

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

Official Report
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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 25, 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. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 213?

An Honourable Member: Absolutely.

Mr. Speaker: We are? Okay.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: We'll call Bill 213, The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act.

**Bill 213—The Settlement of International
Investment Disputes Act**

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the MLA for Steinbach, that Bill 213, The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act; Loi sur le règlement des différends internationaux relatifs aux investissements, be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: It's a long bill, as I'm sure the members have seen, but it—its intent is actually fairly simple. As the explanatory note says, this bill will bring the convention on the settlement of investment disputes between states and nationals of other states into force in Manitoba when the convention is brought into course in Canada under the Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act, Canada.

Mr. Speaker, business, as we all know, is very important to the well-being of Manitoba and it indeed does drive the economy. The government has said so itself several times, and I'm pleased that they do recognize this. This particular bill is something that the—the act came into being because I had requests from various groups—the law society, the bar society of Manitoba, investment firms, speaking to businesses. They saw that this was out there and Canada had not yet ratified it, and because of our federal-provincial structure the provincial legislatures need to put an act in place in order to allow Canada to be a signatory. And, indeed, we are one of the last major countries to sign on to this bill. Some of our trading partners, notably the US, has ratified and signed in 1966, so we are a little behind the curve on this one.

Mr. Speaker, access to an impartial, international dispute resolution mechanism would only be a benefit to companies not only in Manitoba, but companies that are choosing to do business or seeking to do business in Manitoba. It sends a definite message to the world and to businesses in Manitoba.

Internationally, we know that we have another—a number of companies that are looking worldwide in places to invest, and we want Manitoba to be one of those places. And when they look at the structure of the Manitoba economy they may see that they may not have access to this particular dispute mechanism. So that may be one of the things that drives them away and we won't want to—we want to avoid that. We want to make sure that we have all the tools in place that businesses need to use. There are many ways, Mr. Speaker, that businesses try to protect themselves internationally. Contracts, obviously, are an important one, letters of credit and this ratification of this particular treaty and act would be a great way to move that along.

Now, I've been a signatory to a number of international contracts, Mr. Speaker, and negotiating with international companies is interesting. And much of the time is spent on legal jurisdiction, and that is one of the key components of any contract that you enter into with a company in another country or a government and that is often the part that you may leave for last because it's one of the

most contentious. Where are you going to go to court if, indeed, this relationship breaks up, and that is often seen as who has the power in that contract. And we've signed contracts that you've had to go to court in Illinois or in New York state. The closest I've ever got to home is Ontario because that was the law firm that I used. So it doesn't often be the case—it's not often the case that you may have it in your home environment anyway.

But, when you are dealing with the laws of other countries, there is often a question. We—our laws in the United States, the laws in Canada have a common root back to England, but they are substantially different and, again, in Canada we have the Québec jurisdiction that, again, has a different form of law. So you're dealing with laws in those particular environments and you may not be familiar with them.

Having access to this international settlement court would be something that you can take all of those variables out, and it would kind of be over and above all those, the court where you would go, the place where you would go when you have a final dispute mechanism when you need that. You hopefully don't need it, but when you do, it's there.

You, know, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the US, for instance, and let's use that because we're most familiar with the United States. You would think that in most states the law would be what we're used to up here with some changes, but, in fact, in the US there are states that you don't want to go to court in. Mississippi is a great example. They tend to favour local companies. They tend to favour local individuals, and there are some court cases there that have done substantial damage to companies throughout the world and in the US because of that environment. So you have to be careful where you want to go to court.

A few years ago I was travelling in the US, and I was in California and I met an individual there that he was talking about some of his travels. And he'd done quite a bit of international travelling to Russia and other areas, and I said, well, what is it that takes you to Russia? He said, well, I have the rights to Subway for Russia. I said, well, that—you must be doing very well. He says, yes, as a matter of fact I've just gotten my first restaurant back from the Russian mafia after 10 years. Because we opened it up 10 years ago, 15 years now, and his partner at that time—you had to have a Russian partner as a 50 per cent partner—walked in the day of opening

with his compatriots and Uzis, and said, you're leaving. So he spent 10 years trying to get that restaurant back, Mr. Speaker—much international travel, much in the form of legal bills. And certainly something of this would've been a great use to him. He finally did get it back and was in the process of building more restaurants, but that's a prime example of where this type of thing would come into being and would be useful.

