spending money, or money is being asked to be spent on jet fighters which are not, you know—stop drug smugglers in the Pacific or the Atlantic. It's—these jets are for invading countries, and, you know, what I'm saying is, is that us? Are we now turning into, you know, America's Cuba? You know, like, I mean, that is a sad fact. I want my students, when they're going over, that they are protecting people. They're not invading countries, and that's very important to me, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for giving me the time to speak about that. Thanks a lot.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): And I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 208, which was The Remembrance Day Awareness Act and Amendments to The Public Schools Act, brought forward by the member from Emerson, and seconded by the member from Assiniboia.

You know, almost every family in Manitoba has been touched by the military in one way or another and by the things that we are talking about in this bill, trying to recognize and—November 5th to 11th is Remembrance Day Week across the province. We see the names on the cenotaphs and the memorials all—in every community across this province of the people who made the supreme sacrifice in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, for us to enjoy the freedoms that we have today, for us to have the freedoms that we have in this assembly. That's what they went for; that's what they stood for. And we have only one thing we can say to those brave people that went over there—and they were young people; young men and women put on the uniform of this country, went overseas and fought for our freedoms. We only have one thing that's appropriate to say to them, and that's thank you.

In World War II, the commitment of Canada exceeded almost all other nations. It became a defining moment in the history of our—and it helped to shape—shape our nation of Canada. Sacrifices of our veterans, the role our military played in World War I did more to unite our country, to build our

national pride, than any other event in this nation's history. At the time of World War I, we had poor communications and transportation services. Young people from across Canada joined together in a common purpose so that the collective could be successful. We excelled as a nation. Many of those young people made the supreme sacrifice, and there's only one thing, as I said before, we can say to them, and that is thank you.

My own family—I had a great uncle that was killed near the—and he's buried near the Menin Gate in France. I still have—it's been passed down through the family—I have the Silver Cross in my possession now that was presented to his mother. The Silver Cross was to commemorate the loss of life in the war, and I'm sure everyone here has heard of the Silver Cross mothers. It passed from his mother to his sister to my father to me, and I now have that Silver Cross medal at home.

The Second World War, we had a huge commitment out of our family in many ways in that conflict. Two of my mother's brothers were in that war. They all came back safely and started families in Canada and became part of the fabric of our ever-growing nation. Mom had two brothers that fought in that war and a brother-in-law. My dad actually signed up but never got over there because of a medical reason. His sister was an aircraft mechanic in the war, and she was stationed at CFB at the Commonwealth training centre at Portage la Prairie, and his brother was a gunner on an aircraft during the war.

The—I remember the—after the war—I don't remember before the war because I was born after the war, but after the war, there—in Neepawa there was a Commonwealth air training centre there where troops came from other Commonwealth nations and took their air training, pilots training, in Neepawa, and there were several other Commonwealth air training commands in Manitoba that turned out—I think I remember a figure something like—it was in the tens of thousands of pilots that went into that war, the Second World War.

My own military background is slight, but I was—I spent a number of years as a teenager in the Air Cadets—marvellous experience. It—we got to do things that probably little farm, prairie boys didn't get to do very often. We were taken up in planes. We were flown here and there, and we went through a lot of military-type training and the disciplines that go with military life. And the Air Cadets and the Sea

Cadets, all the levels of cadets across this country, still continue, and I think it's a great experience for any young person to take part in those. It teaches you some discipline and there's expectations put on you that you remember for the rest of your life.

You know, a number of years ago when I was on the municipal council, one of the resolutions that I was able to move and was passed at the then union of Manitoba municipalities meeting was a resolution asking for the banning of hunting on Remembrance Day. The rationale to it was that the veterans probably didn't want to wake up on Remembrance Day to hear guns going off again. It was well received at the municipal convention, but it never made it into law in the province. But I still think it would be something that should be considered.

The very fact that so many young Canadians went and defended our freedoms is something we never want to forget. When I was a child in school—I went to a one-room country school for the first eight years, and we had a Remembrance Day service every year. When I got into high school, we were let out of school to march to the cenotaph every year on Remembrance Day at the eleventh hour on November 11th.

* (10:30)

And we—at that time, there were a huge number of veterans from the Second World War still around, many from the First World War, and we would march to the cenotaph, go through the service, and it was an eye-opener for young people. It kept us in touch with what was going on, and that's what this bill is asking for. Let's never forget what happened. Let's never forget the veterans that gave us the type of life we have today.

I urge all members of this House to support this bill and move forward to make November 5th to 11th Remembrance Day week across Manitoba.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): I want to thank the member from Emerson for bringing this subject of great importance to this Assembly.

My community of Opaskwayak and the neighbours town of The Pas, we have Remembrance Day ceremonies for as long as I can remember in our communities, and it's a day of—people get together. It doesn't matter what background you come from. You know, it doesn't matter if you're, you know, non-Native or Aboriginal or Métis or—on that day we're

all Canadians. On that day is very important for us. Both our communities were represented in great numbers; World War I, World War II, Korea, Cyprus, Bosnia, Afghanistan. Mr. Speaker, we even had community members in the Vietnam War. One never came back he was killed in action over there, and the other one suffers for life from diseases that he picked up over there. So there's many stories that are told by the veterans, and I had the privilege of listening to those stories first-hand from the veterans themselves.

My dad was a war veteran. He was 19 years old when he was shipped overseas. His home regiment was the Canadian Scottish Regiment. But he volunteered for a special unit that he called the anti-tank unit, and essentially, you know, did battle with the Panzers and Tiger units, 12th SS Division. And the stories he told me about those events still today I wonder how these young people 19, 20 years old could live like that on a daily basis not knowing, you know, when their time would be up; today, tomorrow, next day.

In their discussions amongst themselves, around outside my house there when I was a boy, there were many stories about sacrifice, personal sacrifice, and I remember him telling the story of D-Day that he was part of, and he told me this scene, the carnage and the noise and the blood and people falling beside him and behind him and in front of him. It's something I couldn't comprehend as a young boy that he was telling the story to. I just couldn't grasp the enormity of how those events. But it was something that he said that how people must move forward.

And one of the greatest things that he was most sad about was that when they were told, when they got off the landing craft, if their partner beside them went down do not pick him up. Do not stop and pick him up. And so many of his friends fell and he kept going. But they all had to do that, and at the end of the day they all talked about it.

These are kind of things that we don't know about, or didn't even, you know, have opportunity to know the details behind the stories in the history books. So Remembrance Day for us is an opportunity where the veterans come in and tell the personal side of their stories, many different kinds of situations that they were involved in.

I—my dad passed away last July, but today is coming to another date, June 6. That's another important date and that, so the family will get

together and, you know, celebrate his survival and what he did for Canada.

But Remembrance Day is a day for all people, all grades in schools. The whole community must know the many, many sacrifices our young people made. And I didn't know. I thought, you know, in looking at my dad telling the story, I used to, the old man, you know. That's how I looked at him. Until the day I sat across the table with my two sons, 19 and 20 years old, and I thought, oh, my God, that's how young as my dad was. How could he live like that? How could he survive something like that? It's the greatest sacrifice we ever made, but it was a good one, and they will be the first one to admit that this was a sacrifice worth making.

Recently, my—one of my boys—my sons—came back, and he's from the service. He did his part. He went overseas, too, and, you know, represented Canada. He was with the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He tells different stories too. And—but one of the—I think the most interesting story that he told was on his patrols with his unit, how they kept the kids fed along the ways, kids that were starving, kids that didn't have any homes or parents. And they would make plans before they went out on their patrols and provide some food for these kids. And I think, you know, one of the things that he thinks about still today that bothers him is, I wonder what happened to those kids? That's what he thinks about to this day.

Everybody has different levels of, you know, experience in times of war or armed conflict. Everybody has a—stories to tell and those stories must be told. They must be told to all peoples on Remembrance Day, November 11, and everybody must listen and understand.

