

Second 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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<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, July 18, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Okay, are we ready to proceed with Bill 208?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 211?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 202?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 207?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 201?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 203?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 200?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 214?

An Honourable Member: Yes, sure.

Mr. Speaker: We've made it—good.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call Bill 214, The Cyberbullying Prevention Act, standing in name of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

Bill 214—The Cyberbullying Prevention Act

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): And good morning to you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, it is a great day to be a Manitoban and a great day to be a Legislature here in Manitoba doing what the people have sent us to do, and that is deal with legislation.

Bill 214, The Cyberbullying Prevention Act, is one of those very important pieces of legislation that I would recommend to this House. I would recommend to this House that it would actually be debated. I would encourage members of the New Democratic Party caucus to actually get up and start debating it. It is an important piece of legislation.

Years ago, I had the opportunity—[interjection] I am being heckled here, Mr. Speaker. The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) said they would like to debate this piece of legislation, and as soon as my 10 minutes have run up, I would encourage him to get up and start debating it. It's a good piece of legislation.

Years ago, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to represent this fine Chamber at the CPA conference in Toronto. It was a very good conference, and one of the topics we discussed was technology and Parliament, how does the change in technology impact legislative bodies. And it was very telling, and I had the opportunity to speak and one of the

concerns I raised at that point in time was that legislatures across the world tend to be behind where technology and innovation is going and it is important that we pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and start to get ahead of the curve and not just following it. Often legislation is actually put forward and passed that is already behind where technology is, and we have to be very careful about that as legislators.

Bill 214 is one of those pieces of legislation that is ahead of the curve, that is actually ahead of where things are going, and it is very important that we look at this legislation. And I would encourage us to do so, debate it and pass it.

I know all legislators have probably been approached by individuals who are bullied. And one of the things that has always concerned me—and I want to cite two cases. I will not use, obviously, names nor will I name the school. And the case was a young boy, a young guy, who happened to be the tallest—he was probably the strongest and the biggest guy in the school, and there were a couple of individuals, bullies, who would take an amazing amount of glee to walk down the hallway and drill him in the shoulder, to push him around in the hallway, trying to provoke him to do something and then knowing full well that there would be repercussions on both sides. That was not his temperament; his temperament was not to engage, and instead he took it. His friends, of whom I spoke to several of them, indicated that they were fearful that if they were to step in and to help this individual that they would become the next victims. And, as is usually the case, what happened was when the going got tough, the victim had to get going.

And I find that 214 finally addresses that point, that it is no longer the victim who has to leave. It's no longer the victim that is then doubly punished by being bullied—the first time being bullied and the second time by having to leave.

There's a second case, and again I will leave the names out of it and schools out of it. It was a girl, and I actually know the girl and I know the bully. I actually know all of those involved. In fact, I know that the family wrote to the minister of Education of the day; nothing was done. Nothing was ever done appropriately for this family, and the girl was bullied over and over and over again. And in this instance, again, when the going gets tough, the victim has to get going, and they pulled this girl out of the school and put her into private school.

This Bill 214 is important because not just does it address cyberbullying, things that are now taking place far more so than when we were young—and I would like to point out to this House that bullying always occurred. The only thing that is different, I would say, amongst others, are two things.

Number 1 is we're finally recognizing what bullying is. It's not just, well, kids will be kids or that kind of trying to rationalize our way out of it. We are now taking it serious, and it has moved its way from the schools onto the national agenda.

But, more importantly, with cyberbullying what is happening is bullies can now be far more anonymous than they used to be. They before would have to go to the playground or on the way home they would walk and they would make catcalls or push someone around or beat them up. Now they're doing it often anonymously online, and that is almost the most hurtful, because if anybody here has young children or teenagers you know how often your kids are online—I would make the argument far too long online, but that's what they do—whether it's playing games or communications or whatever it is that they're doing online, and often that is when they are being attacked. They are being attacked when they are doing what they find as being relief.

I have a son who says to me after a hard day of school and lots of sports, he says, you know what, let me have one—my one hour of downtime on the computer, and that usually involves the computer, his iPhone and two other pieces of electronics, which somehow downtime is working all four of those and—but that is his downtime. But that's exactly where cyberbullying is taking place. They are attacking those who are using it as a downtime, as a fun time, and that's the way they are being attacked.

* (10:10)

And we have read in newspapers—Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you, often I cannot read those papers. It is so offensive. It is so hurtful, what's going on, and it is time for us as legislators to stand up and start putting in the process in place that we protect the victim, because we have to stop this notion that when the going gets tough that the victim has to get going. It is time that we put in place the kinds of means and the kinds of things that victims have a right to fight back, because we are now faced with a far different world than when we grew up.

My kids' eyes rolled to the back of their head when I explained to them what I grew up in, so far as

technology goes. I remember that cutting-edge technology called the eight-track. I remember a lot of just really—oh, and then we had cassette tapes and then we had Walkmans. And, you know, it was a different world for us, and a bully was still somebody out on the street corner. That bullying has now moved anonymously and has moved into a cyber Internet, and we better start looking at the costs on our young people. We better start looking at what it's doing to our society, and I think it's important that we give the victims tools by which they can defend themselves.

I've, over the years, had lots of individuals come to me and complain, and what I'd like about 214 is it doesn't say that someone, somewhere—it doesn't put the onus on somebody else, that they should stand up and defend these kids. It doesn't say that it's a principal or that it's the police officer down the street or it's numerous amounts of individuals. What it does is it gives the individual being bullied, gives them tools, gives them rights to defend themselves, and I think it's important that we empower young people. They know what's going on. Young people know where it's at and they are also very concerned and they want to have these kinds of tools.

And I would recommend to this House, have a look at the legislation. Don't play fast and loose with this. I hope that while we aren't going to be seeing a lack of debate from members opposite that somewhere along the line someone's being bullied and feels they have no hope.

This bill gives hope to victims and it says to them, no longer will we punish the victim. No longer is it the victim that has to leave. No longer is it the onus on the victim to actually get out of a situation, but rather that we go after the bully. And when it comes to cyberbullying, this bill is what our province needs. It's appropriate, it's been well-vetted, and I would recommend it strongly to this house.

And I basically have come to the end of my time and I look forward to hearing the comments from the member from St. Norbert who was so vehement about getting up and speaking that he had to take even some of my time to heckle me, so I recommend this bill to this Legislative Assembly. Look forward to hearing the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau).

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 214. You know, some days in private members' hour, it's good; some days in private members' hour,

it's the good, the bad and the ugly; and some days, like today, it's the good and highly questionable.

And what is good about debating this bill? Well, now we know that now all MLAs in this House have at least expressed some interest in protecting youth. Now, of course, all of my New Democratic Party colleagues and I were very proud when the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) introduced Bill 18 last fall, to use our public schools in the best possible way to protect our children. I know the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has now spoken in favour of Bill 18. I know the member for River Heights has some ideas, and until the clouds parted last Wednesday, it was difficult to find out where the Progressive Conservative Party stood on cyberbullying.

In fact, what was the clearest and most cogent statement from any Tory on the issue of cyberbullying? Well, it was the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) and he argued in the Winnipeg Sun on March 11, '13, his view on combatting cyberbullying, and I quote directly: If you're being bullied on cyberspace, don't go there. Simple as that.

And, you know, until the clouds parted last Wednesday and the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) walked in with his bill, that was all we heard from the Progressive Conservatives. So I welcome the fact that we can now actually debate this issue, and I think that's a positive thing.

And what else is good? Well, we know that it's not enough now for the member for Steinbach to borrow ideas from the Manitoba New Democrats—which, of course, he did before the last election when he scurried around with Hugh McFadyen. And every time we'd announce something they'd run the next day and say and oh, you're going to put an MRI in Swan River; we're going to put an MRI in Swan River. Oh, you're hiring Crown attorneys; we'll hire more Crown attorneys.

It's not enough the member for Steinbach is copying what Manitoba New Democrats are doing—I think it's a good thing that now he's copying what New Democrats in Nova Scotia are doing.

And I don't know whether the member for Steinbach told his caucus members that, but when he did his Google search—as we know he does—and he looked all around North America to find something to help him explain his position on Bill 18, where did that lead him? It led him the New Democratic government in Nova Scotia.

And I don't know, the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), I think, failed to mention that in his comments. I don't think the member for St. Paul knows that it's the Nova Scotia New Democrats who wrote the bill that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has now introduced. So that's positive.

And what else is good? Well, Mr. Speaker, this morning what is good is the member for Steinbach has now effectively renounced everything he has said on Bill 18 since the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) introduced the bill back in the fall. And why do I say that? Well, I've listened to the member for Steinbach, as he's spoken quite a bit on Bill 18, and what has been his public reason for opposing Bill 18? Well, it's been, from what I've understood, the threshold.

The member for Steinbach has real problems with a threshold that will allow a teacher or resource teacher, a principal, to step in and protect a child who's being bullied. Well, what does Bill 14 provide? Well, pretty much the same threshold to get a judicial officer involved to make an order or a judge to grant a judgment. I'm glad that like Saul—or Saul on the road to Damascus, on that dusty path, it now seems that the member for Steinbach has had a conversion. And I'm glad that now the member for Steinbach has effectively renounced all of his public statements on his opposition to Bill 18, and that's very good. I congratulate the member for Steinbach for finally recognizing the wisdom of Bill 18, the strength of our Education Minister. And it now appears that his public statements in opposition to Bill 18 now mean nothing.

And there's the member for St. Paul who just spoke, who didn't have enough to say, I suppose, who's now going to run back to the caucus room and say, member for Steinbach, you didn't tell us that was the NDP bill in Nova Scotia; you didn't tell us that everything you've been saying for the past seven months you've now effectively washed away by standing up and introducing Bill 214.

And, of course, we had the member for Steinbach doing his filibuster—his filibuster in bankers' hours, I may add, but a filibuster nonetheless.