* (10:10)

When you are operating in a country that has a hostile and unstable government, is the judiciary going to be much better? And many of our companies in Canada look for expansion worldwide, and sometimes they are in some of these environments, that the government may be hostile, it may be unstable, and if you do come to dispute, well, is that really where you want to have that dispute heard, Mr. Speaker? You might want to go to an international impartial body such as the one we're speaking of here.

Another—one of the complaints I've heard about some of the legislation like this is that, you know what? Canada's going to sign on to this eventually, why does Manitoba need to enact this legislation? Well, Canada has a long history of division of powers, Mr. Speaker. Going back to the British North America Act of 1867, now called the Constitution Act of 1867, that constitution dictates, indeed, provincial powers and federal powers, and sometimes there's a blurring. But, in cases where it is clear like this one, where the Province has a responsibility to put legislation in place, would you not make sure that you enact the legislation ensure—to ensure that provincial rights and responsibilities are protected?

So that is one of the keys here. We have an opportunity to do this. It's a pretty simple piece of legislation for the government to enact, Mr. Speaker. I hope they will take a serious look at it. We have had a number of individuals around Manitoba that have expressed an interest in seeing this legislation go forward, so I am interested at the point in seeing what the government has to say about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I was really surprised to hear the member opposite stand up yesterday and say, when he introduced the bill, that this is a very complex but simple piece of legislation, and

surprised to hear him say that it shows that we're ready for business and that we have to move forward with this legislation.

It's really curious because there are things that we are currently doing with our agreement on internal trade to get our house in order with respect to agreements between different provinces in this country and the leadership that we've demonstrated as a Province on the agreement internal-on internal trade. And one of the bills that's currently sitting on the Order Paper, that has been there for quite some time now, is Bill 11. And Bill 11 is the bill that would bring us in compliance with proceedings against the Crown. And it's talking about the dispute mechanism resolution and how we need to resolve this matter and come into compliance across the country.

So now the member opposite stands up in the Chamber yesterday and rushes to have this bill brought to the table today, and in less than 24 hours thinks it's imperative that we act on something that's been part of the convention that started in 1965. I was 1 at the time, Mr. Speaker, when this convention first came into effect with respect to the settlement of international investments disputes. So it's really curious that suddenly this is a priority for members opposite.

The other thing that's really curious about this is the fact that the federal government can enact this without provincial legislation—they can do that. And they've had—as I said, I was 1 when this first came into consideration by the federal government, so they've had 48 years to consider this. And they want us to have this go to committee within less than 24 hours? I don't understand their priority on this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we have things that we have been doing for the last 10 years on the Agreement on Internal Trade to enhance relationships between provinces, to allow appropriate mechanisms for resolving disputes between provinces, to allow appropriate mechanisms to resolve disputes between business-to-government and person-to-government mechanisms. And members opposite, they actually just wanted us to sign up with the New West Partnership Agreement which has very punitive business-to-government and person-to-government dispute resolution mechanisms, and they thought that was a priority.

And, Mr. Speaker, we believe that we should be working with the Agreement on Internal Trade for

business-to-government and person-to-government dispute resolution mechanisms, and that's what we're doing with The Proceedings Against the Crown Act and Bill 11, which has been sitting on this Order Paper for quite some time.

So I'm really curious as to where members opposite's priorities really lie, when the federal government has the authority to do so. Now, if the federal government should come along and say, hey, Provinces, we need you to enact legislation within your jurisdictions to bring us into compliance with this particular piece of legislation, we're more than willing to do so. But to suggest that we have to do it now and it's urgent to do it now when it's been sitting on the table for—did I mention 48 years? Did I mention I was 1 year old when this was introduced in federal Parliament? I think it's rather curious that this suddenly becomes a priority, that their priority after introducing the bill yesterday is to debate it today. And I'm sure they're going to say bring it to committee tomorrow. That's what they're going to say. And this has been on the table, did I mention, for 48 years? I find it really, really strange.

So it is a federal legislation issue, but they've not yet enacted the convention for Canada. The member has mentioned that. They have not yet enacted that.

And, when provinces are considering enacting the legislation and when we are formally asked to do so, then we will do so. But there's consultation going on. There are people working on this matter. So it's really—I'm just almost speechless, which isn't good when you're speaking, but I'm almost speechless to understand this importance of this particular piece of legislation.

Member opposite also said that he's had people come and talk to him about the need to do this. In my role as minister in the last three years, I've had—yet to have one person say to me, Mr. Minister, you must move on The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act. Nobody has come to my office and suggested that we pursue this, not one. So it's rather curious. Now—[interjection] No, I didn't get the letter. Okay. [interjection] There you go. I haven't had people knocking down my door to have this matter brought to the Legislature.