So, I think, for my dad and his fellow veterans, Remembrance Day, November 11, was the most important day for them. Yes, we tried other days, November 8, you know, but November 11 was the day for them. And to this day the legion in The Pas still holds November 11 as the day of remembrance for what our people did, our veterans did for Canada. And I really want to see that remain that way. November 11 is a day of great importance for all Canadians in remembrance of what our veterans did, sacrificing their youth and their lives for this country.

Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): It's a great honour to get up and speak in favour of this legislation, a piece

of legislation, Bill 208, moved by the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), we thank him for bringing this bill forward; seconded by the member for Assiniboine, and we thank him for being the seconder for this motion. It's very important because it deals with what the next generations are going to do in regards to remembering those who sacrificed their lives so that we could have this standard of living that we have today, that we could have the health-care system, education system, that we can the quality of life that we have. Those individuals went forth and were willing to die for us.

*(10:40)

Mr. Speaker, back in 1995, I was elected a school trustee, and our home legion, Legion 215 on de Vries, was one we always attended. They had an amazing ceremony and finally it got to the point that so many people were attending, they moved it to the church nearby: one, because it was very crowded in there; and No. 2, because of the age of the veterans. The stairs were a little more difficult for them to get up and down.

And what they would do is, certainly, in '95 and on, they would ask every World War I veteran to get up and be recognized and there were quite a few. I'd say there were 20, 30 World War I veterans. Then they'd ask how many World War II veterans were in the room, and a large percentage of the room would get up. And over the years that number declined, when, one year, they said, would World War I veterans get up, and no more veterans got up.

And they had another thing that they did that was just so powerful. They would take a poppy and they would read off every member of the legion that had died in that year, and they would drop it on the floor. And sometimes the list would go on and on and on; 50, 60, 70 veterans were dying every year, and it was just shocking. And it tells us, as the next generation, the generations coming up, that those who fought in World War I and II, and even those who fought in—as or were involved in Korea and other wars, they're also getting older, and it's up to us now to stand up and say, you know, we should really remember them.

I had the opportunity as of '95–1995 to be a trustee; in '99 then, as MLA—to present a wreath at the cenotaph, and as my kids got a little bit older—Brigitta and Stefan would have been four and five—and I always took them along. They always came along with me, and the legionnaires just loved it, eh, the two little kids coming along. They always sat in

the front bench, and they thought it was just the coolest thing, to sit with all these politicians and police chiefs and all the rest of it.

And, so we went out to the cenotaph, and we lined up to present the wreath, and I didn't keep an eye on Brigitta and Stefan like I should have—they were four and five years old—and all of a sudden I noticed the crowd wasn't paying attention as much as they should have to the laying of the wreaths, and there were my two children decided they were going to go to the side of the cenotaph and make snow angels for those veterans who were no longer here.

And, I think, everybody else who was there thought it was really cute and witty. I can tell you, as their father, I was doing the old, you know, wink, you know, get-over-here look, and they were just having a great time. And, wouldn't you know, it didn't take long and other kids joined them and it was just one of those real special moments. You know, they felt that they wanted to do something and they were going to make snow angels for all those veterans who were no longer there.

Mr. Speaker, it's a very important thing, that we have an awareness of what took place in our history. And I believe there's a saying: for those who forget their history are doomed to repeat it. And we should keep—in our memories, we should keep passing along the memories, we should keep passing along the horrible side effects, the horrible consequences of what can happen when things get out of control and war breaks out.

And I've been to an awful lot of the remembrances, and it's particularly moving for myself when I go to a high school or a post-secondary institution because, really, those are the age groups that would be fighting. In fact, I was talking to one of our pages here, Sam Dueck, and he pointed out to me that he's 17 and, you know, you look at him—fine, fine, young man, you know, clean-cut, works hard—he'd be the age of those who would be preparing to go to war.

And it's shocking when you look at them, how young they must've been, and they would've left the Prairies in very sheltered, wonderful families, farm life, you know, beautiful prairie city like the city of Winnipeg, or towns and villages, and thought maybe they were buying into a little bit of an adventure, and they were going to go overseas and see a little bit of their world.

And what shock, what horror they would have gotten themselves into. They had no idea of what they were getting into. And, you know, it's something that I think we should all keep in our memories, that we should all keep on the forefront of our minds when Remembrance Day rolls around.

I agree with the member from Emerson who said this is not a holiday and it shouldn't be recognized as a holiday, it should be recognized as a remembrance. That we lift up those individuals who sacrificed, not just those who died, but also those who survived, that came back with physical damage, who came back often with a lot of issues that they had to deal with, psychological problems, you know.

I think, now with modern medicine where it is, we recognize a lot of the issues that they come back with and we should be cognisant of that, and, we should remember those individuals who came back. And, in discussions a lot of us have had, you know, family members just wouldn't even talk about it; they simply wouldn't talk to their children or their spouses about it. They would bottle it up and—very troubling for those individuals—that's how bad it was.

So, I think, this is a very good opportunity for us, as a Legislature, to come together, to show Manitobans, that, you know, maybe in question period we have the occasional disagreement, but when it comes to legislation like this, we come together, we support this because it's the right thing to do; it's an important thing to do.

Let us make sure that, as generations come up, that they not forget what took place, so that we could have the kinds of freedoms, the kind of standard of living, the kind of quality in our life, that did not come free; it came with a very heavy price.

And, I'm very pleased to see that this legislation will move on, move on to committee, and further debate. And, I—again, it's an honour to be able to get up and speak to Bill 208.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Indeed, it's a pleasure to rise in the Chamber and speak to this bill. I'd like to thank the member from Emerson for bringing it to the table as well as my colleague from Assiniboine for seconding the bill.

I believe I told this story in this Chamber once before but I think it's a story worth repeating,

especially in the context of this particular discussion that we're having today.

When I was a much younger man working at a summer job in Gimli, there was a gentleman who would always come in the front door of the business. And, I would see the car pull up and he would get out of the passenger side, come in and visit us in the store and he'd tell a jokes—some of them were good jokes; some of them were not so good jokes. But, as he was in there talking to us, his wife would drive off and go run her errands and this is happening daily. And, I got to know this gentlemen, Gordie, quite well. And Gordie, about 45 years, probably 50 years my senior at the time, was a very affable guy.

And, I finally got to the point of comfort with Gordie where I said, well, Gordie, how come you don't drive? He says, well, I'm legally blind and I left it at that because I didn't have that comfort level to discuss that issue any further. But, he ended up going on—coming in every day, and as I said, sharing his jokes and sharing his good humour and his good will.

And, he came in one day and said, you know, I won't see you for a couple of weeks, I'm going to go on a trip; I'm going to a reunion, and I'll see you—I'll come right back after two weeks.

Well, sure enough, two weeks past, and Gordie comes back, and Gordie's really distraught. So I said, Gordie, what's wrong? He says, well, I went to this reunion and the person that I really wanted to see the most was not there; he had died two weeks before the reunion. So I said, well, what made that person different from the other people that you saw at the reunion? Why was it so important that you reconnected with that person? And Gordie said, that was the guy that chewed my food for me. Well—and I was taken aback and that's when he explained to me, that he was with the Winnipeg Rifles in Hong Kong. He was a prisoner of war and the only reason he survived, when he was so malnourished, was because somebody else chewed his food and regurgitated for him so he could get some nourishment.

I was absolutely floored by that story, because this was guy who came in, had not a care in the world, happiest guy you'd ever know, and he shared that with me. And that told me, at the time, when I was just starting to take my history degree at the university, I said, that's why I'm studying history. Now, I have to do with why—with what I'm doing in studying history, and I have to teach that.