I'm now going to be very pleased when the member for Steinbach stands up and apologizes to the people of Manitoba for the public statements that he's made for the past seven or eight months on Bill 18. He'll now apologize and say, you know what? I got it wrong; that's why I've now introduced

Bill 214, I think I need to go in a very different direction. And I'm sure he'll convince his caucus to go in a different direction.

And we can get Bill 18 passed in time for the next school year and we can protect students across this province. I think that's a very, very good thing.

I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the big picture, of everything that's going on to protect children and people from bullying and cyberbullying. I've already talked about Bill 18, and we know that's it important to empower schools; to give principals, teachers, others the ability to intervene whether or not the bullying is happening on school property, whether or not the bullying is happening on school time. We want to empower schools to get involved. We want to empower students to gather together to protect each other in any way that may mean, and if that means gay-straight alliances, as exist in most high schools in Manitoba, we want every high school student who wants to start a grey-gay-straight alliance to be able to do that without being pressured or banned by their school or their school district.

And it is true, Bill 18 is not a comprehensive code to end bullying. There's no question about that. We are doing everything we can do within the public school system, and it is acknowledged, which is why I think it's good we're talking a Bill 214, that there can be other steps to compliment what's going on, and I'm happy to talk about that.

*(10:20)

Last fall at the minister of—the meeting of Justice ministers in Regina, Minister Bond, who's the Justice Minister for British Columbia, came forward in light of the Amanda Todd tragedy in British Columbia, and she asked Justice ministers across the country to support having departmental officials from across the country work on ways to improve the laws in Canada. I was proud to support that, and as a result of that meeting—which I can tell you every single Justice minister supported—our officials have gone away, and the initial plan is they would come back in the fall, this fall, with a report to Justice officials.

Early this spring, Premier Dexter in Nova Scotia, in light of the Parsons tragedy, asked if the departmental officials would speed up their work, and instead of coming back to talk to Justice ministers in the fall, this is an important enough issue that it was asked that those officials come back and

report to the premiers at the Council of the Federation at a meeting that's going to be happening next week. And, again, I supported that. I was proud to support that on behalf of Manitobans and, indeed, the premiers will be discussing this very important issue next week. And our hope is that premiers will call strongly on the federal government to make changes to the Criminal Code to do everything that's meaningful and effective to take on bullying and cyberbullying on that front.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you that personally, as the Justice Minister in our government, we will support the federal government if they are making changes which are meaningful and effective at protecting children. It's very important that one of the issues being considered is going to be the distribution of intimate images and, unfortunately, cases that have involved that situation has resulted in tragedies. That was the case in Nova Scotia; that was the case in British Columbia; and, sadly, that is the case across the country.

And, of course, the question will be, how do we best fill that gap? And I think it's appropriate to see what the response is going to be from the federal government to see where the Criminal Code will be filling in gaps that have been identified, and then when that's done we can then take a look at what other steps need to be done. And I'm proud that our Premier (Mr. Selinger) will be supporting that move. I'm proud that our Premier will be speaking in support of that, and I'm proud of all of the expertise and knowledge that exist in the province of Manitoba at taking on this issue.

So now, of course, the introduction of Bill 14 has washed away all of the member for Steinbach's (Mr. Goertzen) public concerns about Bill 18. And, of course, if there's any further delays of Bill 18 it will be very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the emperor has no clothes, and that's why we're going to be very, very happy to move this along.

With respect to Bill 214, we will be continuing to talk. I'm not saying that the member's approach is wrong. I do believe that we need to look at this carefully. As he photocopied what they're doing in Nova Scotia, he came up with a scheme that actually is very different from how protection orders are granted here in Manitoba, which we allow for domestic violence victims, which we allow for victims of dating violence—an amendment we made—and as we now allow for victims of human trafficking, and we'll look closely at that.

We also need to make sure that the threshold which is now being adopted by the member for Steinbach, which is a good thing, is an appropriate balance of the rights of Manitobans, and there is more work to be done. But I'm glad to see the member for Steinbach has now changed his tune, that everybody now appears to be in support of assisting children to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I'm struck by—while the member of Steinbach has talked about a filibuster, you know, some of us don't believe that the theme song of a filibuster is nine to five. So—but I digress.

I'm sure the member for Steinbach—and I must admit I was mistakenly going to call him the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler). I know he's had some opportunity to spend some time in St. Paul, Minnesota, recently, and I wonder if he's been actually checking in, really, with sort of his alter egos in the US, you know, in the Tea Party. Because I'm struck here by—I'm not sure, you know, I necessarily agree with my colleague the Minister of Justice here, because I'm not sure what to believe with the member for Steinbach anymore.

You know, when it comes to bullying, an issue that I think is fundamental to who we are and what we are as members of the Legislature—let's not forget, it was only a few months ago in Steinbach when there was a meeting of several hundred people where all the member for Steinbach could talk about was how proud he was that we had a meeting of several hundred people that came out, that basically took a position opposing a bill that would protect all Manitobans, all young people, against bullying and actually specifically put in the bill the provision that would allow, that would mandate the establishment of gay-straight alliances, that recognized that bullying targets, in particular, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered kids.

And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, he was so proud at that time, and here, you know, a few months later—and actually I must admit, you know, the—a bill being introduced well into the session—I wonder, is this the new version of the member for Steinbach or is this a smokescreen to distract from the fact that they want to do virtually anything to avoid having Bill 18 go to committee, having Bill 18 go to a vote, where they have to stand up in this House and either stand with

the majority of Manitobans who want to protect all kids against bullying or to follow the dictates of some who have a more extreme view, who've made it very clear—and it was made very clear at that rally that their view is if MLAs don't support what they like, if school trustees, if city councillors and mayors don't, they'll vote them out.

So we'll see, Mr. Speaker, how principled the member for Steinbach really is. Or is it really all about politics for the member for Steinbach and members opposite? I have to say, it's all about a kind of politics that, I think, probably is familiar to people in terms of the US and Tea Party politics. Well, I've said this on the record: their agenda is the agenda of the 1990s, and I'll say it again—the 1990s in terms of economic policy, but on the issue of social policy and on bullying, it's the 1890s.

I mean, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) saying, if you don't like—you know, if you have problems with cyberbullying, shut it off. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I didn't grow up in the year of BlackBerrys and iPhones and the rest of it, but the member should actually check what's happening with young people today, who can connect with friends across the street, throughout the world, using the latest in technology—hand-held—at home. This is the reality of the year 2013. We're not in the horse-and-buggy era anymore. You know, I realize members again want the horse-and-buggy era when it comes to municipal boundaries, so they're consistent; they're in the 1890s. But we have a broad range in the sense and the way in which bullies can operate.

But you know the fundamental issue of bullying comes down to nothing more or less than the kind of intimidation that we see day in, day out, and it's up to us to make a difference. Now, you know, Mr. Speaker, I get very emotional when it comes to bullying. I've been there—I've been on the receiving end. When I first moved to Thompson as an immigrant kid, I can tell—I was bullied, but I was always struck by the fact that it was nothing compared to the bullying I saw the Aboriginal kids and the Sikh kids go through. And I—and, you know, if there's been a—an issue that drives me in anything and everything I do, it's always been about human rights; it's always been about fighting against racism.

But there was another element, too, when I was going to high school. I tell you, there was virtually nothing worse you could say or do about someone than to make some aspersion on their sexual

orientation. And, Mr. Speaker, if you were gay or lesbian, and I—in my class, by the way, our 'valedictorian' is now a judge in the province who is gay; a good friend of mine, Tim Preston, actually. I—but it was never stated, because, you know, in—when I went to high school, you just, you know—you know kids—you knew you had friends that were gay or lesbian, you just didn't say it. But the worst kind of bullying I saw was against kids that were seen as having a different sexual orientation, whether they did or not—it didn't really matter. I mean, the worst kind of slur you could throw at someone was one that was casting aspersion on their sexual orientation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what really hit home to me was a few years later when my kids were going to the same school—and, you know, I was reminded of this this weekend. I was talking to the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) about this. You know, our daughters left home a while ago. Her room is like a museum, and I came across her bike helmet, and it's pink. And I'll never forget the day that our son couldn't find his bike helmet, so, of course, in our family, well before legislation, it was, wear your bike helmet. So, if he was going to bike to school, he had to have a bike helmet. So he borrowed our daughter's, and it was pink. He was pulled off his bike, he was kicked around by a couple of kids. Again, there was nothing worse than some aspersion on sexual orientation.

Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, what I'm really proud of today? Guess who is the chair of the school board of Mystery Lake and Thompson right now? He is. And I'm proud to say that the school district of Mystery Lake is taking a clear stand in support of Bill 18 and the deterrence of bullying.

* (10:30)

And I want to say to members opposite, you know, they can dance around, they can bring in every smoke screen they want. But I think everybody in this province understands that just as that rally in Steinbach made it very clear that there are people that don't think that we should be protecting gay and lesbian kids, Mr. Speaker—I like Thompson, by the way. We don't have a gay-straight alliance, we have a GLOW—gays, lesbians or whatever. I, you know, that's a classic, Thompson way of looking at things.

But, you know, until we put in specifically that—you know, if anybody had any doubt why we need Bill 18, just look at the reaction from the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the more extreme opponents of the bill. I mean, has anybody not read

some of it? I know we haven't had the chance to get it to committee yet, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very interested to hear what those comments are.