Anyway, the convention does hold the framework for the resolution of disputes between foreign investors and government, and the Province will give it consideration. That's the matter that we have before us right now. And a full assessment of the merits of this legislation is required and further

information has been requested from the federal government.

So, to see that this is the priority for the opposition, it boggles my mind. Now—*[interjection]* It doesn't take much, oh yes, yes. I, you know, Mr. Speaker, I sat and listened intently to members opposite but here they go, here they go. *[interjection]* Yes, I—okay, I responded, fair enough.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, on the advice of the Council on International Trade, which we had headed up by myself and Dave Angus of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, we've been very much engaged in our international trade focus to reflect the desire to enhance trade with the BRIC countries. We've made that our priority. And we have seen an increase in trade over the past 10 years, 463 per cent increase in trade with Brazil, Russia, India and China.

And we know that, yes, there are some concerns that members might have with respect to doing business in some of these different jurisdictions. And we know that there's, that it's appropriate to have investment dispute mechanisms in place. And we know that the federal government will be responsible for that particular dispute mechanism and that we will follow the lead when that legislation is enacted, Mr. Speaker.

But, again, I'm at a loss to understand why the opposition will not support our efforts to bring the Agreement on Internal Trade into compliance with respect to Bill 11. I'm at a loss to understand why they still think that Canada should be divided into sub-regional trade agreements, particularly when you consider the New West Partnership Agreement and the fact that here we are in a situation where they're focusing on sub-regional trade arrangements and sub-regional agreements, but the fact that these sub-regional trade agreements and the dispute mechanisms are not necessarily compliant with a national trade agreement. But their priorities clearly are not the priorities of Manitobans because they don't understand the impact that that would have to follow the compliance agreements as outlined by the Agreement on Internal Trade versus the New West Partnership Agreement.

And, indeed, Mr. Speaker, as I said, people are not knocking on my door to see this happen. And, yes, I do recall, and I appreciate that there had been a letter and this is some time ago when I had received the letter, and I do appreciate that. I do recall that now.

But that said, again, the Agreement on Internal Trade has been our priority. We need to get our House in order with respect to a national agreement on trade. And when the federal government decides it's time to consider this particular legislation and when the federal government decides that the provinces need to bring this legislation forward, we'll do so. But to suggest that it's a priority and it has to happen now is perhaps a little bit premature, so I don't understand why members opposite would consider this to be such a valuable piece of legislation at this time.

* (10:20)

Now, if you look at the work that we have been doing on national trade, The Labour Mobility Act, the labour mobility chapter and the dispute resolution chapter that included monetary penalties being added in 2009, the expanded agriculture chapter that was added in 2010, they represent significant improvements to eliminate barriers to labour mobility and to strengthen the Agreement on Internal Trade and to improve internal trade.

And we're a leading driver of national labour mobility efforts here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that we're very proud of, the first province to proclaim the labour mobility legislation in 2009, implemented full labour mobility for financial services. We're simplifying the corporate registration and reporting requirements, and we're improving transparency in government procurement practices, including the designation of a single electronic tendering system for publishing tender notices in each jurisdiction.

So we're making significant strides to develop an agreement on internal trade, and I think members opposite should be debating Bill 11 rather than this bill right now, Mr. Speaker. That's our priority right now, is to bring Bill 11 and the compliance with the Agreement on Internal Trade for the proceedings against the Crown, and we need to get our house in order nationally and hope that the federal government would demonstrate the leadership on this particular initiative as brought forward by the member opposite.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank the member for bringing it to the floor so we could have this debate, and I look forward to hearing what other members have to say on this particular issue.

Thank you.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I certainly want to thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing forth this private member's bill—in terms of settling international disputes. It was new to me, and I was certainly interested in reading about it and it certainly makes sense.

And the minister's talking about Bill 11, The Proceedings Against the Crown Amendment Act. All he has to do is talk to his House leader, bring it forth and we'll debate it. There's—it's not up to us to decide which government bills get brought forward, but apparently he's not in communication with his House leader if this is such a priority. So let's see if he wants to bring it forward this afternoon and we will certainly debate Bill 11.