So, he was inspirational to me, as many storytellers have been. In his particular experience, as a veteran in World War II, really had a profound impact on my life. So, that's when I decided that I would teach and do something with my history degree to that end, and teach.

*(10:50)

So I—it was in Gordie's memory that I developed a lesson plan where we actually simulated trench warfare. And I had my students marching. I had them doing all the things that you would do. In fact, we had great participation from the 17 Wing; they brought their medical corps out, because they did assessments of the wounds that the students would have sustained when they charged over the trenches. We used bags of flour. So when they got hit with a bag the flour would spray on their body. The medic would come out and assess the wound and say, well, you're going to bleed out; you're dead in five minutes. So I'm sorry you're here; this is where you lay; this is where you stay for the rest of the exercise. And we did that for a day, and the numbers were staggering in terms of how many were left lying in the field, in that battlefield, when we did that exercise.

It was really quite a powerful learning experience not only for the students but for me. But what really drove that lesson home for me was they understood why they brought backpacks and were carrying backpacks to simulate the weight that they'd carry when they're on the march and doing all the exercises. They understood that. What they didn't understand was, oh, Mr. B, as they called me, affectionately, some otherwise—said Mr. B, why you making us bring a pen and paper? You're going to make us do work. Well, the work that they had to do while they're in the trenches before they went over the trench was—I said: Okay, now you're going to take out a pen and paper, and you're going to write a letter home; it could be the last letter that you ever sent. And that was an extremely powerful moment, for me as a teacher, to read those letters. In fact, I remember my wife—expecting our second child, very emotional at the time, sitting there seven-months pregnant, in considerable discomfort, but reading those letters and getting extremely emotional from what she was reading in the letters. And she kind of prepared me for the content of the letters, but they were extremely powerful. And what's really rewarding for me today is having those same students come up to me and talk about that experience. So that had a profound impact on my

decisions in life on what to do and how to do it as a historian and as a teacher.

And it's a tremendous honour for me that I will be driving down Veterans Memorial Highway next week, going to Gimli to review the Stefnufastur Air Cadets. It's a tremendous honour to be invited to do so. In Gimli, we're very blessed with the Stefnufastur Air Cadet Squadron, which has participated repeatedly in the Remembrance Day ceremonies at the Gimli legion, at the Winnipeg Beach legion, and they're a great squadron with tremendous participation. Not only that, in terms of the Remembrance Day services, but also in terms of their participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and it's a group that continues to grow and flourish and is very visible in the community.

But not everybody is involved as the Stefnufastur group is, and I see the value in this exercise and, certainly, bringing this bill to the table is very important. I've also had the privilege of being invited to participate with Canada's National History Society in a panel to discuss the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge. And I would like to tell the member from Emerson that in that panel discussion I will bring—be bringing this piece of legislation forward to demonstrate what governments can do and have done to support our appreciation and understanding for that sacrifice that our students make.

And, you know, it's—the timing around this is really interesting, as well, because just a couple of days ago I sent a quick birthday wish to a former student, and I didn't have him in my classroom for academics, but he was a student that I coached basketball. And he became the first doctor since Korea in Canada's medical corps to have field experience. And he talked about being the senior officer with the most medical experience in the entire base, who had to respond to the friendly-fire incident, 2002, and the impact that that has had on him personally.

We have a lot of reminders because of what's happening in the world around us today, and because of our role as peacekeepers and because of our role as a peacekeeping nation and a nation who steps up with our allies to intervene where necessary. We have a lot of reminders as to why it's important to recognize the sacrifices that have been made in the past.

And, you know, with my experiences with the trench warfare, I often joke that I'm in much different trenches now in my role as a Member of the

Legislative Assembly. And it has been noted by my colleague from Springfield that when we're in this Chamber we agree to disagree. *[interjection]* Or, pardon me, the—from St. Paul. Thank you very much. We are allowed to agree to disagree in this Chamber, and we're allowed to fight with words. And the only reason that we're allowed to do that is because people like Gordie made the sacrifice that Gordie made. It's because people like my friend Dan was prepared to answer the call and serve his country and it's because people like the son of our MLA from The Pas answered the call.

So I'd like to thank the member for bringing this legislation forward and, again, I'll assure him that I will bring this to the table when we discuss how we recognize the contribution of our veterans.

And with those words, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this bill. I think it is important that we make sure that we continue to recognize Remembrance Day and that we do this in a more formalized fashion, and that we make sure that the traditions are not only carried on but in fact that they are improved in the way that we recognize what has happened, the contributions of our veterans, and the important contributions they have made to the freedom and the democracy that we have today.

I think that as the others—colleagues have spoken, that this Remembrance Day is vital to—for people to remember the horrors of war, the problems when freedoms are taken away, but, at the same time, it is also important to remember that the goal of war is not just to have more wars. The goal is to achieve a peace where we've got democracy, freedoms that we have today, and that we can live in security and safety.

And I think as well as remembering the tradition of our soldiers and our armed forces fighting in wars, we also need to remember the tradition of our armed forces as peacekeepers and of promoting and building peace around the world. And sometimes this part is forgotten when it's at least as important and, in fact, in today's world, is probably even more important.

And so I think that when we move forward in recognizing the contributions of our armed forces, it's always very important to remember their contributions, sacrifices, the problems, the heroic acts, but it's also very important in remembering that

their contribution to peace, peace that we have here in our country, but peace around the world and our ability to participate in discussions as we do in this Chamber.

So with those few words, I will let others speak for a few minutes before this closes. Thank you.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I have about two minutes to bring a few words to the House on this issue. I'd like to thank the honourable member from opposite who brought this. I really believe that it's an important issue and so thank you to the minister of—member from Emerson for allowing me to second it.

As a son of a person who served in the Armed Forces, I think it's important, as a person who personally knows some people who have fallen in Afghanistan and other conflicts, I think it's important to know this, and I think it's one where we can bring the entire Chamber together, where we can see unanimity and we can move forward, not just forward now but forward in the future. So I hope that this is a unanimous vote.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 208, The Remembrance Day Awareness Act and Amendments to The Public Schools Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House—*[interjection]*—second reading of Bill 208.

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

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, I wonder if we could make that unanimous, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House unanimous in passing this bill? *[Agreed]*

Thank you to members.

RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution before us this morning is the one sponsored by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) on the Brandon University 2011—*[interjection]*

* (11:00)

The honourable member for Morris, sorry.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: On House business, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on recidivism in Manitoba, sponsored by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on recidivism in Manitoba, sponsored by the honourable member for Steinbach.

Now we'll proceed to private member's resolution, and this morning we're debating the resolution sponsored by the honourable member for Brandon West relating to the Brandon University 2011 strike.

Res. 5—Brandon University 2011 Strike

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Moved, seconded by the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen),

WHEREAS the Brandon University strike that took place from October 12th, 2011 to November 25th, 2011 had a negative impact—sorry, negative academic and financial impact on more than 3,000 Brandon University students and their families that will be felt for years to come; and

WHEREAS the Brandon University strike, which lasted 45 days, was the longest university strike in Manitoba's history and was the second strike at Brandon University in the last four academic years; and

WHEREAS throughout the strike the provincial government turned its back on more than 3,000 Brandon University students and their families when it chose to support the collective bargaining process at all costs; and

WHEREAS the Brandon University students had no control of the future of their academic year and had no input into the actions that led to or took place during the Brandon University strike; and

WHEREAS if the Premier had the best interests of students and their families at heart, he would have

legislated an end to the strike before students missed more than six weeks of classes.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Premier and the Minister of Family Services and Labour to take the requisite measures to ensure no other post-secondary students are subject to another strike such as the one that occurred from October 12th, 2011 to November 25th, 2011 at Brandon University.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to debate the resolution as printed? [*Agreed*]

WHEREAS the Brandon University strike that took place from October 12, 2011 to November 25, 2011 had a negative academic and financial impact on more than 3,000 Brandon University students and their families that will be felt for years to come; and