I, by the way, received one call in my constituency opposing the bill. Ironically, it's from a woman who home-schools her kids. I'm not quite sure what the connection is with bullying in our schools, but I listened. And, Mr. Speaker, you know what? I respected the fact that she had a very different view. But it was an extreme view. And when I see members opposite, isn't that what really it's all about? They do not have the fortitude in the year 2013 to stand up—and I challenge the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) to do this, to stand up and say he supports gay-straight alliances as part of an antibullying strategy. But he doesn't have the fortitude to do that. And I don't know if he was proud because he supported some of the extreme positions expressed at that rally and have been expressed since, or I don't know if it's about politics. I don't know if he's going to follow the lead of his leader who—you know, I love when the Leader of the Opposition lectures us about disasters. He was EMO minister and he quit before the '97 flood, and he quit provincial politics during the '97 flood to 'pursune' his own personal ambitions. I wonder if the member of Steinbach has another agenda. We'll see what happens in terms of that federal election.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, it should be more important whether you're dealing with a disaster, whether you're dealing with an issue like bullying. Put your personal agendas aside. And that's why—you know, the member of Steinbach is anything but humble. When he brought in this bill I would have expected a bit of humility. Maybe—maybe the—you know, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) is right. Maybe there's some softening there, but I think it's all about politics. I think it's all about taking advantage of people's, you know, concerns. I don't agree with him. You know, if it wasn't about politics, we'd probably be in committee on Bill 18 right now. We'd probably be debating, actually, Bill 18, and not this bill.

But, you know, I think it's all about politics because they want to stir this up. Maybe they can't even control this politics, Mr. Speaker, but at the same time they want to persuade other Manitobans that they're really a party of the 21st century.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they're stuck in the 1890s on social policy. They don't want to take a stand to support antibullying measures against all

Manitobans. The difference is we're a party of the 21st century. We'll tackle cyberbullying. We'll be there for gay, lesbians, or whomever because that's how you stop bullying. You say it's unacceptable in Manitoba and you take a stand of principle. That's something the member for Steinbach and members opposite wouldn't know a thing about.

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

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this morning to put some words on the record with respect to Bill 214, and I do thank the member for Steinbach for introducing this legislation that would have a real effect in making the lives of so many students safer.

And you know the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) stands up and he says it's all about politics, and every time the member for stand—Thompson gets up, I'm convinced that, for him, this is all about politics. And he takes half his speech to just call down the other side, but puts very few words on the record to actually talk about the merits of 214. And I actually wonder if the member for Thompson has actually even taken the time to talk—to actually look at Bill 214, consider its merits, consider where it stands on the continuum of trying to create safer places for students. And I would encourage him to do that. I would encourage him to take a look at that bill and see what it does and compare it to others, because really what we should all be about in this place with respect to these issues is we should be really sincerely about the issue of creating safety for students, safety for young people, and this bill does exactly that.

You know, my son came home recently and he was telling me about this new technology. He says, Dad, you've got to be really careful with your PIN, your Visa card, because, he says, now there's this new ability for people to walk by you and just kind of skim the information from that card. It's like a perimeter payment going on without your knowledge. I was completely unaware that that technology even existed. And I thought, man, you got to be careful about that kind of thing. And then it's that kind of principle, I think, that we're talking about here. It's the principle that technology advances at such a rapid pace that we're often unaware of the implications of that quickly advancing technology. And I think that's what we need to approach here.

We under—have to understand that the challenges for students in this kind of situation go far beyond

just the classroom. They extend into all these areas where social media and technology, things like instant messaging and Twitter and Facebook and Pinterest, and texting. Our kids are connecting with their peers and they are more and more in environments where this kind of cyberbullying can go on. This is a serious issue and it requires a serious response. I think we need to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that young people can often lack a well-developed ability to weigh the consequences of their actions, to give proper consideration to their intentions before they act on them. I don't think that's very disputable. I think we all understand that, that the students and young people need guidance. They need to feel safe, and we know that technology is changing all of that.

I know that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has gone through and he has looked at legislation across North America, and one of the members said earlier this morning how he had borrowed elements for his legislation from other jurisdictions. Well, indeed, I think that's what the best legislation seeks to do. It looks across to see what legislation exists out there; it connects with the people who have brought forward that legislation; it looks at the merits of it; it looks at the challenges. And that's exactly what the member for Steinbach has done in this case. He's gone across and tried to find the best kind of legislation out there, because, indeed, it's all of us legislators, it's not just in the Manitoba Legislature, that we are grappling with issues like this. It's across Canada and it's across North America, and, indeed, we don't have to, in every circumstance, reinvent the wheel. There are some very significant pieces of legislation that have accomplished some real gains for students and for young people, and we need to look at those.

Mr. Speaker, 16 per cent of all parents say they've had a child who has been bullied or for whom bullying is a frequent occurrence, and that's a study by the Canadian Public Health Association. And we know that bullying can lead to things like substance abuse, it can lead to truancy, it can lead to depression, it can lead to aggression and it can lead to a declining academic results.

And we know that the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) here in this province has—she has got up and put on the record comments—she's likened the things like the tragedies of Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons, and then she said, and that's why Bill 18 will succeed. But the fact of the matter is that in the case of Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd,

the issue that was there was not related to this one issue that she's trying to champion. It's not just related to gay and straight alliances, but in the—in those situations, those were particular situations that were related to cyberbullying. They were cyberbullying things. It was reputation—it was their reputation, and yet the minister stands up and she says, if you create gay-straight alliances in schools, that will decrease the instances of the Rehtaeh Parsons. The fact of the matter is we need to have legislation that is not just optical, we need substantive legislation, absolutely—[interjection] And I can hear the member across the way chirping and talking about how good this is. This is good. It's important to understand that this conversation needs to be broad based. And the solutions that we articulate need to be broad solutions that will actually create safe places for students—not just a few students, Mr. Speaker, but for all students.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we know that the member's—that the Minister of Education's bill, we know that it lacks many things to make it successful. We know that it is cosmetic rather than concrete. It lacks a reporting mechanism. It lacks the courage to expand the list of student organizations that are created to provide safe students for—safe places for students. It lacks disciplinary consequences for those who perpetrate acts of bullying. It doesn't give meaningful concrete tools for administrators to be able to actually work with these situations. The minister had an opportunity here, but she hasn't availed herself of that opportunity.

* (10:40)

And, Mr. Speaker, I can understand there's a lot of chirping in the background. It makes it difficult for me to put my comments on the record.

I don't think that the members of the government actually want to hear anything other than the sound of their own voice on this issue. They made that clear from the very beginning. They've had chances to call their bill and they've chosen not to do that. And even today, they chirp in the background, but they don't actually want to hear any comments put on the record that reflect any other views other than their own.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's too bad. And that's regrettable because cyberbullying is devastating to victims—

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

I regret to interrupt the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), but it appears that there's some honourable members of the Assembly here this morning that wish to have some private conversations. Might I suggest they use a loge to my right or to my left, or perhaps outside of the Chamber to have those private discussions.

The honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) and the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton).

I said before, I regret to identify specific individuals and I do regret having to do that, but I have to keep order in this Assembly, and that's the only way that I can accomplish that, it appears.

If you want to have those private conversations, and I say this to all members, please take those conversations into the loge or outside of the Chamber.

The honourable member for Morden-Winkler has the floor.

Mr. Friesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Brad Wall has called for action on this issue of cyberbullying. He called for an emergency debate—

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

Just a moment ago I asked the member of St. Paul to contain himself. I'm going to say it one last time. I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable member for St. Paul. Please contain yourself for your conversations.

The honourable member for Morden-Winkler has the floor.

Mr. Friesen: As I was saying, you know, Brad Wall has called for action on this issue. He's called for an emergency debate, and they had that on April 25th in the Saskatchewan Legislature. He's calling for changes to be made that would make the distribution of intimate images without consent online a stand-alone criminal code offence. That's the kind of substantive action that the member for Steinbach's (Mr. Goertzen) bill proposes in the province of Manitoba.

I know that the Prime Minister Harper has had a chance to meet with the family of Rehtaeh Parsons, and I know that the federal government is looking at finding practical ways to stop this kind of thing.

This is new activity. And we have to understand as legislators that there are ways where technology is advancing and we as legislators need to keep up with

these advances in technology. We need to come up with frameworks. We need to devise ways that continue to protect young people. This is not just young people misbehaving. This is criminal activity.

And in many cases we have not kept pace with technology. And what better reason could we be assembled in this place here than to make a difference, than to stand in the gap for bullied children who feel like no one is actually helping them, and enact real measures that will send the message and provide real consequences to make places more acceptable, more safe.

I know that in our schools today administrators and teachers and school divisions are looking for real direction, real leadership, and not the kind of cheap politics that this Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) has brought forward: divisive, acrimonious, entrenched, narrow and at times even vindictive. And, clearly, I think that her comments at times must even trouble her own members on that side, because at the very least we must all acknowledge that people come to this issue at a place of sincerity.

And to say that those opposed to you somehow are less Manitoban, are less Canadian—you must acknowledge at the very, very substance, at the root of this, that people want to have an honest and fulsome debate about this. They care. They care. And not acknowledging that, I think, is the greatest failure of all.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the member from Steinbach has brought forward legislation that allows persons to obtain protection orders when they are victims of cyberbullying. It would allow for the seizure of electronics that are used to cyberbully, it would create a special and a separate civil tort of cyberbullying and it puts the onus on parents to act when they become aware that their child is engaged in cyberbullying.

Mr. Speaker, the merits of this bill—it is strict. It has an enforceable definition. It is something that can be used to send a real message to make a real difference, and that's the encouragement that I give to the other side, that they would get interested in having a real debate on the merits of this issue in sincerity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk on this bill, but I first off would

like to thank the Minister of Education for putting in Bill 18. It's very important. I was a teacher for 31 years and I have a lot to say in regards to this bill from the honourable member from Steinbach. I think it was great that we're talking amongst us, both sides of the House talking on this important issue.

I want to thank the member from St. Paul for being so passionate and trying to make some changes. I might not agree with him, but at least we're talking about it.

I'd like to thank the member from Morden-Winkler for getting up and talking about this issue because it is a very, very important issue.