Now, and this is just another piece that we need to do in order—two things: in order to attract international businesses to Manitoba to do business here, so that there is a dispute mechanism, arbitration mechanism to handle if—should a dispute happen, but it's also important, too, that for our businesses here that—we have many businesses within Manitoba that do a lot of export business, and just to name a couple of them, it's, you know, the Versatile manufacturing plant, the MacDon Industries, HyLife, it—their plant in Neepawa and Maple Leaf in Brandon. Certainly they're sending—those two companies, HyLife and Maple Leaf, are sending pork products around the world and they do business in many, many countries, so they're used to dealing with international companies and international regulations, but this—it—this bill would help us make part of the world scene.

And it's terms of inner—companies selling internationally, I certainly want to put the good word in to Plains Processors, who are building a new slaughter facility in Carman right now, and they will have—for beef and various other species, they will have federal inspections, so they will be able to sell their products around the world once the plant is up and running. And, as I go by there quite often, it's good to see the building coming up. I talked to Calvin Vaags a couple of weeks ago and the plant is coming along. It's the—construction continues to come and it's certainly exciting for Manitoba to have this federal-inspection plant up and running here sometime next year, so we look forward to that.

But, in terms of this bill—private member's bill, it just gives added secure—confidence and security and it helps Manitoba companies to be successful internationally. It's—this is—there is no cost to the Province to sign up for this. It would certainly give

the signal that Manitoba's open for international business. And I know the minister was talking about, the federal government can do this. But, you know, maybe the federal government would—this would be an incentive for the federal government to move ahead, if Manitoba saw that this was important, that we need to have this dispute mechanism in place. And so let's move the bill on and take it to committee, see what happens, if there are any public concerns about the bill. And we would certainly look forward to seeing that.

And so there are many countries around the world that have ratified this. We're a signature—Canada is a signature to this. They were—they actually signed on in December 15, 2006. But the—it hasn't been ratified yet. And, as I said, it would be good for Manitoba to join with British Columbia, Ontario, Newfoundland, Labrador, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, that have all adopted legislation to implement this. So it's not like we would be the only province that has done this. It's—it just would be a great signal to the—both to the federal government and to the international community that Manitoba is open for business. And we need to have this.

We know we have free trade agreements, you know, particularly with the US. We know we're having trouble in terms of the COOL legislation—country of origin labelling. And this particular bill does not relate to legislation which COOL is in the US. It's legislation that we have there, and we know that the damage that COOL has done to our trading of particularly beef and pork products into the US, and this is not—this bill does not address that. But we know that there will always be disputes—trade disputes around the world, it's just the nature of the business. But, at the same time, this bill allows companies who are dealing internationally, if they do have contract issues with who they're dealing with in a particular country, to be able to have a dispute resolution mechanism in order to go to.

And certainly, as we welcome country—companies from around the world to come and do business here, this would be an important signal to them that should there be a dispute from the contracts they hold or subcontracting to other companies, that disputes arise and they do tend—will arise from time to time, that there is a mechanism that they can have in order to get into some arbitration. And the way it works is that if there is a dispute in a—about the contract be in—that they're dealing with, that both sides, should they—both sides—

decide to use this ICSID, is its—the acronym for it—then the contract—or the arbitration then becomes binding and it does not relate back to the province or the country. It's—if both sides agree to this, they use the 'arbitrer'—arbitration process and any resolution from there is binding.

So it certainly—it's an incentive to—both to have businesses come to Canada, to Manitoba, and know that we're part of the world scene. We know that trade is so important to us here in Manitoba. We're a trading province in a trading company. We need that to be able to trade in order to have our companies move ahead and prosper. And we know that this government likes taxes, so the better the companies do, the more taxes they will pay. So you would think that alone should be some incentive for this government to move on something like this that will help drive our economy and help small, medium, large business that have grown and succeed, and they can continue to grow and benefit both the communities, their local communities and the province as a whole. And, obviously, Canada is better for that and the province of Manitoba is better for that too.

* (10:30)

So, Mr. Speaker, I know it—the bill seemed to be a little perplexing to the minister, but we certainly can pass on our briefing notes to him if he wants to—some more information on it.

And, you know, again, there's no cost to the Province; this is not something that's going to cost the Province. There's no legal implications of this. It's simply doing good business, and while that may seem like a strange practice to this government, you know, it really is good to encourage business.

And we certainly want to express our support for this and, hopefully, the government will see fit to pass this bill and take it on to committee and see what the public has to say about it and that we can join the international trading. It just gives another tool for those who are trading internationally and another tool to encourage international businesses to come and do business here in Manitoba.