WHEREAS the Brandon University strike, which lasted 45 days, was the longest university strike in Manitoba's history and was the second strike at Brandon University in the last four academic years; and

WHEREAS throughout the strike the Provincial Government turned its back on more than 3,000 Brandon University students and their families when it chose to support the collective bargaining process at all costs; and

WHEREAS Brandon University students had no control of the future of their academic year and had no input into the actions that led to or took place during the Brandon University strike; and

WHEREAS if the Premier had the best interests of students and their families at heart he would have legislated an end to the strike before students missed more than six weeks of classes.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Premier and the Minister of Family Services & Labour to take the requisite measures to ensure no other post secondary students are subject to another strike such as the one that occurred from October 12, 2011 to November 25, 2011 at Brandon University.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West that the—whereas the Brandon University strike that took place from—okay, seconded by the member for Spruce Woods, pardon me, that,

WHEREAS the Brandon University strike that took place from October 12th—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Helwer: The strike at Brandon University may have faded from the memory of some in this Chamber, but it is still very real and very divisive in the Brandon community. Brandon is rightly very proud of its educational institutions. Assiniboine Community College and Brandon University are very important to the structure and fabric of education in Brandon, the Westman area, and, indeed, Manitoba. Brandon University is and has always been a unique institution in Manitoba and deserves to be treated as such by this government.

When the strike first started, few could believe that Brandon University was going to go through yet another strike. None believed that it would last as long as it did—45 days, 45 very long, very damaging days. In the life of a student, an hour or three-hour long class can seem like an eternity. A 45-day strike just caused despair.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I've told some of the stories of the students and families affected by this strike, but we will never know the true impact on Brandon, on faculty, on staff, on the administration, on families, and on students. It divided Brandon; it divided families, and throughout it all, the students are the ones who were the victims, the ones who paid the biggest price. Students had no choice.

Mr. Speaker, when a factory goes on strike, you have a choice: you can go buy a widget somewhere else. When you're a university student at a university that is on strike, you have no choice. You can't leave and go to another institution halfway through the term. They had no choice.

Some may say it could have been worse. Look what's happening in Québec. For these students, it could not have been worse. This was their reality. This strike damaged their education, and they damaged it in one of the worst ways.

What has been the effect on Brandon University so far from what we have heard? A hundred and fifty of the 3,000 students dropped many of their courses; others dropped some of their courses. Seventy-five thousand credit hours were dropped, 10 per cent of the total enrolment. More than 200 students dropped out altogether; they went elsewhere, or they left their dream of a university education altogether.

We don't know what will happen to enrolment next year, but we suspect it will be down, and some of my colleagues will speak to what they have heard in their constituencies. It is hard to put into words the impact of this strike has had on Brandon, and even more difficult to convey the effect on students. I have spoken to many in the Brandon community about setting aside the ill will and working to rebuild Brandon University's reputation, but we've not had a lot of action just yet. This week, Brandon University was in Winnipeg, here in the Legislature, to hold a reception. I'm very pleased they made that step. I was not able to attend, as I had to attend a funeral in Brandon, but I'm happy to see that they're taking those steps.

At the AMM, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) promised the mayor that he would help. Help would have been useful during the strike. This government's inaction during the strike has damaged the students' academic careers, has damaged the university and has damaged the city of Brandon. We can try to mitigate the damage, but we really need to make sure that this will not happen again.

New and existing students need to be assured and reassured that they will not be forced to go through another strike. They need this assurance, not only in Brandon, but in all the other post-secondary institutions in Manitoba. Many comments have been made that if this strike occurred at the University of Manitoba, it would've not been allowed to last 45 days. We don't know that, and, hopefully, we never will. This government can change that.

Some of the members of this Legislature were very fortunate to attend Brandon University, and you have the power and ability to make a difference. Use it. This government will stand up and speak about the money they put into post-secondary education, how much they've supported Brandon University, and on and on. Well, it has not worked for the students at Brandon University. This government has failed the students. They failed to prevent a strike when they had the full ability to do so. You knew this was going to happen again, make a difference.

And then they failed to deal with the strike. This government has the ability and power to make a difference and make sure the students will not have to endure another strike. Use it.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): I appreciate rising to put a few words on the record this morning

with regard to this private member's resolution from my honourable colleague, the member from Brandon West.

Mr. Speaker, like the member from Brandon West, I'm an alumnus of Brandon University. I'm joined on this side of the House with many other alumni from Brandon University, including the Finance Minister, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard); there's former staff from Brandon University here, the member from Kirkfield Park.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We've got members on this side of the House. The member from Fort Garry who's—Fort Garry—Riverview, whose daughter attends at Brandon University. All of us are very, very proud of Brandon University. It's one of the finest undergraduate institutions in Canada. I know, for myself, Mr. Speaker, the undergraduate degree I obtained from Brandon University stood me in very good stead when I went on to further work at Queen's University in Kingston and in McGill University in Montréal. There was no deficit in my education from Brandon University. Quite the contrary. The undergraduate education that I received at Brandon University was second to none in this country.

And I'm very, very proud to be a supporter, an alumnus, and an advocate on behalf of Brandon University, and, frankly, for post-secondary educational excellence wherever we are supporting it, as a government, in this province. So I'm not inclined to further hobble or to denigrate or to undermine the future of Brandon University by repeatedly bringing in storm clouds over the institution, by claiming it's somehow damaged, by claiming that the university is less than it should be.

* (11:10)

I know I got in an argument at a public debate with the former member from Brandon West, Mr. Borotsik, a number of years ago, where he did a soliloquy in front of a bunch of students in Brandon—how the university was awful; it was a terrible university. And—you know, and that sort of attitude, Mr. Speaker, which is implicit in the member's PMR, is so wrong-headed and so destructive—as members opposite are so destructive on many issues in this Legislature.

You know, I think about the Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, where the members opposite stood up for the dismantling of the Wheat Board and the loss of several hundred high-paying jobs in this province.

More recently, members opposite were cheerleaders for the removal of the immigration program from the province of Manitoba and its relocation into Calgary, which is a huge—huge—attack on the economy of the province of Manitoba.

In Manitoba, the—our immigration program, the most successful in Canada, Mr. Speaker, has not been supported by members opposite but, rather, the removal of that program from Manitoba has been encouraged by members opposite and there's votes to that effect in this House.

So while those of us on this side of the House stand up for Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, members on the opposite of the House have got a clear record of standing down for Manitoba, working to hobble and damage successful initiatives because they put politics ahead of this province every single day and they're quite happy to appeal in an extreme—extremist, hard right, ideologically driven way, that they're appealing to their small and diminishing base is the top priority of members opposite in the—this House, when it should be—as it is on this side of the House—their top priority should be standing up for Manitoba and growing this province and making it a better place for all Manitobans.

So, Mr. Speaker, this sort of PMR is the—just the latest in a long string of resolutions and initiatives and positions taken by members opposite to hobble and impede the progress of the province of Manitoba; progress that this government is proud to continue in terms of building this province and making it a better place to live for all Manitobans, a better place to work for all Manitobans, a better place to raise families, and most important, a better place to invest and create prosperity.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm a proud alumni of Brandon University. We have faculty from Brandon University; we've got parents of students from Brandon University on this side of the House. All of us on this side of the House support the institution, support it strongly.

I should make mention because I'm always fond of doing this given that we've invested as a government over a billion dollars in the city of Brandon over the last decade, Mr. Speaker—every single penny of that billion dollars has been opposed by members opposite in budget votes. They haven't supported a single investment at Brandon University; they haven't supported the development of the wellness centre, the Healthy Living Centre, right now, which is under way in Brandon. We've got one

of those formerly endangered species of the building crane at Brandon University building that wellness centre right now.