I'd like to thank, like I say, the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan). This is something in my teaching career over 31 years that I would like to have seen many, many years ago, but it's taken, I guess, the fortitude of the Minister of Education to come up with this bill. It's not one that's going to make everybody happy within our province of Manitoba. We are diverse and, in some cases, very diverse religious groups within our own province. But, having said that, when you look at Bill 18, it's very important not only to the gay-straight alliance, but for all children in our schools, and I hope we recognize the importance of having this bill and passing it.

I go back, like I say, 31 years in teaching, and 10 years ago I did a bullying survey for the Flin Flon School Division. And at that time—this was before cyberbullying. We were talking about how attitudes of children have changed. It used to be when bullies went out there, if someone was bullying you, you went, you had a fight, you got it over with, you shook hands and that was the end of it.

As we know, times have changed, and I think we have to recognize, on both sides of the House, that we have to make sure that we're moving with the times. And for saying, cyberbullying, just don't go there, that's not reality. It's getting harder and harder for kids to be different and to walk on a different road than other people.

And so what this is doing is recognizing the different groups and, no, not one group. I think it was the minister—or the member from Morden-Winkler said that, you know, this would give more power to some groups. I don't think that. I think what it does is recognize the different groups within our society, gives them the chance to get together, whether it's the gay-straight alliance, whether it's a Catholic

group, whether it's a Mennonite group, whatever. It gives chances for these groups to have meetings and to come together, and it also gives chance, I think, for the different schools that are within our province to come up with some strategy.

And the strategy we used in my last school, an alternative school, was restorative justice where you have to stand up, okay, for your actions, and you have to meet the person that you were bullying face to face. Because, you know, any—you know, we used to, as a teacher, say, well, you've got a detention; you're kicked out for three days, whatever. That's not reality. The reality is, is that you have to stand up for what you did and you have to respect the person across from you and come to some agreement. And I think what this bill does is recognizes that and recognizes also the importance—okay—this is the importance of being different.

I had two students in my 31 years commit suicide, and I can't say it was just bullying. I mean, they had a tough life. But, if this bill was in, I think we could have saved them. I think there might have—you know, as teachers we see opportunities—or we did see opportunities, but we thought, well, that's not our place. I think this is recognizing for parents, for teachers, for the government to come up with some plan to make our schools safe and make our schools places where learning is going to take place, and it's getting harder and harder with everybody with an iPhone, iPad—everybody. You know, communication doesn't stop between 9 and 4, communication can go around the night. I had kids when I was teaching at an alternative school, played video games all night or they were on Facebook all night. That's reality, and so we got to recognize that and we got to be strong in that, and, again, I want to thank the Minister of Education for bringing in Bill 18 and realizing the importance of this.

*(10:50)

And, as a teacher, over my 31 years, like I say, there's—I've 'teet'—I've taught criminals, I've taught wife beaters, I've taught murderers—and that was a normal school. And over time, as a teacher, you go—everyone goes through that, and sometimes you think back to some of those dark days and what kind of influence you could've had.

Well, you know what, I think with Bill 18, I think it'd be important because now this is another tool where teachers as a team, the principals, the Province, we are working together so that our schools are safe, so our schools are a learning

environment—[*interjection*] Thank you. I like to say that, you know, gays and homosexuals and that were welcomed in our schools in the North. Well, at one time, no one came out of the closet—no one did. But now I have to say that in our schools they are coming out and they're feeling more comfortable. They're not quite there, but they're feeling more comfortable. And I think it's our job as a society to look at these unfortunate people that are different, okay—and like the honourable minister from Thompson said, he was an immigrant and he was treated differently.

And I think with homosexuality, that is a tough fight, and I'm not going to debate whether it's right, whether it's wrong. The idea is that they feel comfortable coming to school, that they do not feel bullied, that they do not go to school because they're being bullied, and I think that's what Bill 18 does.

And again I want to thank the minister from Steinbach for giving an alternative. And that's fine, but, you know what? It doesn't go far enough. I think we have to strong—I think we have to stand strong in this House for this bill, because it benefits everybody. I know the honourable member from Steinbach was proud that a thousand people stood up against the bill, but I really do not think—I really do not think that that's what all Manitobans want. And I think we should show respect—I think we should show respect because this bill is going to make a big difference for individuals in our province. It's going to make sure that when they go to school, like I say, they'll have a smile.

One of my goals as a teacher was if you can get kids to want to come to school, that feel comfortable in your room, they'll keep on coming. And if they keep on coming, they're going to get educated. And that's so important that we, as legislatures, I guess, realize that it's important for kids to want to go to school, to get a education and follow their dreams. But, if they feel that they're bullied or picked on, many of them just give up. And, like I said, I've gone through a couple of suicides that I'm not proud, because I think maybe things could've been done differently. So I'm hoping that all members in this House realize the importance of this bill.

And again I want to thank the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) for coming up with this, and if my time in being an MLA is short or if it's long, this is going to be one of the most important things to me that I was part of in this Legislature, because, as a teacher, we live through the bullying and whatever, so it's an honour to put my voice on the record. It's

an honour for me to see the member from St. Paul and the member from Morden-Winkler, the member from Steinbach, to stand up and passionately talk about their views on it, because it is an important question.

But again I want to reiterate, thank you, Minister of Education, for bringing this up so that when I'm old and have lost my hair—oh—when I'm old and I've lost my hair, I can sit back and say, you know what? I was part of this.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to talk [*inaudible*].

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I wanted to put some words on the record after the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) was saying, you know, that they wanted for us to debate this, when they wouldn't let the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) debate it. It was fantastic. You know, I wanted to make sure that I get to say this.

I'm wondering about the—that the letters PC, you know, for their party, PC, I'm think—I started thinking it stands for pony and carts party, Mr. Speaker. You got the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) over here saying that if, you know, if you're getting bullied on the Internet, just don't go there. Well, that's not reality anymore. I mean, that's actually a ridiculous statement to say that we wouldn't go on the Internet. This generation of people live on the Internet.

You know, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen)—he—they often put incorrect stuff on the record, and they talk about it all the time and they keep saying it, hoping that people believe it's true. So I'm hoping that maybe in Steinbach, they'll actually start piping in this song that I've heard by Macklemore, and it's called Same Love. And I'm just going to say a couple of the things, and maybe they can pipe it into their caucus room, Mr. Speaker, because maybe they'll start to actually understand and believe some of these lyrics.

Here's a couple of lyrics: A preconceived idea of what it's meant / For those that like the same sex had the characteristics / The white—right-wing conservatives think it's a decision / And that you can be cured with some treatment and religion / Man made, rewiring of predisposition, playing God. / I can't change / Even if I tried / Even if I wanted to. / Love is patient and love is kind / A culture founded from oppression.

These are the words on this song, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? I listen to this song all the time, and every time I hear it, I think of the Conservative Party. I think about how—all the right-wing conservatives and the oppression that they put on these people. They don't support Bill 18 but, oh, they put this bill up and we have to pass it within 24 hours or kids are going to be devastated across this province.

What about our bill that's been sitting on the table for eight months? This bill will protect people, but they—oh, no—only if it's their idea, Mr. Speaker, will they support this bill. It's absolutely ridiculous that they would think this.

And, you know, I don't disagree with the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) very often, the Minister of Energy and Mines, but sometimes when we hear about him calling the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) a Tea Party member—well, we just heard from the member for St. Paul. I actually think maybe he's a socialist, because he—you know, he agrees with our party. He agrees with Nova Scotia's legislation. He's saying that it's great legislation, so maybe he is actually a socialist. Maybe he's hiding in the NDP caucus room, and he's just waiting to jump out and say, I'm going to cross the floor, Mr. Speaker, because I believe in them.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? We would welcome him and give him a big hug, because that's how our party does it. We include everybody. We would totally include him and give him a big hug, and maybe that's what he's lacking from his side, because they're all so afraid of this issue and they're afraid of this.

So, you know, they talk a big game, but when eight months—eight months—Bill 18 has been sitting on the table—shameful, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), he should be ashamed of himself for bringing up our legislation, basically carbon-copying it. He talks about how, in his bill, it's okay if it's emotional well-being, but in ours we talk about feelings. What's the difference? There is no difference. It's just because he came up with the idea. Now, oh, it's, all of sudden, it's a great idea. We got a bill. We've got to pass it in 20 hours. It's a ridiculous concept, Mr. Speaker.

We have to stand up and fight for all the youth in the province, and we should be supporting Bill 18 and this should have been passed a long time ago.

I'm really disappointed that the 300 people that are signed up for committee haven't been able to voice their opinion. You know, why are they so—oh, well, we've got to get our people to hear from Bill 20, Bill 20, Bill 20. Well, less—132 people showed up. We've got 300 people waiting to speak on Bill 18, and they won't let that happen. Why not, Mr. Speaker? They talk a big game, but really they don't want democracy. They'd let—they didn't let the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) stand up and talk about it, and they're not letting 300 people come down to our Legislature and talk about legislation that we should be passing. They should be ashamed of themselves.

And I'm hoping the member for Steinbach uses the Internet—or, actually, maybe the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), I can teach him how to use the Internet, because I know, you know, back in the PC pony and cart days, they didn't know how to use the Internet and use YouTube. But I can help him YouTube this song, and maybe they could pipe it into all of their towns. And maybe those thousand people that stood up against gay-straight alliances and people having equal rights will actually listen to the lyrics of this song, and realize that people are born a certain way. And you know what? We should accept them all, and we should protect them all. There's no way that they should be up standing there saying that they're not going to allow these people to stand up and protect them like we will with Bill 18. I find it absolutely disgusting, actually, Mr. Speaker, what this member for Steinbach—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. Order. Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) will have five minutes remaining.

The hour being 11 a.m., it's now time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution that we are considering this morning is the one sponsored by the honourable member for Portage La Prairie, titled "The Need for Safe, Healthy and Sustainable Housing."