So, with that, I would like to support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I, too, want to thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing forward this resolution here today. I appreciate this billed here today. I appreciate him sparking a debate on trade in our Manitoba

Legislature. I think it's a very important topic that we all need to be dealing with.

I found it interesting that the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), though, would offer to send briefing notes to this side of the House. Given the quality of their debate these days, I would not want one single briefing note to come across this—to this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. Briefing notes based on Ouija boards are not something that we're interested in. We're interested in the facts. We're interested in things that are true. We're interested not in just pulling numbers out of the thin blue sky somewhere, we're interested in making decisions and analysis based on absolutely solid research, Mr. Speaker. That's what our Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson) has done and continues to do, and that's why we've been successful with trade here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing I noted that the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade was talking about was the date by which this convention was signed, back in 1965. I was a little jealous when he pointed out that he was 1 year old. I was a little bit older than that. But I think the point is that a lot has changed since 1965. Lester Pearson was the Prime Minister in Canada in 1965 when this convention was signed. The Toronto Maple Leafs went into the Stanley Cup playoffs in 1965 as the defending Stanley Cup champions. You haven't heard that in a long time—*[interjection]*

You know, we try to have some fun in this place, and what—and they just get mean and nasty on the other side, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that just—that is just—that just shows you how long this has been. In 1965 the Tories was a reasonable progressive party. That has certainly changed over the years.

In those days they had a premier, Duff Roblin, who was progressive and was into building things and building the province, unlike today, Mr. Speaker, which is pretty much the exact opposite. Mr. Premier Roblin who built the floodway and brought in a 5 per cent sales tax to pay for it, I may add, but he had some vision, unlike what we see across the way today.

The other thing that has happened since 1965 is many, many trade deals have been negotiated and signed and implemented since those days, and you know what? Every one of those trade deals has dealt with disputes—a dispute—has found a mechanism by

which to deal with trade 'disputes'—disputes because they happen, Mr. Speaker. And we do have to put a lot of thought and analysis into how we implement trade deals. In a perfect world you would sign trade deals that is a win-win, that is good for both signatories to the trade deals. But from time to time there are disputes that happen. We all understand that being—that's the experience that we've had with the— with trade deals that we have signed over the years. And Manitoba has been an active participant in discussions, because we understand that when Canada signs a trade deal with an international partner, it does have implications for our province; it does have implications for our economy. And this government, this side of the House, is intent on growing our economy and building our economy, and a stronger economy each and every day.

We understand that trade is important to that. That's why, first of all, Mr. Speaker, we work with Manitobans, we work with the private sector and we work with the public sector to make sure that we have a diverse economy in the first place. You don't get to sign trade deals if you don't have much to offer, and let me tell you, Manitoba has a lot to offer.

We have one of the most, if not the most diverse provincial economy in our nation. That comes by for a number of reasons. Part of it is a diverse strategy on the part of this government to promote our diversity. It is also a reflection of our location in Canada, in the centre of Canada. It's a reflection of the resources that we have. We have a strong agricultural base. We have forestry and mining in the north. We have a manufacturing sector that is our strongest, actually—our biggest part of our economic pie is in manufacturing. We have a very substantial investment sector, Mr. Speaker, that contributes jobs and economic activity in Manitoba.

That diversity of our economy is tied to probably the most diverse trade strategy in the country, and there's two aspects to this, Mr. Speaker; one is internal, and the member for Gimli, the Minister for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson), I think was very clear in talking about our strengths when it comes to international—or sorry, internal trade, and some of the very progressive things that our government has worked on over the last 13 years and continues today to work on in terms of trading with our provincial neighbours, trading within Canada, bringing down some barriers that gets in the way of that trade happening. I think some very progressive work has gone into maximizing our advantages on internal trade.

As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, from Manitoba, if you visualize the Canadian map, about half of our trade travels east from Manitoba and back, and the other half of our trade travels west of Manitoba and back. We have invested money in CentrePort Canada, that that's going to make sure that we can maximize not just east and west, but north and south, as well. And north, I think there's very big opportunities with Nunavut and some of our northern neighbours to make sure that we maximize the kind of trade opportunities that we can. Because we know that that means that businesses in Manitoba will do well, and businesses then can hire people. That means our public sector will do well; it'll be strong. That means that the public and private sectors can work together, which is the way it should be—in my view, Mr. Speaker, so that we can build a stronger economy. So we've made those investments along with the federal government, who we've co-operated with in terms of CentrePort Canada, to grow that part of our trade file.