Mr. Speaker, they did not support, earlier in our mandate, the construction of the health studies building and Aboriginal counselling centre at Brandon University—major infrastructure investment at the university. They did not support the tuition cut and reduction—10 per cent tuition cut and reduction, and then the tuition freeze that we put into place to encourage young people to attend at our post-secondary institutions in the province.

They did not support the money that we've invested in the Rural Development Institute at Brandon University—significant millions of dollars at the Rural Development Institute, which support the rural economy. And I don't have to—you know, I don't have to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that most of the members opposite are from rural Manitoba. Especially in my region of the province, there's a vote-rich area for the Conservative Party historically, but members who represent that region had a differential hydro rate; it was higher in rural Manitoba than it was in Winnipeg. We equalized the rate; they opposed that.

Mr. Speaker, we invested in the Rural Development Institute which strives to develop the rural economy in this province. Members opposite voted against that. The rural members voted against that. They voted against the wellness and healthy living centre; they voted against our tuition policy.

They voted against every single penny that we've invested in post-secondary education at Brandon University, and I might add, at Assiniboine Community College, Mr. Speaker, which is the most exciting campus development currently under way in Canada, a project that will transform the economy in rural Manitoba, in rural southwestern Manitoba, in particular. And it will transform the lives of generations of young people who can now gain a world-class education, training education at the Assiniboine Community College in Brandon, the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts, the Len Evans centre of trades and technology—every single penny at Assiniboine Community College as well as Brandon University opposed by members opposite. So there is a clear pattern and a clear record, a 12-year record of work to damage and undermine our post-secondary education system in the province of Manitoba undertaken by members opposite. This is a continuation of that sort of a policy of

destruction, extremist policy of destruction, of—shameful policy of destruction for our post-secondary system.

We do believe, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, that all Manitobans are served well by labour relations that respect the collective bargaining process, respect free collective bargaining, respect employers and employees to negotiate the terms of their workplace in a respectful and structured manner. We have in Manitoba—and I know the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard) will speak more to this in her remarks—have got a very enviable record in the province of Manitoba. It certainly contrasts sharply with the record of members opposite when they last held government and Manitoba was racked by labour unrest. We were racked by cuts to health care. We were racked by over a hundred per cent—130-odd per cent increase in tuitions across this province. We were racked by cuts. The member—the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) was on the board of governors at the University of Manitoba when they increased tuition fees through the roof, which caused no end of people to leave the post-secondary educational system in this province—

An Honourable Member: While roofs are caving in.

Mr. Caldwell: My friend from Dawson Trail, Mr. Speaker, reminds me that when we came into office there was a billion-dollar infrastructure deficit in the post-secondary system. The engineering building at the University of Manitoba was separating from each—from their additions that had been made over the years so that the roofs were leaking in the engineering building.

So, you know, we've got a proud record of investment in our post-secondary system. In Brandon we've got a very proud record of investment, historic level, unprecedented level of investment in Brandon University and Assiniboine Community College. We're going to continue to support our college—colleges and university system in this province. We're going to continue to support post-secondary education in this province and we're going to make and continue to make Manitoba the best place to live not only in Canada, but in the world.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It's certainly a pleasure to speak to this resolution that's been

brought forward by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer).

Clearly, the member for Brandon West appreciates what Brandon University means for the community of Brandon, and certainly for western Manitoba. It's certainly a very important institution for us in that part of the province.

My wife is an alumna of the Brandon University. I took my university at the University of Manitoba. So we have debates from time to time about quality of education in the various and respective colleges, but, certainly, an honest and open and interesting discussion at times.

Certainly, a lot of our friends have students who attended Brandon University and it's very important for them and it's very important for the community.

I think what the member for Brandon West is bringing forward in his resolution is pointing out that it is a very important institution. And given the fact that we had this strike, a 45-day strike, there was ramifications for the university and certainly ramifications for the City of Brandon and the area as well. So what is shameful in my mind is the member for Brandon East choosing to put his head in the sand and ignore the very important institution that was there and the damages that were caused by having this strike, and the strike that existed for 45 days. And, Mr. Speaker, I think you have to recognize that it was only three years ago that we had a similar strike at Brandon University that stained the reputation of the university.

* (11:20)

You know, and as a result of having those two strikes at Brandon University, I know for a fact that many of my constituents have decided to take their university and their schooling elsewhere. In fact, I know of one student who was enrolled in university first year when the strike occurred, as a result of the strike dropped out of Brandon University, is now—and taking her schooling in Toronto. So, obviously, that's a very dramatic and extra expense for her and her family to undertake. And it's certainly a challenge. It's a challenge for her and it's a challenge for her family, and it's a direct result of the strike that occurred there this past year.

It's incumbent upon us, as legislators, to make sure that our kids get quality education. And we're seeing that in the—in elementary school and in high school, where are test scores are the lowest in

Canada, we're spending more and more money on education and, at the end of the day, we're getting worse results as a result of the money we're putting into education.

It's typical NDP policy; spend more, get less. And that's exactly what we're doing. I know the minister is probably going to get up and say, you know, we're spending more money on post-secondary education. And that's probably the case—that's probably the case. But what are our students getting for university education? They have to put up with things like a 45-day strike which, as a result, over 200 students dropped out of university.

Now, as parents of kids, you know, we spend a lot of time preparing our kids, saving money, preparing our kids for university. In a lot of cases, for rural students, we have to find them accommodations as well. I know a lot of the sitting members don't have to deal with that because their students may just take the car or take the bus to go to university, and it's fairly easy and they can live at home. For those of us, and those of us that have rural constituents face a completely different set of challenges. We have to prepare ourselves for those because it's an extra expense and an extra cost to get our kids to university.

So, in fact, I had a constituent of mine, during the strike was on, phone, and he says, you know, I got two kids going to Brandon University, you know, I've been saving up for years to get these kids to school. I got two of them at Brandon University. I had to go out and I had to rent accommodations for both of them. I'm spending, you know, several hundred dollars a month on accommodations. I got to support them for this. And here they are, they're not getting any education. You know, what am I to do? So this poor parents, who are at their wits' end, with their two kids in school, not knowing what they should do. So these are the kind of situations that, I think, the government should be addressing.

And, you know, when the strike was over, there was no thought about making sure that all those costs were going to be covered, and I think it's incumbent upon the government to make sure that our kids are getting the quality education that they deserve.

And, instead, the—you know, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell), he was absent for 45 days from Brandon. You know, he gets in the House today and talks about, you know, standing up for Brandon University, standing up for Brandon. Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the

truth. The member for Brandon East was missing in action for 45 days during that strike, and so—and where was this government during that 45 days of that strike? Where was the government? *[interjection]* Absolutely. They weren't there standing up for the kids. They weren't there standing up for the parents. They get in the House, they're saying, that, oh, yes, we're standing up for Manitobans. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. They were completely absent for that 45 days during that strike.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, we used to get students from Saskatchewan come over to use Brandon University as their college. We used to get that, but not anymore because those students are concerned that they get here, they go on strike, what are they going to do?

So we've had two strikes in the last three years at Brandon University, and it's very alarming. And to have the minister for Brandon East saying that, you know, there's no harm done, everything's fine, everything's rosy while I put my head in the sand and I want to ignore it. Well, that's not something that a government should be doing and that's why I say the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), I applaud him for bringing this resolution forward, and the government has to pay attention to what's going to happen in Brandon University.

And not only this, Mr. Speaker, but what would happen if the University of Manitoba or University of Winnipeg were to go on strike as well? What would the government do in that case? You know, it's not just an—a situation that's isolated to the Brandon University. I think it's something that this government has to deal with and I certainly look forward to hear what the members are going to say and—on this very important issue. And I do want to commend the member for bringing this resolution forward and I think it's important that the government pays attentions and understands what the ramifications were for Brandon University and for the community.