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 25—The Need for Safe, Healthy and Sustainable Housing

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I move, seconded by the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen),

WHEREAS the provincial government's Department of Housing and Community Development states that its vision is for strong, healthy and sustainable communities where individuals and family thrive; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has failed to provide safe, healthy and sustainable housing in its public housing units; and

WHEREAS there are too many instances of the current provincial government cutting corners and increasing taxes that hurt those with the greatest need for support; and

WHEREAS Manitoba housing complexes have been ignored by the current provincial government and residents have been exposed to bedbugs and mould; and

WHEREAS violence has become far too prevalent in Manitoba Housing complexes under this provincial government; and

WHEREAS the current provincial government has made many promises related to housing, but has failed to deliver real results; and

WHEREAS there is a repeated concern over the complexity of support programs available to help those in need.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to deliver safe and affordable housing for all Manitobans instead of making promises it does not keep; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to collaborate with stakeholders to integrate the complex supports currently available to assist them that can be navigated by those that need these supports.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Portage La Prairie, seconded by the honourable member for Midland,

WHEREAS the provincial—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Mr. Wishart: I rise today to call the government to account, to honour their commitments to Manitoba families—excuse me.

Housing is one of the basic necessities of life. Inadequate housing has been linked to a wide range of social difficulties and problems and we see these effects every day, from things like poor school attendance to poor nutrition, substance abuse, addiction to—~~for—~~and addiction, for problems in the justice system and the pressure on our health care system.

A lack of affordable housing units hurt Manitoba in many ways. Failure of the government to provide for Manitoba's most vulnerable is shameful. We have been calling on the government to raise the level of the rental housing allowance to the 75 per cent of the medium market rents for some time now. This government often touts its record in social housing, devoid, of course, of facts.

An objective look at the facts will provide some insight. For example, a number of affordable housing builds in every region in this province has actually been decreasing every year this government's been in power. The number of afford—of social housing units has decreased in nearly every region since this government came into power. We continue to lose many units, actually, to 'condoization' development, upscale rentals and, in particular, back to the private housing market. Rental allowances have only marginally increased since the early '90s when rent—while rent has increased 60 to 70 per cent during that time frame.

Additionally, we've called on them to raise the standard considered acceptable in public housing, quality of which has reached very low levels in recent years. Not long ago there was a competition held by the Employment and Income Assistance advocates network, finding a—trying to find Manitoba's worst social housing, and I was called on to be a judge in that. And, in particular, it was very sad to see some of the examples that were brought forward, and, yes, a number of them actually were Manitoba Housing units and the standard in those was very poor. But even those in private conditions were in very poor condition, and the ultimate winner was actually a rooming house. And I think we've seen in the media recently quite a lot of coverage on the problem of rooming houses here in Winnipeg in particular, and they do exist in many other parts of the province, as well. And they represent a particular problem in the system because there is a gap between permanent rental units that we like to place people in—and the quality of them, of course, is still a factor—and being on the street.

And we know that we have a number of people that are homeless on the street. That number is very hard to get real solid numbers on, quality numbers on, but they certainly vary between two and three thousand, rising in the summer and dropping in the winter, as we could honestly expect. But those that are in rooming houses probably number in the six-to-eight-thousand range. And they provide a gap, but it's a gap that is certainly nothing for us to be—the filling of that gap is certainly nothing for us to be proud of. Clearly, we have a lot of work to do ahead of us, and the numbers are actually very large.

And in—also, just to confuse the numbers even further, it is suspected that we have somewhere between three and four thousand people that are not quite homeless. They're couch surfing, they're moving from place to place on a fairly regular basis, friends and relatives or wherever they can find a place to hang their hat for any—for a day or two. And it's certainly a very sad reflection.

But we can't just throw money at this issue. We like to make—the government across the way really loves to make a lot of announcements. And I was reviewing some of the material on the website, and, certainly, there were just dozens of announcements and ribbon cuttings. Many of those projects are not yet completed or are in the process, but very little talk about actually getting effective use of their dollars and, in particular, very little increase in the amount of social housing that's available.

'Sushon'—the solution may begin with a close look at the gaps in the current system, and carefully, in close consultation with the stakeholders, identify solutions. And really what we're talking about here is real consultation. I'd asked a question the other day of the minister regarding a renovation of a seniors facility in Ashern, Manitoba, and it's not alone in this process.

And the consultation in that case had been very minimal and certainly had not engaged the—those that lived there in terms of what they wanted done or what was to the benefit of all in that residence. In fact, what happened was very much just done to them, rather than for them. And we still struggle even to this day to get the—get that one actually back up and in shape. It is not, at the current moment, in as good a condition in terms of operating into the future, as it was before the renovation. So we certainly lost ground.

Those are at suffering are those that need help the most, the users of social housing, which tend to

be the low-income. Nearly every indicator of population health yields a worst outcome for those living in social housing, and government has done so. And there has been a publication, came out not too long ago—Social Housing in Manitoba—that was from the U of M, and its indicators have certainly raised a lot of eyebrows, in particular, to the quality of living in social housing.

Just as an example, premature mortality rate—much higher in social housing—a measure that serves as a good indicator of health stat, is nearly double for individuals living in social housing. Rates of hospitalization for injury are almost double for individuals living in social housing. And many—much of that is actually false. And certainly that is somewhat a reflection of the environment that they're in. Rates of 'tuberc'—'turbaculo'—sorry—tuberculosis are nearly two and a half times higher for those living in social housing. And that, too, is a reflection of quality of life in the housing. Prevalence of diabetes for those living in social housing is almost twice as high as the prevalence amongst all other Manitobans.

The evidence clearly demonstrates that the government's record is not working. The top-down approach for government is failing Manitobans. We have seen, repeatedly, announcements about new strategies, new initiatives, but the results have never hit the ground. And announcements really don't change things unless they're actually work—implemented. And we are not seeing that.

Time and time again, this government uses its heavy hand and makes these big announcements, and people are expecting some results. And yet, down the road, they see little change. We see the Department of Housing's vision is supposed to be for a strong, healthy and sustainable communities, where individuals and family thrives, but the government has failed to deliver on this. Clearly, from the data presented in the social housing report, it's clearly not healthy to live in Manitoba Housing and clearly they're not sustainable communities and certainly the turnover rates are atrocious. And people are moving in and out simply because they want to get away from that situation. Government has failed on each of these counts for Manitoba individuals and families.

*(11:10)

We see Manitoba Housing units that are plagued with violence, crime, bedbugs and mould. How can this be safe for the residents? Where are these

individuals to turn to for escape? The current alternatives are unacceptable and we must find a better way. This government has made promise after promise, yet their dire situation remains unchanged for individuals and families living in Manitoba. How many kids are going to have to drop out of school before this government recognizes the connection between school attendance and good housing? How many individuals will continue to suffer from increased respiratory problems and other serious health conditions connected to poor housing?

With vacancy rates hovering between 1 and 2 per cent in Winnipeg and actually lower in some other cities, the market supply of affordable housing is very limited, and certainly the costs continue to rise. What makes this matter worse for these families—are further forced to choose between either paying rent because they haven't got enough supports to pay the whole rent or pay for things like transportation or food. That's a pretty tough decision to have to make and, actually, a direct connection between the support that is supplied for rental housing and the heavy use of food banks in the city here and we continue to go up and up and add volume. It is a shameful recognition and a very good indicator that the problem is actually not being solved, but actually getting worse all the time.

Now, the Province says that it has introduced a number of other programs, things like RentAid, but I don't know how many times I've talked to individuals who have tried to qualify for RentAid, a very complex process, and have been refused in the process. It is certainly a very meagre additional support, to say the least, and so hard to qualify for that many people actually give up in the process and do not pursue it all the way through.

Now, I'm running out of time here, and I know that this government when—in their response to this private members' resolution, will certainly be making lots of comments about what happened in the '90s. And '90s, when it comes to the housing market, is another world. It's a complete other world, and I suspect that they will certainly want to draw references and parallels to what happened in the '90s. But I can tell you now, it is completely irrelevant to the current situation. The housing market evolves very quickly even from year to year, and we're certainly seeing any comments that are made about what happened in the '90s, about talking about—you know, something that is a century ago. The equivalent is there.

So I certainly encourage them to talk about their record now and talk about what they can do.

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

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): I welcome the members opposite invitation to talk about our record. I'm sorry, 10 minutes does not give me enough time at all, first of all, to put the facts on the record, and then to deal with the inaccuracies that he put on the record. But I'm going to focus this morning on our record. It's a positive record. It's a record about commitment to this great province we call Manitoba. It's a record about employment opportunities, training and apprenticeship and, most importantly, providing safe, affordable housing across this province.

We have a multitude of strategies that we have developed under previous ministers of Housing. The now-Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh) came up with a beautiful piece of work called HOMEWorks!, and that HOMEWorks! we've been following for the last five years. And I am so proud of the record of this government as well as all the non-profit organizations that we work across the province with who have developed and committed to developing the 1,500 units. That commitment expires on March of 2014. I can tell you, as of today, July of 2013, we're well on track. We have committed over 1,250 units. Those are units of family housing. Those are units for people with special needs, people living with disabilities, people with mental health issues. Those are housing for Aboriginal people across the province as well as family housing. These family housing units, they're attached to universities. They are immersed in communities across this province, and I am very proud of what we're doing.

In Budget 2013, we went further, went beyond that 1,500 commitment. We made a further commitment of 500 more affordable housing and 500 more social housing units. That, too, is going to make a huge difference. We also have a commitment to meet, by 2014, and that is 1,500 more rent-geared-to-income. That makes sure that the housing is remaining to be affordable.

I'm not quite sure where to start, there's just so much information that needs to be put on the record. We cannot deny the fact and the importance of good quality housing, and that's why we've made those commitments. We know that providing stable

housing creates healthier communities and healthier families, and that is what we're about. We are about providing services to what matters most to families. We are going to work with all the non-profit organizations and we're going to address those issues.