Of course, the other part of our trade, and which this bill brought forward today, is talking about is international trade, and, again, Manitoba has not been shy about working with international partners. Most Canadian provinces point to United States as their biggest trading partner, and that, of course, is true of Manitoba. But only about 65 per cent of our trade is to the US, of our international trade. That's a smaller number than the Canadian average. That means we're less reliant on the US. It's still an important export partner for us, export-import partner, but we're not as reliant as many other provinces are in Manitoba. We—and that speaks to some of the good work that this minister, Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, has done and his department. Have to give full marks to folks in that department for establishing networks, working with people in Brazil and Russia, India, China, the countries around the world in which we can do business.

* (10:40)

And, Mr. Speaker, we should always be looking at ways in which we can do more business, not just the government, but working with the private sector to make sure that they're working with other countries as well. Because this means, ultimately, that we can improve our standard of living in Manitoba. We can work with other countries to improve their standard of living as well. This means—this is the way you grow an economy. This is the way you provide employment and this is the way you

take advantage of those advantages that we have here in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, just to conclude, I want to thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for bringing this forward. I think it's an important discussion that we need to have. I think we need to keep working with the federal government to make sure that we—should they want us to work with them to move forward on this issue through some analysis that we should do, I think we should be very open to an invite and to work along with the federal government to make sure that we continue to put ourselves in a strong position when it comes to trade in Manitoba.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity.

I want to thank my colleague from Brandon West for bringing forward this bill. I know that he and others have wondered why the government wouldn't have brought forward this bill themselves. Five years ago, in fact, the federal government asked this government, every province across Canada to be a part of this particular agreement. Five years ago the federal government indicated that the provinces should be looking to be a part of this to bring in individual legislation, and today we hear—five years after that invitation—we hear the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) say, well, we don't want to rush into anything. We need to look at it. We need to examine it—five years after he was invited.

Now, I know he wasn't the Minister of Finance at that time, but he was certainly in the government and he was the Minister of Agriculture and I suspect that this would be important in some aspects of agriculture, as well, and five years ago that invitation came forward. Five years ago that invitation—he certainly would know under—in Agriculture the issue of dispute mechanisms, Mr. Speaker. He's shaking his head that it doesn't impact, but I think it does. There are dispute mechanisms within Agriculture whether it's the WTO or other areas. But five years ago the federal government asked this government to be involved, and today they say, well, we haven't had time to think about it. I mean, where have they been?

And I think the real issue here is we know that every time an issue of trade or free trade is brought up in this House, the NDP oppose it. Every time there is a discussion about how you can open the

borders and have more trade with our neighbouring jurisdictions or other countries around the world, the NDP oppose it. It's like Pavlov's dog, Mr. Speaker. We mention trade, and they salivate to try to oppose it. You know, as soon as it's mentioned, they don't want to be in favour. And we remember the former leader of the NDP, Gary Doer, with the bullhorn talking about how free trade, the 1988 Free Trade Agreement would destroy the country and how they were opposed to it, how awful it was and, of course, we saw the opposite. There's many places and many companies in Manitoba that have benefited as a result of free trade and we've seen the positive impact that it's had in Manitoba.

We talked about the New West Partnership and the importance of trade and we had to bring legislation into this House on this—on that. And, of course, immediately, probably before they even read the bill, the government opposed it because it had to do with trade and having more trade—and, well, we wouldn't want to do that. We've got to put the borders up around Manitoba, and you wonder sometimes if that's not the reasons for the high-tax policy, so that we can become an island unto ourselves, you know, put up the borders at Saskatchewan, put up the barriers at Saskatchewan and have these high taxes compared to other provinces and other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. You wonder why they're trying to insulate Manitobans.

So, whether it was the Free Trade Agreement of 1988 which the NDP vehemently opposed, and I think they would probably say that they tacitly supported today, but in their heart of hearts we know that they don't. We know that they don't support free trade with other countries and other provinces, whether it's the New West Partnership which they are doing, you know, they're doing everything they can to make it unattractive for those other provinces to want to accept us into those trade agreements.

We see provinces to the east, we see provinces to the west joining into partnership agreements, but that's not happening in Manitoba. And at one point I think it was because this government was simply unwilling and they didn't want to be part of those agreements, but now—they're making Manitoba so uncompetitive that those other jurisdictions don't want us to be part of the agreement. And that is concerning when that is the policies of this government. So I'm disappointed that the Minister of Finance and the Minister responsible for Entrepreneurship would stand up and try to slow this

down and put some sand in the gears of this process moving forward on this bill.