You know, we know that challenges are there in terms of the finances for the University. And, you know, they're out there trying to raise some money for the university, for the college, for their endowment funds and whatnot, and we—I know, when you talk to people in the community and around the community, you know, they're—it's harder for them to raise funds because of the ramifications of these two strikes. So it's a very important issue

and for the government to ignore it, it's at their own peril, Mr. Speaker.

So, I just want to say, it's a very important resolution, and I hope that the minister will recognize that it's an important issue for Brandon, an important issue for western Manitoba, and, in fact, an important issue for all the province. So I'm looking forward to hearing their comments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I'm pleased to stand today and talk a bit about the issues that happened at Brandon University and put on the record what actions the government did take to help to bring that labour dispute to a resolution.

So, I—just going to go over the timeline. My understanding is that the strike started on October 12th of 2011. A conciliation officer was appointed to assist with negotiations on that exact same date to help the parties come to a resolution. After a period of time, we moved to the next phase in labour relations when you're trying to resolve a dispute, and we appointed a mediator to assist the parties on October 24th. The mediator worked with both the parties and presented a report. There was no resolution found to the dispute. So, on November 21st of 2011, I ordered a vote happen, and that, Mr. Speaker, is an exceptional thing in Manitoba. It's something that this government has never done before, to order that the members of a bargaining unit vote on the final offer that's been presented to them.

It became clear to us that we had provided conciliation, we had provided mediation; both those efforts had not worked. There was not substantial progress being made. The university had let it be known that they had put their best offer on the table, and we felt that the best way to move this forward, for the benefit of the students, certainly, who absolutely were the ones most affected and most hurt by this strike, that there should be a vote taken. As it happened, a few days later, after I ordered that vote take place and before the vote could actually take place, the parties were able to come to an agreement at the bargaining table.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that we did act on this side of the House to help that agreement come to be, and we acted within the law. We acted by appointing a conciliator; we acted by appointing a mediator; and then we took the

unprecedented step—which I must say has been very unpopular with some people—of ordering the union to vote on the final offer. And we acted exactly because we knew that students were being affected by that strike. We acted because it didn't appear that there was significant progress being made at the bargaining table.

But I also will say that, within the context that it is my belief and it is my experience, that when you allow parties to come to a conclusion of collective bargaining at the bargaining table, you get the best results. And I think, frankly, we only have to look at the situation that Air Canada finds itself in to see what the result can be when governments intervene repeatedly one after another in labour relations. It doesn't solve the issue, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't mean that there are no work actions; certainly there are job actions when governments intervene and order people back to work and legislate the end of strikes or lockouts.

What it can mean is that both parties—both management and labour—stop negotiating, stop talking, because they believe they don't have to. They believe that the government will come in and solve all of the problems and so they don't negotiate. But it also means that you end up with a situation where you have work actions that are totally unpredictable, where you could have, for example, wild-cat strikes that you can't predict that cause tremendous disruption.

And so I think, in Manitoba, what we have done over the last 10 years is try to restore the balance in labour relations in this province, and we've really seen some positive results from that. If we look back to the previous government in the 1990s, we see that we were losing, on average, 5,000 person-days a month to strikes and lockouts. Under this government, and certainly in the last year, that number has been under 2,000, so it's been more than cut in half, the time lost to strikes and lockouts. And I think that's because we've been able to foster better relations between labour and management, because we've put in place a legislative structure that doesn't favour either side, but that provides for a fair and balanced approach to those relationships.

* (11:30)

And I must say, you know, as a graduate of Brandon University—and I'm joined by many people in this Chamber who graduated—I am very disappointed that the members opposite would disparage the quality of education at that institution.

And, certainly, it's not new; it's certainly something that I heard when I went to school there, that it wasn't as good as other universities. But I'm very proud of the education that I received at that university, and I'm proud of that institution still today.

I think that it provides a very high-quality education to students. I think it provides an incredible student experience. I know when I went to Brandon University, I was able to be in some classes where I was one of two students. I don't think you get a better student to professor ratio than that in any university in this province. And so, I would be alarmed that any member of this House would try to suggest that the quality of education at our post-secondary institutions is less than what it should be. I think they provide a very high-quality education to our students, and I'm proud that I got my degree at Brandon University.

There's no question that strikes like the one that happened at Brandon University, as well as long-duration lockouts, are very hard on the people involved. They're very hard, in this instance, on the students. They're very hard when you're locked out as a worker. They're very hard on management when you're trying to either run a university or run a business.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, I've asked the Labour Management Review Committee, which is made up of equal members from labour and management to take a look not only at the strike that happened at Brandon University but also at lockouts of long duration that have happened in the province, to see if there is something more that should be done in the labour law to make sure that we have the tools necessary to help people come to the bargaining table and reach an agreement and avoid these kind of long-duration strikes and lockouts. So I've written them that letter. I expect that they will start to work on those issues soon.

And it does give me an opportunity to speak for a moment about the Labour Management Review Committee and what a unique tool it is, really, in the country, but certainly what a useful tool it's been here in Manitoba. And they don't always get consensus, and certainly the consensus that they arrive at is not always something that I agree with. But it has been a very useful tool for us in bringing labour law forward. It gives a place for both representatives of labour and management to take a look at what the issues of the day are. To talk about

what changes might come forward, to reality-test them against some lived experience, but also to negotiate, to make sure that when we bring a law forward, it's not a law that favours one side or the other, but it's a law that is aimed at providing for a balanced labour relations climate in Manitoba.

Because we know that having that kind of balanced climate is something that is good for Manitobans. Not having a lot of strikes and lockouts is better for Manitobans. It's better for the productivity of our industry here in Manitoba, and I think it's better, all round, for everybody that lives here. And that's what we've tried to follow when we've been in government. So, if we go back to 2000, we brought in a new labour relations act, some changes to The Labour Relations Act, to restore the balance that had been lost in the previous decade.

Part of what we brought about in that—in those changes was a brand new idea. And that was a procedure to allow for strikes or lockouts that had gone on for more than 60 days, for either party to come and apply to the Labour Board for arbitration. Previous to that there was no mechanism to end long-duration strikes and lockouts, and that model has been effective at ending some very long strikes and lockouts in Manitoba. And that model is now being looked at by other provinces where they have had strikes go on for months and years, Mr. Speaker, or lockouts, where people have been prevented from earning a living because they've been locked out. And now we know that they're looking exactly at this model. It is a model that is reviewed from time to time, and it may be that we need to make some changes to that, in light of the situation that happened at Brandon University, in light of the long lockout that happened at Granny's Poultry and other work stoppages that have happened in the province. So, we'll ask the Labour Management Review Committee to take a look at those very issues.

I would also say, you know, it's quite touching to hear the members opposite's concern for students of Brandon University because when I was a student at Brandon University, and I was a student there in the '90s, and I came to this Legislature to talk about some of the issues that we were facing, one of which at the time was a 15 per cent tuition increase in one year, which had followed similar double-digit tuition increases. And when I came forward as a student with other students here to talk about those issues with members, do you know what I found? I found chains on the doors to the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. They wouldn't allow us in to talk to them. They

wouldn't allow us in to express our difficulties that we were having at that time.

This government has always been open to the views of students. We've always listened carefully to those views and we continue to. And I think that we will continue to have not only a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in this province, but we'll also continue to have a government that encourages everybody to pursue post-secondary education and make sure everybody has the opportunity to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing forward this resolution, and I believe it's a very good resolution—[interjection] What? Oh. No. This, maybe. All my electronics. Are we okay now?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Rowat: Yes, my goodness. Sorry about that.

I want to congratulate the member for Brandon West for bringing forward this resolution. I think it's a very good resolution, and I think it is worthy of the debate that we're having on it—this, on Brandon University and the strike today.