I'd like to talk a bit about our homelessness strategy. We know the impact of homelessness to our whole entire province, not only to the families that are impacted but also to the communities. And with their—with the issue of homelessness, we need to make sure that we're providing a continuum of housing options, that we're providing housing options that provide support. One of those examples is our Portable Housing Benefit—that is a benefit that stays with the individual. It's an individual who has a mental illness or had a mental illness and is on the road to recovery, and we're able to provide them with stable, affordable housing. They are given a \$200—a monthly income that they can put towards their rent, and they can go into the private market and rent. That is essential.

But not only do we provide them the monetary support, but we also provide them with wraparound supports. And I have to thank the Canadian Mental Health Association for their support, as well as the regional health authorities across this province. This program would not have been a reality without their support. We have much more work to do, and we're committed to doing that. We have approximately 550 individuals that are part of that program.

We also have one of our jewels. We went with many community organizations and we committed to adopting HOUSINGFirst. And when we adopted HOUSINGFirst, we committed to the redevelopment of the Bell Hotel. We had many community partners with that: Main Street Project, we also had the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, as well as we had the City of Winnipeg. And when we came together and concluded that project, we are providing approximately 40 units to individuals who for the first time in decades have a place to call home. And people in this House, we cannot underestimate nor can we truly understand what it's like not to have a roof over our heads. We need to ensure that we're providing those adequate supports, providing them with the ability to have independence and to grow.

One of the things that we're also doing as well as building across the province—and I have a long list that I'd like to share with the members in a few moments about the number of projects—but we're also

investing in renewing the existing housing stock here; housing stock that we own, over the 14,000 units. What we have done is we have redeveloped large complexes in Winnipeg such as Lord Selkirk Park, Gilbert Park–Blake Gardens is another example. We have done work in Brandon, as well. And, as well, we've been working in Moose Lake and Cormorant in the housing stock there.

What we're doing there is redeveloping sites that have not been touched for decades. The member's right. I cannot go any further without reminding people about the 1990s. In the 1990s, the members opposite invested approximately \$20 million in—into maintenance and improvements. Well, I can tell the House today that we have made a commitment of \$134 million for maintenance and improvement. And we are going to touch thousands of units across this province.

But what we do with that money, we're investing in the infrastructure but we're also investing in the members of the community. We're hiring local. We're providing them with education and trades, and we're making a difference. I have to commend the work of BUILD in Winnipeg and BEEP in Brandon about the local hiring perspective, which we have been able to develop. I think I've put on the record a number of times there's been approximately 200 individuals at any given time that are working as part of our community forces. And I can tell this House that there are a number of them around—over the last few years 40 individuals have either gone back to school for an apprenticeship or are—have been hired by the private sector. To me, that's a huge success.

* (11:20)

The stories that I hear of individuals that have been involved in redeveloping the housing units in their own communities, the pride that they have, the future, the hope that they feel; that is priceless. So we're going to continue to make those investments. We're going to keep talking to Manitobans about them. And I'm going to tell the member opposite, we're going to keep cutting those ribbons because we're about investing in Manitoba communities, always and forever we are going to make those differences and those changes. We know those benefits.

So I only have a few minutes left and I have this incredibly long list of housing projects that we have committed to since 2009, and I'm going to read it off into the record. We have DOTCHAI II in Brandon,

Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council, Brandon; Western Manitoba Seniors Non-Profit Housing Co-op, Brandon. What did they build in Brandon when they were in power?

An Honourable Member: Nothing.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Nothing. All right, now we move to Camperville. We have—I think we built around four new houses in Camperville. We have the Dauphin Seniors' Non-Profit Residence. We have built in Gimli—oh, Grunthal, Menno Home assisted living; Chalet de La Broquerie. Oh, and look at this, Springfield. Oh, at Oakbank. As well as, oh, let me see, Portage la Prairie—amazing work; Icelandic Lodge in Riverton. Oh, the East Borderland Community Housing Inc. Oh, Sprague. Oh, and that's where the minister from Finance's grandmother used to live there. Yes. Villa Youville in Ste. Anne's.

Oh, too bad the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) isn't here—Bridgemark Manor.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, we refer to members of their constituency, not whether they're in the House or not. Certainly, out of order. I ask you to call the member to order.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to caution the honourable minister that when we're referencing members of the House, it's to be by their constituency names or ministers by their portfolios. So I am asking for her co-operation in this regard.

And also with respect to members presence or absence in the Chamber, we ask that no reference been made to either of those items during the comments by any member of the House and especially during the minister's comments that she's making here this morning.

So the honourable member for Lakeside does have a point of order. I thank him for raising the matter. And I ask for the minister's co-operation.

* * *

Ms. Irvin-Ross: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Steinbach will be very interested in Bridgemark Manor in Steinbach; Sunset Place in Swan River.

We have built secondary suites across this province; Virden Centennial Housing Corporation and Neeginan Village Phase 2 in Winnipeg; Welcome Place Winnipeg; Centre Village Housing, Winnipeg; Kinew Housing Winnipeg; Westminster Housing Winnipeg; Ford–Fred Douglas; Bell Hotel; Place La Charrette; St. Matthews Church; Peace Tower Housing; Living Gospel Affordable; Marie Rose Place; Living Gospel; Westlands profit; River Point Centre; Avenue Building—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): It's my pleasure to be able to speak to this resolution brought in the by the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart).

And, indeed, I thank the member for bringing this up as an opportunity for members to look at the actual record, not just the ribbon cuttings that this minister says that she will continue, but to look at the record of this government when it comes to actually making a better place for Manitobans with lower incomes.

And I guess what we could say, Mr. Speaker, is we could ask a question and say all right, this government likes to talk about the 1990s, so what has this government since the 1990s done to raise the rental allowance for poorer Manitobans? Well, obviously, this—an NDP government would move to match it. They would move to increase to a hundred per cent of median market rent that allowance, except, no, they didn't do that.

So then, surely, an NDP government would raise—in that considerable time, 13 years of government—they would surely raise that rate to 90 per cent. Oh, no, no, they didn't make that target. So surely they would come to 75 per cent of the median market rent. But, no, they didn't make that target.

As a matter of fact, after 13 years of government and multiple Housing ministers, it takes a critic for the PC Party to embarrass this government into saying, bring up your level of the rental allowance to a sum that will be reasonable for Manitobans, and, Mr. Speaker, it's the PC Party that continues to underscore the importance for this government to move in the direction of actually making housing affordable for Manitobans. They direct their attention to other issues. We keep calling on them to direct

their attention to the substantive issues of making housing more affordable for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity a few months ago to visit a Manitoba affordable housing unit in the city of Morden and I had coffee with the residents there. And one of the residents was trying to explain to me what it meant to her to pay the high cost she had to in the Manitoba housing unit where she was living. And she was trying to explain to me what her after-rent income was or the money that was available to her for everything else she had to do, and I have to actually admit that I doubted her because I thought I had heard wrong. So it just happened to be that the activities co-ordinator, a part-time director of activities, was there that morning, and I took her aside afterward and asked for a clarification, asked if I had heard correctly. And she indeed indicated I had heard correctly, that after this one woman was done paying for her rent at the beginning of the month she had \$35 left to spend that month on groceries.

And I went home and I told my children that story because sometimes kids need a lesson. They need an inoculation against the kind of entitlement that I think kids tend to feel with their iPods and their bikes and their this and their that and their trampolines, and my kids were really—it had an impact on them when they understood that this woman had \$35 available to her after her rent to spend on food.

And, as the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) has so aptly said this morning, if we can make a difference here and if the government will indicate that they will drive down that cost, then people actually have more money to put into things like food, and not just food but eating more healthy, making healthier choices right across, and I think that leads us to—exactly to the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy study that was recently released. And I thought it was a glaring omission that this Minister of Housing would stand up and put 10 minutes of comments on the record and not refer one time to a comprehensive study that her own government helped to pay for that would give indication of how are we doing.

That's embarrassing. No Minister for Housing could, with any amount of legitimacy, look away from a report that says that we've got major hurdles to overcome. She says, there's nothing to see here. She says, put a smiley face on the document. It's all good. It's all rosy. We're heading in the right direction. It reminds me of this Minister of Health

(Ms. Oswald) who day after day says, we've got more work to do. Well, indeed, this Minister of Housing has more work to do, and this report goes a long way to actually addressing the kind of work that is left to do.

And, Mr. Speaker, the thing about this report that is so interesting is that it is easy to find in the research, and going back 20, 30 or 50 years, it's easy to find the differences, that residents in social housing don't live as long or that they have—more likely to have things like schizophrenia or maybe to commit suicide. What is so interesting about the new Manitoba Centre for Health Policy report is that it seeks to go into the data and correct and do a mathematical correction to remove the effect of low income, to try to compare apples to apples. And, indeed, the study does just that. So they say—they come back and they say, we're trying to get at what it really means, the indicators of health for people who live in lower—in social housing. And what they came back and found is that it is still worse in Manitoba after all those corrections: instances of respiratory morbidity, worse; instances of breast cancer screening, worse; high school completion, all worse in social housing even after the mathematical models have been adjusted to account for a lower income.

* (11:30)

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's clear to all members of this House that no matter what this Minister of Housing puts on the record, there is indeed much more work to do. But we will only get to that work, as the member for Portage la Prairie has said, we will only get there in as much as this minister is willing to acknowledge that her government has not put their focus on the right thing. Here it is, this government busy like beavers, putting the PST up to 8 per cent, making it exactly more difficult, putting obstacles in the way of the people who will be most and egregiously affected by this minister's policies.

At the same time, there is no adjustment year after year after year from this Finance Minister to the basic personal exemption. These people who earn the lowest amount of money before taxation, there is no attempt to make equivalent to Saskatchewan or equivalent to other jurisdictions. In other words, this government seeks to keep these people from getting ahead, seeks to keep these people from having more money in their pocket after taxation to be able to get away from the kind of social indicators that this most recent report has shown.