I'm disappointed, but maybe I'm not surprised, because every time we bring forward something that will benefit companies in terms of trade, whether it's international or national or even within our borders of the province, they do things to try to make it more difficult. They do things to try to make it harder and to try to jam things up. They have had now five years since the federal government has said, we want the province to join us. Many other provinces have done that. Now, maybe it's because they're so used to being last that they just—that's just their default position. That they just simply have to wait until they're absolutely last before they do something, that they don't know how to react in any other way but to be dead last. Well, that's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

And we saw today that we saw some statistics that retail confidence for small businesses in Manitoba is down again, I think, for the third or for the fourth straight month, that it's one of the lowest in the country, that the confidence of our business owners is low. Now, this wouldn't impact all of those business owners—many of them aren't trading internationally—but I think that this government should be looking at any and every opportunity to try to increase the confidence of business owners and those who might look to do business in Manitoba. But instead they do the opposite; they raise taxes, they put up barriers, they're not interested in trade agreements, they are antibusiness—they are antibusiness—and we see it over and over.

And I know that I've now stirred the heart of the Minister of Entrepreneurship who's going to try to turn to his colleagues and say that that's not true, but his actions and the actions of this government speak that it is true. His actions and the actions of this government when it comes to high tax policies, when it comes to being opposed to trade agreements, show very clearly this is not a business that's friendly to government.

So I would hope that the next couple of speakers for the New Democrats will stand up and support this legislation and move it. If they don't, we'll know—we'll know—that they continue on with their anti-free-trade mantra, that in their heart of hearts they're not interested in trading with other countries, that they're not interested in trading with other provinces and that they are dedicated to making us less competitive and making it harder for our businesses to do that.

And that's too bad, because we have businesses and business people who look beyond the borders. We have business people who are not only optimistic, they're capable, they want to go and compete with the best in the world, and we know that they can compete with the best in the world and we have confidence in them. I only wish that their government, the NDP government, had as much confidence in them as we do, and they should stop throwing up barriers to trade, they should stop throwing up barriers to Manitobans being able to participate in a more global economy.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I'm very pleased to rise and give my comments on these important discussions we are going on, and I thank the member from Brandon West for bringing this legislation.

And I think that as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) mentioned, that we are not opposed to good ideas coming from anyone. There is no monopoly of any good ideas to anyone, but I think what the minister said was we are talking about here, that such an act being pushed through in a rush, is not really in the interest of—*[interjection]* Let me explain to you, member from Steinbach, you—this—my own personal experience of having 15 years in international trade, travelling all over the world, dealing with businesses, I have some kind of practical experience that I can share with you, that when there is a dispute you cannot really look at this particular legislation and say, this is going to solve everything, because this is a national issue. This is the issue that Canada has to act and it—as it says, that 1965 convention on the settlement of investment disputes between the states and nationals and other states play the role in the settlement of investment disputes around the world, but the council of ICSID Convention can be ratified by federal government without provincial legislation. So without provincial legislation it can be ratified.

* (10:50)

I am not opposed to discussions about how we can enhance it, while working together with the federal government, because I think the attitude to build 15 small, little countries in Canada, I have never, never supported that. We have to work together. We are a very small country and we have a lot of potential to develop our plate all over the world. But we have to work together with the federal government and federal rules that will apply in international disputes.

So I would very respectfully say that, yes, there are some merits in trying to say we can work together, but we don't need a legislation on a rush to pass and then say that the government should do this. We should work together with Ottawa, ask them to do the convention Canada and we will support anything that goes for the international trade.

The minister spoke—and I think we all know we have few things going on here in Manitoba. World Trade Center itself is a world body that offers huge amounts of protection and rules and regulations that the entire world is practising on international trade. So I think we have that now in Winnipeg and Manitoba.

We also have few other things going on. We have Centrallia which brings the businesses here from all over the world. We are working on some other programs to bring international trade relationships between Manitoba and rest of the world.

And I think that I'd like to share that my personal experience in terms of trying to dispute. Mr. Speaker, I know in my own case, I will not cite the example, but when the receivables of \$1.2 million are being disputed between supplier and the receiver is to be debated between who? Go to the court, it will take forever. We have a mechanism in Canada called export development corporation that re-provides 90 per cent of receivables to the manufacturer who exports through them.