I live in Westman, and I have a lot of respect for what Brandon University does for the region of Westman and Parkland, for that matter, Mr. Speaker. It's an institution that I attended, and there's a lot of people in the Chamber that attended Brandon University or have a connection to that school. My children are graduating; my son is graduating this year, and my daughter's graduating next year. We've had the discussion around the table of, you know, the Brandon University as an option and, unfortunately, that's not going to happen for my children. They've seen what has happened over the last three years—two strikes—and they're quite aware and very educated on the fact that there's, you know, a likely chance that this could happen again in the next three years.

So, they've ruled Brandon University as a no as an option. And that's unfortunate because it's a half an hour from Souris, where we live. It would be fantastic to have my children remain in the community, and I guess by not having them remain in the community, it's very hard to get them back into the community. And I think that a lot of people who attend Brandon University, have graduated from Brandon University, have settled in the area because

they want to be around family. And I think that, you know, my children's options are going to be in another province.

And it was interesting—Cameron's class, they did a straw poll to see how many kids were going to—were considering Brandon University at the beginning of the—of this school year, before the strike. And there were—there was a good handful. I would say there probably were seven, seven or eight kids that were going to be going to Brandon University at the beginning of the school year, but changed their minds, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know if any of them, I don't believe any of them are going to be going to Brandon University this fall. And that's very unfortunate because I think this government had an opportunity to show some leadership and to make, you know, an effort to get the teachers and the students back into the classroom.

You never saw Drew Caldwell, or the MLA for Brandon East, anywhere. We walked with the parents; we talked with parents. We talked to the administration; we talked to the faculty. Everybody was concerned about the situation, and I believe that that this government really let Brandon University, the students, the families, the faculty, down. They failed to show some leadership. And, you know, now we see several kids from the community where I live, which is a half an hour from Brandon, going to school in other provinces. And how sad is that? Because a lot of times when you go to—when you leave, not only your community, but your province, you don't come back. So, you know, it's very unfortunate that the government that was so caught up in protecting the union, their friends, and had very little respect for the students and the families and the community of Brandon itself.

* (11:40)

This week, we had a reception downstairs for the Brandon University alumni, and one individual indicated that the Brandon University brand has been tarnished. You know, and how sad is that? They come to the building here this week to celebrate and recognize the significance of being a Brandon University grad, very proud to be, you know, a graduate of Brandon University. But they feel that this government let Brandon University down, let the alumni down, let the students and parents down and it's tarnished their brand, Mr. Speaker.

And that's unfortunate that this government, you know, just couldn't come to the table, couldn't get it done, Mr. Speaker. And there's so many families out

there that, as the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen) had indicated, saved over years to get—to ensure that their children got a quality education, and many have dropped out.

The statistics that we've been able to gather are there are at least 150 students decided to just drop courses and, you know, over 75,000 credit hours were dropped, representing 10 per cent of total credit hours, you know, and that's cash in the—you know, taken from the pockets of families with no outcomes. And, you know, this is a government that really doesn't understand outcomes. It doesn't look at things. It'll just throw money at things, but not look for outcomes. And, you know, I think they should, because this situation actually resonates on the brand of this NDP government and how they really don't care about families and they don't care about the ramifications of their inaction.

And I'm just very disappointed as a mother of two children in rural Manitoba who, you know, what—how can I persuade them to go to Brandon University? You know, it would be hypocritical. Like, they have very solid reasons why Brandon University's not an option for them. And, you know, and I'm just going to have to say that, you know, I look forward to the minister's comments from—with the minister responsible for post-secondary education, because I really want to know why she had her head in the sand, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to know why the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) was missing in action. He's supposed to be the Westman MLA providing, you know, supports. You know, he's missing in action. You know, and it's interesting. He'll be there for a ribbon cutting, but my goodness, can you find him when there's an issue? Forget it. We get a lot of calls from his constituents because he doesn't pick up his phone. You know, like, and here we go again. You know, like this is just unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, that—[*interjection*] Yes, you know, this was a very serious issue. And being a former president of the Brandon University Student Union, you would think that he had a bit of interest in getting this resolved.

So, in closing, I want to thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing this forward. I know it had a great debate in Brandon city council on this issue, and I believe that they—Brandon council put a really good resolution forward. And I think this government should really pay attention to the leadership from Brandon and

Westman who are very concerned with the lack of interest by this government in education in rural Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, there's no question that the strike was difficult on students. It's stressful to be a student. It's often the first time away from home, the first time on your own, balancing the pressures of studies, sometimes balancing that with your private life, maybe with working, maybe with other pressures, out on your own for the first time. So difficult, difficult in any situation to be in a university setting and first time away from home, but, no question, the strike was difficult on students. So, of course, we are just as pleased as students were when classes resumed at Brandon University.

And I would like to commend Manitoba Student Aid for their work and their individual work that they do with students and the way they try very hard to look at individual situations, but also with Brandon University and the allowances that it made to try to accommodate the students after the strike.

I know that right now the university is working very hard to heal the wounds of the strike and to ensure that there are better relationships between administration and faculty well in advance of the next contract. I know that since the strike the university has peacefully ratified one collective agreement, two more have been negotiated and are being voted on today. And I know that's because of the hard work that people have come to the table to try to mend some of the relationship issues that have come up in the past. Since the strike the university has settled that one contract and are about to settle two more without incident, and I commend them for that.

I've been told, in talking to students and to faculty and administration, that things are moving along in Brandon; that people are ready to get back to work; that it is in a process of healing, and I commend them for doing that.

I met with the president of Brandon University yesterday. She told me that she's having regular meetings with the new president of the faculty union and I'm optimistic that that will lead to a better understanding and better co-operation well in advance of their next contract.

Also, contrary to what members opposite said, the president told me that she's had lots of meetings

with alumni, both here in Manitoba and outside of the province. All alumni, who are still proud to be from Brandon University, who credit Brandon University with their success and are quite happy to contribute to the fundraising efforts at Brandon University. And the president assured me that those efforts are going well because people do have a warm spot in their hearts for the experience and the time that they spent at what I think is a very unique university, not just in this province but in Canada as well.

I know that the university, after the strike, placed a great emphasis on ensuring that students were able to finish the term and get back into a regular routine of things. It did mean that reading week was cancelled, and that is, of course, disappointing on some levels, and possibly, inconvenient as well.

But it did mean that Brandon University was able to ensure that the term ended as scheduled, on time, so that students could finish in time for other commitments they may have had. And whether that's summer jobs they had lined up, internships or other commitments, it certainly meant compromise on the part of everybody, but it also meant working together to ensure that that term ended at the arranged time, which made this summer, and heading into next term, a lot more predictable for students.

Also, as I was saying earlier, I really do want to commend Manitoba Student Aid and the people who work there, for their hard work that they do every day, working with students and evaluating students' individual and particular concerns.

I know that they don't see students as numbers on paper; they see them as, how can we support them, how can we help them get—what is the goal of all of us, is to see students get through their education and not be penalized for not having the same amount of money as other students have in order to go.

I know that in cases where students reduced their course load or withdrew from classes because that, perhaps, they didn't feel they could complete their classes in a shortened term, and that's understandable; every student has a different way of learning. They took measures to make sure that penalties were not imposed, so that if students did feel they had to drop courses or take a little few less credits in this second semester, they were not penalized for that. They also will work with each of them individually and make sure that they're treated fairly.

We also made sure that we were working with Brandon University administration, with Manitoba Student Aid, to make sure that throughout the strike, that students continued to receive financial assistance. Because, of course, as I said, it was a difficult time for students, and I understand that for them it was a time of uncertainty, and at least they knew that they were going to be looked after through student aid.

There has been no term cancelled at Brandon University because of a strike. And I'm not saying that it's not a difficult thing for students, faculty, administration, and the city of Brandon to go through, but it is important to recognize that students were able to get back into the classroom and finish their term on time.