And, Mr. Speaker, it boggles the mind to think that this NDP government has had 13 years to get at these things, and I think it must make the members—the newer members of this caucus across the way—it must make them scratch their heads. Indeed, I know with certainty that their third-party groups, their traditional base of support is increasingly scratching their heads and saying, ah, why exactly did we get on this train? Because when it comes to basic personal exemption, when it comes to PST hikes these groups are realizing that this government does not have their best interest in mind.

Indeed, as we have gone to rallies to call attention to the government's ill-conceived hiking of the PST to 8 per cent, we have stood in lockstep with antipoverty groups and groups calling on this government to think again and to turn back the clock and to remove the PST increase. Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of substantive change that this government could make to make a real difference and, instead, what does the minister do? She gets up and she says, oh, we will continue to cut ribbons. Of course, they will continue to cut ribbons. Of course, they will choose a path that is more cosmetic than concrete, more optical than substantive because that is the path they have chosen. As long as they feel they can continue to keep in the news cycle some idea that they are doing something, well, they feel that they can keep on side. But the evidence in Manitoba Housing units is there and those indicators are not going away.

Mr. Speaker, in the short time I have left, I know that there are others who want to speak on this issue, and I welcome their comments. But there are so many challenges that are facing us. I wanted to just say, to close off, that—coming back to that anecdote about that woman who had shared with me about how little tie—how little money she has left. She talked to me about the fact that she was trying to get a phone, and you think about someone who's trying to get back into the workforce. I mean, how could we do anything without a phone? And she said, at this point in time a phone was a distant luxury for her. She simply did not have the means to acquire one for herself or pay a monthly bill. That's exactly the kind of obstacle for a person of limited income to—that keeps them from getting ahead.

So I challenge this government to do more than just talk, to do more than cut ribbons and to do as the member for Portage la Prairie has done, to get at these substantive problems with some substantive solutions.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say, first off, that I think that the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) should stop bashing people in Manitoba housing. These fine citizens depend on our government to have some help along the way. And I find it the height of hypocrisy that they say that they're standing lockstep with the people who are poor, when not one of their members, I think, has ever experienced poverty.

When I was—in the '90s when I had a young child, I looked for help with the government of Manitoba at the time. And you know what? There wasn't any, Mr. Speaker. I had \$5 in my bank account. I know what it's like to be poor. I challenge them to say the same thing. The leader of their opposition, with his 12-sprinkler, seven-car garage, \$2.3-million home, yes, he's the average citizen and everyday Joe who stands lockstep with the people in poverty. I find that insulting and disgusting.

You know what's glaring? The member for Morden-Winkler said there's a glaring thing. You know what's glaring? The hypocrisy of the pony-and-carts party in—from Morden and Winkler suggesting that the development and that ribbon cutting is bad. You know what ribbon cutting means? That means that we build things. He talks about concrete examples? I'll tell you what we're going to do with concrete. We're going to pour more of it when we build 1,500 more affordable housing units. They don't want to cut ribbons; they want to cut everything. They want to cut our building. They want to cut our services.

How does they propose—I find it hypocrisy that they stand up and ask for a 1—ask for more building when a 1 per cent cut was just suggested by them across the board to every department just a few weeks ago. How would they build more stuff if they have a 1 per cent cut? It's just absolutely height of hypocrisy to stand up, and they do it over and over again.

You know, they talk about rental income and how this woman—and you know what? She might have had \$35 left at the end of the month, but you know what she would have left at the end of the month underneath them? Minus 115, because they cut \$115 a month that we reinstated. You know, they talk about how they would have a phone. Well, if you added a phone into it, she'd be even more in the minus.

You look at the 1 per cent cut across the boards. When you talk about them and their plan for market

rate for hydro, there's another cut to people who are living on the edge of the poverty line. The average rate for a Manitoban, if they got their market rate system, would double by \$79. So now that same woman that he's talking about, that he claims that he's the champion of the poor, would be minus \$229 a month underneath their system.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, when they talk about the housing, they really—I mean, I'm surprised that they even brought this to the floor. I think that it's insulting that they would talk. They cut the assistance rate three times. We reinstated \$48 million when we got back into power into people on social assistance, and they talk about being the champions of the poor. Well, lip service is all it is, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I look at my area. You've got Place La Charrette that just opened; it's a Ten Ten Sinclair thing. And you know what? It's a fully accessible—for anybody who's handicapped or not, every suite is fully accessible. There's bungalows for families and then there's an apartment high-rise—37 units, Mr. Speaker. That's done underneath our government.

The Manitoba Housing in my area on Newdale is being redone. Right now, as we speak, there's construction going on and we're revamping it. Because you know what? We know that we have to do those sort of things for people.

When they were in, did they do that? No, Mr. Speaker. They cut from everything. They cut from programs, and they suggested it just a few weeks ago. We don't have to look back to the '90s. I know the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) saying we're always looking back to the '90s. Let's not look back. Let's look back three or four weeks ago when the member of—the Leader of the Opposition suggested that we slice and dice every department by 1 per cent.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we've got other projects going on, and I know the Minister for Housing didn't get to finish her list, so, you know, I'm going to finish that list for her because she only had 10 minutes. I'll start with mine, Place La Charrette; that's where she ended off. We have St. Matthew's church, the Peace Tower Housing Incorporated, Living Gospel affording housing project, Westlands Non-profit Housing Co-op, River Point Centre, Avenue Building, Sara Riel, Eden health-care centre and the Gateway Foundation. Now, I know she really had to whiz through the first ones because she only had 10 minutes, and, you know, I mean, 10 minutes with all the projects that we got going on, you can't

really—you can't get through them all. We'd have to ask for leave, so I offered to make sure that I finished the list for her.

I mean, you know, the height of hypocrisy from them, too, is the bashing of Manitoba that we hear consistently. We look at yesterday's paper—two fantastic articles about the Bank of Montreal. Number 1, they're moving their VP here because they said Manitoba has and Winnipeg has never been booming so much as they've seen in the last 10 years. Oh, what's the government that's been in power the last 10 years? Our side of the House, the NDP. They also talk about the growth, that we're going see 12,000 jobs by 2016, Mr. Speaker, and that it's—that our rate of growth is better than the national average.

But that's not good enough for the Leader of the Opposition, because you know what he'd like to see? He'd like to see high unemployment rates. He'd like to see it when it was like when the last time he was in power when it was up around 7, 8 per cent, because you know what it does? It allows a cheap pool of labour for the companies that he represents. It doesn't allow for people who actually work to have jobs and to do good things in our economy. What they like to see in the conservative philosophy is to have a really big cheap pool of labour that companies can draw from to pay people next to nothing because they're desperate for jobs. That's their view and that's their vision.

We're not going back there, Mr. Speaker. We're going to keep building and move forward.

In fact, I'm going to quote—the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), I'm going to quote his friend who was at committee on Bill 20 that I was very honoured to listen to all those Manitobans, those fine Manitobans speaking about Bill 20. We sat through all of them and, you know, they're very apt to bring up Bill 20 and they want to talk about their speakers. This is actually a friend of the member for Emerson. He said—he came to the committee and he—in one of his sentences, he says, Cliff and I go back a long time.

* (11:40)

You know what Mr. Heather had to say? He said he wasn't going to come to committee hearing, but he tries to stay clear of it. However, from what I've been reading in the media and reading in the newspapers and hearing on CBC which is the situation that I listen to, I've become increasingly frustrated with the way that their party's handling the PST. And to put it

very bluntly, I believe the Progressive Conservatives are only trying to make hay with this. I don't believe you really—you guys are really caring about Manitobans at this point in time. I believe you are more interested in gaining power.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because they're talking about housing and being the champions for the poor. You know what? We've never seen this before from their side of the House. They're trying to be the friend to everybody, but meanwhile they say that they would cut the same programs that they're advocating for. It's absolute hypocrisy. How can you say that you're going to build more social housing, that you're going to build more health care, that you're going to do all this stuff without the funding? They're going to cut \$550 million from the budget and they're going to build more housing. Oh, they're going to cut \$550 million and they're going to provide more support to the poor. It's absolutely hypocrisy at its greatest.

I just wish that more people would pay attention to these question periods and to the video on in here because then they would actually see what's going on—that the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) is so out of touch with the people in this province, poverty-wise. And the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), the Leader of the Opposition, I mean, he's so far out of the universe of being in touch with the people of poverty, he's somewhere in the neighbourhood of Pluto. I mean, he's so far out of the realm of being involved with poverty, it's just absolutely ridiculous.

You know, you talk about—we did talk about people on the committee and, you know, I find it interesting that Mr. Heather said that he has nine minutes left and I believe that this bill is a poison pill and it might cost us the election on our side of the House. But we have demonstrated vision and the desire to move Manitoba forward. Building housing is moving Manitoba forward; cutting things by 1 per cent is not moving Manitoba forward. He said that we have—we don't want to go backwards to the four. I heard one presenter talk about the four terms in the woodshed. I remember those four terms in the woodshed. He's referring to the time when the Conservative Party was in power. He said, I don't want to go back to them again, guys. Sorry, Cliff, I don't want to see them again. I want to see some new leadership from our side, the NDP.

And you know what, that's what we're showing with this. We're showing leadership; 1,500 new

housing. We announced 500 more in our budget, a budget that they don't support. So it's the height of hypocrisy to bring forward this PMR to say that they're going to want more housing. They bring this forward, but then they deny us the very budget that will build it. How can they even—how could he even stand up in this House and say that? He's denying the funding that is going to go to this. They said in the media that they wouldn't uphold—they wouldn't stand in the way of our bill to move forward on all of the financing for the province, and we've seen nothing but bell ringing, over 80 hours of bell ringing from them and they're standing in the way of order of Supply.