The university did a lot to help students who thought that perhaps, that a term that's shortened by a week might be a little more stressful for some folks; some folks, depending on how they learn, might not have felt they could do a full course load. And that's why the voluntary withdrawal date, for the first term, was extended to January 6th, to allow a full refund for students, if they decided that they didn't want to keep going, they were able to get a full refund.

But the best news that we heard, was that although that that opportunity was there for students to get the refund, most choose—most chose to stay. And that's, of course, the best news that we could get: is that most students did choose to go back to Brandon University and continue their studies, and that is exactly what we want.

I know members opposite mentioned that they, you know, were a little nervous that I would talk about funding to universities and our commitment to students, and I don't under—you know, I do understand why they would be nervous. Our investments in post-secondary education mean that our tuition is the third lowest in Canada for both university and for colleges.

And, I suppose, they really don't want me to mention what they did when they were office, where, of course, they cut funding to universities, cut or froze it for five years straight at the same time as they raised tuition by 132 per cent while they were office. Not surprising, enrolment went down by 15 per cent when they were there.

* (11:50)

Pretty different from what we've done. Our record is quite clear: since we came into office we've

increased post-secondary education funding by nearly 90 per cent. That's including on top of that \$800 million in capital support for freezing tuition to the rate of inflation. And since 1999, we have seen operating grants go up by 90.5 per cent, and yet tuition has only risen by 3.4 per cent. Big difference from 132 per cent when they were in office.

Our plan is to continue supporting our universities so that they can offer the quality and excellence that they have and to continue growing with that; to make sure that students have affordability and access to that high-quality universities and colleges that we see in Manitoba, and that they won't be penalized for not having the money to go because we brought in a bursary program, Mr. Speaker.

In the '90s, when they were in office, they cut the bursary. There was no such thing. Any of us who went to school in the '90s remember what that was like, and why we had much bigger student loans and student debt than our students are facing today. Students were more in need; they had no bursaries. Since then, we've brought in \$168 million in grants and scholarships and bursaries to Manitoba students. We've also brought in the 60 per cent tuition rebate. So, Mr. Speaker, when students finish school and put roots down here in Manitoba, they get 60 per cent of their tuition back. And that's not just students who studied in Manitoba. In fact, that's not just students who were born in Manitoba. You can study anywhere in the world. You can be from any country in the world, but if you choose Manitoba as home, we're going to thank you for that and support you to get your start by giving you 60 per cent of your tuition back as well.

This budget alone showed \$10 million going to Manitoba Student Aid, and, as I said, it's not just the money; it's Student Aid that is supporting students. It's the individuals who work there, who talk to students, who make sure they have the supports that they need.

We are seeing supports, of course, in terms of the operating grants at universities. We've committed to three-year block funding. Last year our universities saw a 5 per cent increase, a 5 per cent increase this year, and our commitment is to a 5 per cent increase next year as well. I compare that to any university across Canada to see if anybody else is putting that sort of commitment into it. And at the same time, knowing that we want options for students, we've got a 4 per cent increase to our

college operating grants, which I might just mention that they've increased by 142.7 per cent since we came into office.

I know that Brandon University will continue to move forward. It is an excellent university. I'm proud of the university education that is offered at Brandon University. I'm glad to hear that they are working together—have formed a quality of life committee with both administration and with faculty, as well, where they're working on recruitment and retention of faculty members. And, as I said, one collective agreement has already been ratified and two more are about to be without incident. I know that everyone has the best plans in place and the support for students, and people—both administration, faculty, this government, and I know the people of Brandon, as well—want to see the best for Manitoba students and those attending Brandon University. And I look forward to being at their convocation this year to see a whole bunch of more young and ready and educated people in Manitoba ready to join our workforce.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to put some words of support for this resolution to my colleague from Brandon West and Spruce Woods for bringing this forward. I just want to say that I had the opportunity to walk the streets with the students and their parents and some of the other supporters during this 45-day unheralded strike in Manitoba's history. I want to say that I doubt that would have happened if it had of been University of Manitoba or even the University of Winnipeg. I am quite concerned that the government would have stepped in sooner and done something about this. The member from Brandon East, certainly, was not to be seen during the strike period of time in Brandon as well.

I just want to say, too, that the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby) can't have it both ways in which some of the comments she just said—to refer to a week-long strike while it was 45 days. Many students dropped their courses and now have to take summer courses to make sure that they can stay with what they would have had, Mr. Speaker, not to get ahead, and so this has very much interrupted their year. We did have hundreds of students that have left Brandon University, students that dropped courses so that they couldn't—that couldn't finish the year that they had, and that puts them behind.

And, Mr. Speaker, there isn't any members in this House that went through a strike in reference to some of the—my colleagues who said that they attended Brandon University. Those were in the days when they didn't have strikes and so they certainly weren't impacted the same way as any of these students were. I want to say that 83 per cent of the curriculum wasn't—was—only 83 per cent was provided not the whole 100 per cent of the curriculum, Mr. Speaker.

And in regards to saying—the minister saying that alumni have supported this strike; they didn't, Mr. Speaker. The fundraising dollars that have come in since the strike dropped 47 per cent. There's only 53 per cent of support. That's from six years ago, not just the year before. So alumni funding has dropped totally in this—tremendously, it's been virtually cut in half because of the strike.

And so with those words, I just want to say that I certainly supported the students in their efforts to get back to work in this strike and wanted to make sure that the many people that called me from my constituency during this particular strike, who wanted to see it ended, were heard in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just briefly on this resolution about students and Brandon University.

Sadly, the government presided over a situation this last fall where there was a lose for students who lost a lot of time and then it was more difficult making it up and there were some students who were lost, too, who didn't come back. And it was a lose situation for Brandon University because, you know, nobody likes to have a situation where you're not able to have classes and you're not able to be able to teaching students for some time.

And so, I think that it is reasonable to undertake an effort to try and reduce or eliminate the chances of such strikes at post-secondary education institutions in the future, and, therefore, I will be supporting this resolution as a reasonable effort in that direction. Thank you.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I'm actually very pleased this resolution has come forward, I mean, I think it—I think we can use every opportunity we can to put some reasonable words on the record about not just Brandon University, but a university education, college education across the board, Mr. Speaker, but in particular, with what did

go on in terms of the Brandon University situation that we felt.

I—as has been pointed out, I am a graduate of Brandon University—1981, Mr. Speaker, and I—

An Honourable Member: That long ago.

Mr. Struthers: You know, the member from River East points out that's a long time ago. But, you know, there's certain things that don't change over that period of time. I'm very proud of going to Brandon University in the late '70s and into the early '80s. I was struck when my colleague, the Minister for Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard) spoke about being a student at Brandon University and coming to her Legislature—the Manitoba Legislature—to try to talk to the Filmon Conservative government in the 1990s and tried to talk some sense into that government in terms of tuition fee increases that were very much into the double digits, 15 per cent and those sorts of things.

Well, I appreciate the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) reminding me about how long ago it was that I was involved with that—because it was the Sterling Lyon Conservative government in the late '70s and into the early '80s who were doing the same kind of thing, Mr. Speaker. So, I guess—I know

the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) would remember those days—that's our generation.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Maybe we shouldn't be so tough on the current crop of Conservative MLAs for contributing to the tarnishment of Brandon University, like they have here today and other statements that I've seen. We shouldn't be too hard—they've inherited quite a legacy, quite a tradition of one Conservative government after the next, through the generations, not supporting—and maybe I'm being too kind in saying, not supporting students and universities—actually looking for ways to denigrate the fine work that is done at Brandon University and other universities around our province.

So, excuse me, if I'm—if we're a little hard on the current group of Conservatives. It dates back to the Gary Filmon days, it dates back to the Sterling Lyon days—I suspect if you brought somebody—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have seven minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 17, 2012

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