They're standing in the way of paying daycare workers. They're standing in the way of building housing. The need for safe housing and healthy safety housing, that's his PMR; they're standing in the way of their own bill. It's absolutely ridiculous. They want to talk about building and they want to talk all this stuff, but then they stand in the very spot and say, nope, we're going to deny you the funding to do it.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I challenge the member from Portage la Prairie: stand up and support our budget and we will build more affordable housing. That's what we're about. That's what our all whole party is about. We build housing, we build things, we don't cut them, we don't erase things and erase programs. We actually build. So I stand—actually, you know, not only the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), I challenge every member on their side of the House to stand up today and actually live what they're talking about in this PMR, which is build more housing and to support our bill, support our budget and get on with this. This whole positioning for political gain that they've been doing is over. It's time to make a difference in the province. Let's keep building.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I find that that was just a disgusting display of rhetoric by the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau).

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell him quite clearly the reason we are voting against this budget is because they're picking the pockets of ordinary Manitobans, those living in Manitoba Housing and all others, poor Manitobans to the tune of \$277 million in the increase in the PST. So he needs to know clearly, and all members of the government side need to know, why we would vote against this budget. We're voting against it because of their illegal increase in

the PST and the denial of this government to go to a referendum as required under law in order to increase the PST. So, I mean, I question the rant of the member for St. Norbert, the absolute rant, like he is the only one that has ever been in poverty and can relate to individuals that are living in poverty.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are many that are less fortunate within our communities and that need the support and the help of successive governments. *[interjection]* And I know that members would like to shut–shout me down on the government side of the House because they're embarrassed. They're embarrassed about their behaviour. And they're embarrassed about the lip service that they give to the poor in our province of Manitoba, those that are 'livering' in poverty. And we know that the numbers of people living in poverty are increasing under this government's watch.

But, you know, they say all the right things, but what they say and what they do are two very different things, and we know that only from the last election. We know that, Mr. Speaker, when all members, including the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) went to–door to door as part of a government that lied and said anything to get people's votes, and, again, we have a government that has absolutely no credibility. How can we believe a word? How can we believe a word that every–any member on the government benches of the House says in this Legislature, when we know that they are part of a government that will lie to voters, will lie to taxpayers and say anything just to get their vote?

And, Mr. Speaker, yes, the minister can stand up with great fanfare, and members on the government side of the House can stand up on–with great fanfare and talk about all the wonderful things that they've done in housing. The reality is–*[interjection]* Well, I don't think I would applaud, as government members, their dismal record.

And, Mr. Speaker, well–*[interjection]* I think it's disgusting, as a matter of fact, that those that are sitting–that are puppets in the backbenches on the government side of the House would stand up and talk about how wonderful an increase in the PST is for all Manitobans and how they should be ecstatic and they should be excited that they're going to have money ripped out of their pockets once again as a result of a government that misled them and lied to them during the last election campaign. And members of the community and those that are living

in poverty and living in Manitoba Housing are going to see less disposable income in their pockets as a result of this government's decision.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is not anything that the member for St. Norbert or anyone else should be proud of. And I know that there are people in his community that I know personally and members–people in his community that are having difficulty making ends meet. And they are people that will not vote for the NDP again, as a result, and I think he knows that.

And he can put on a brave face and they can clap like trained seals with the answers that the ministers on the government side of the House give around why they had to increase the PST and what they're going to do with that, but there's a long list of people out there that don't believe and feel that they were betrayed in the last budget and the budget before, that looks at taking almost \$500 million more out of Manitobans' pockets as a result–something that I don't think I would be proud of as a government–\$500 million more out of the pockets of hard-working Manitobans, out of the pockets of people living in poverty, out of the pockets of people that are living in Manitoba Housing, that are having difficulty making ends meet. That's not something that I would be proud of as a member of government.

* (11:50)

And I know that I listened intently to the member for St. Norbert and he tends to want to be disrespectful and shout me down, but I won't tolerate that. I will stand in my place and I will stand up for Manitobans who feel that they've been lied to, they've been betrayed and they've been disrespected by members of this government who all went door to door. They went into Manitoba Housing units and said, Mr. Speaker, we will not raise your taxes. We will leave money in your pockets. That's what they said to people in Manitoba Housing, but what did they do?

Mr. Speaker, what they say and what they do are two different things, and Manitobans are not going to tolerate the direction that this government has taken. And they may feel confident here in the House that they have done the right thing and be able to stand up and give themselves accolades and pat themselves on the back, but Manitobans will not forget. Those living in poverty, those living in Manitoba Housing will not forget, and I would urge members on the government side to support this resolution.

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): I'd like to thank the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) for bringing this resolution forward. It gives me the opportunity to put a few words on record about important developments in my own constituency of Rossmere, but also our ongoing commitment of our government to providing affordable housing for Manitobans.

As a home economics teacher and spent many years teaching housing at the senior high level, one of the core values, of course, is family and community. And the essentials of home economics stresses the importance of shelter, food and clothing, basic needs and how these play a fundamental role in helping individuals achieve success in their families, but also, in turn, becoming responsible and contributing members of our community.

And it's with our provincial budget that we are putting families first by recognizing the need for affordable housing for all Manitobans and investing in building hundreds of new, affordable housing units and—pardon me—and increasing unique supported living opportunities, unlike our members opposite that have stated that they would do a 1 per cent, across-the-board cut and by certainly hanging on to extending our debate on this issue preventing these initiatives, many of these initiatives, from moving forward.

And the one that certainly is really important in my community of Rossmere is the new Concordia Village IV that—where, as I speak, the ground has been broken and we are taking concrete steps to move forward on that project. What it means to the constituents of Rossmere, it's a very innovative, new project. A while ago I had the privilege of taking part in the announcement and, as I say, the ground has been broken and it's very exciting because for me, I thought, this is an example of the core values that I have spent decades teaching and sharing with my students is coming to fruition.

So, together with the federal government, we've unveiled plans to develop affordable, integrated and supported housing. And the building will be part of the Concordia Village campus and will meet an important need in our community. Not only will Concordia Village IV provide affordable housing, but the part that is really quite special about is—it—integrated into the campus will be housing options that will support individuals and families with mental health issues.

And the features, it's a totally accessible building so that it will be able to afford people with mobility issues the opportunity to have access to that building. It will include 19 one-bedroom units, 14 two-bedroom units and three—pardon me—12 three-bedroom units. And as I say, we have begun on this project and are working together with non-profits in order to make sure that this happens.

I think one of the aspects that is really important is the fact that it is a supported living situation. And I would like to acknowledge the Eden Health centre services, a private, non-profit, faith-based organization that's been providing mental health services for many years in southern Manitoba, and they will provide the on-site services which will assist the families and individuals with the supports that are crucial to maintaining permanent housing, something that many of us take for granted. And I think that it acknowledges that we really need to have the kind of housing for these individuals to be able to flourish, because without the supports there, it makes—provides more challenges to them in their daily living.

I would like to also acknowledge that as the Minister of Housing went through the list of the items that we are doing across the province, I wish to do the same thing, because I think that Concordia Village IV is one example of the many, many initiatives that we are doing around the province. I think we recognize that housing is fundamental, and, I think, as the minister stated, HOUSINGFirst is something that is clearly a first step for individuals to set roots, to establish themselves, which gives them the opportunity to move on to other aspects of life such as finding jobs, going into education, caring for their family.

And so, as we are investing in housing infrastructure, the HOMEWorks! strategy, we're investing \$378 million in the partnership with the federal government to build new housing, renovate existing housing stock, and, as the minister pointed out earlier, too, in co-operation with many local organizations, so that there is training and opportunity for people within the community to help refresh their homes, renovate and gain the skills that will lead to further employment once these projects are done.

Over the next three years, we will invest \$400 million to renew and maintain Manitoba's social housing units. And within my own community, I've noticed a number of those projects

taking place, and, actually, very close to where I live, seeing one totally become revamped and becoming a new refreshed home for the people that live there.

We're looking at an additional \$34 million to be dedicated to annually repair existing stock and provide quality home environments for tenants.

Since 2000, we've invested \$285 million for 2,610 new social and affordable units. In 2012 to '13, we invested \$82.5 million to renovate existing provincial-owned housing stock. Repairs and maintenance on direct-managed housing units over the past six years averages \$30 million a year.

So our commitment is truly there and solidly there. The average was \$13 million to the mid—pardon me, and this is in comparison in—as the minister had pointed out earlier, that the average was \$13 million in the mid to late '90s.

And, as I indicated, with what is happening in Rossmere with Concordia Village IV, we're also building new affordable housing. Budget 2013 introduced a three-year commitment that includes \$114.3 million for 500 new social housing units and \$25 million for 500 affordable housing units over three years.

This addition of 1,500 social housing and 1,500 affordable housing units are on schedule for 2014, and I know that within my community as well, one of the non-profits in the Rossmere area is also looking at building a 200-unit affordable housing apartment, and this will be also based—an income-based housing unit. We're also funding the

development of 285 more mental health housing units with supports, which of, Concordia Village IV is an example, including interim housing for youth and integrated permanent housing options with intensive supports and spread around our communities.

Mr. Speaker, as of June 30th, there are currently 1,269 new affordable housing commitments and 1,399 new rent-geared-to-income commitments. Of the 1,269 new affordable units, 643 are currently complete and tenanted, 290 are currently under construction and 336 are in the design phase. The remaining 778 units have been committed to already existing projects.

And I think the part that I think is really critical is the fact that we are working with stakeholders to encourage this more affordable housing, that we're working with other organizations, non-profits, other service providers in order to make sure that the kind of affordable housing that we provide meets the needs of these people. Our new rental housing construction tax credit is equal to 8 per cent of the capital cost of new rental housing construction in Manitoba and will offset some costs. It is expected to save landlords \$1.4 million for—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) will have one minute remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, July 18, 2013

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