And guess what, Mr. Speaker? Fraser Institute, which practically—I think that that's a think tank that I'm at times getting very ashamed that our academic [*inaudible*] right. And yesterday's Globe and Mail cited the objection of Fraser Institute in funding \$20 million to Buhler Industries for the export- [*interjection*] Yes, they say that this is the corporate welfare. Come on now. No one, no business will take the risk of trying to export products in the country (a) they don't know, (b) they are not sure whether the money will come, (c) that they don't know when the currencies will hold.

So, when we have a fantastic institute in Canada called export development corporation that helps. It helped my business and I did not have sleepless nights because we shipped lot of, you know, monies at stake. But export development corporation ensures at least 90 per cent is secured and cash flow comes because they pay you. So we have certain systems in this country which are good.

I am suggesting such acts, such legislation—absolutely no question that this is a good idea for us to build on such relationship between provinces, be unified and when government of Canada makes that kind of move we should really sit on the table and discuss very firmly this is what we have, because Manitoba have few things, we are very unique.

I was talking to Minister of Agriculture and Rural Initiatives that we are talking about export of canola and there is a tariff issue.

So these are some of the things you cannot really go and pass an act and relax and say now everything is done. You need to have negotiations going on with individual countries, individual jurisdictions and make it in the frame that is national, that's Canadian. Once it is Canadian it has strength. If we try to make a little bit of Manitoba, a little bit of Saskatchewan, little bit of Alberta, our own little, you know, trade relations, laws and acts, this will be more confusing. So it's a complex issue. It's not a simple issue. It is a very complex issue and it needs to be thought in a very great detail and then work on it.

I think that, as discussed here, we are talking about some of the facts that was mentioned here about the public talking about concerns. I would love to see if—I offer this to the members opposite—any businessman wants to take such issues, on a personal advice, I'll sit with them and give them how to—they can do things that will be securing their investment, their export development corporations.

There are other things that the Canadian government offers—incentives. The Manitoba government offers incentives. We can work together on that and we don't need to give a—an act and a law. That need not be elaborated and it may drive in the wrong direction, because the federal government's jurisdiction—let us work together to make the federal government move. Yes, we can push them. We can ask them to come forward sooner and get this thing done.

As I understand, the department is working on bringing some of these issues together and trying to make this thing work so that it works on the national interest, including Manitoba's own interest. So I would say that we have a lot of things going on here in terms of international trade. You know, the CentrePort itself is an example that will attract investment from all over the world, and they come and they will be able to operate here.

I can give you an example of what has happened when a businessman who went into China, invested and the investment went bad and the Chinese government literally shut him off and he had to lose that money. Now, this is where we talk about can Manitoba go and fight with the—China's powerful country? No. If it is Canada that stands with us, yes. So there is a difference between fighting with a giant—and we were a united Canada, yes. We can dispute, we can win, because there is international law. There is a court in Hague that decides on the dispute. So the mechanism is there. We want to cement it a little bit better. I have no objection in saying, yes, we can work together.

But I think this particular act, as the intentions of the member from Brandon West—very good. I have no doubt that you are thinking very favourably about the businesses that need some help. But, respectfully, sir, we need to work together with our government—federal government and try to make this particular act more consolidated, more solid, so that we can make it effective rather than superficial on a piece of paper; the act passes and does not really be effective. To make it effective we have to work together on this. We are doing very, very good acts on trade. We are working very diligently with several countries, bringing investments, working intelligently to make more investments. And also the dispute mechanisms, how to solve it, is under works. So I would say, as far as I'm concerned, it's up to us to decide what to do, but the decision is—

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

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): It's a great honour to make some commentaries regarding the bill that's been brought forward by the member from Brandon West. And it's quite interesting, the imagery that the members opposite are painting is that, like, Manitoba's not involved in any international trade whatsoever. And it's quite interesting as we talk about Growing Forward 2, in our consultation and discussions with the Ag Minister federally, but not only—all the Ag ministers across Canada. I was originally at a Ag ministers meeting and we had a very lengthy discussion and a strong discussion about the potential of the province of Manitoba not only, but all across Canada, of the positivity of the agriculture sector for international trade. And, definitely, we're in the infancy of developing new markets internationally across the world with trading partners.

And also to relate to certain circumstances, that I've had the privilege of meeting with representatives from HyLife and Maple Leaf, and their appreciation how well they've done in the province of Manitoba and how well they're doing internationally in developing markets in Japan and other countries as we move forward.

And let me be repetitious—the agriculture sector is just a greatest business—emerging marketplace in the world. As we all understand, the population internationally is growing, and the province of Manitoba has the real estate and has the tax incentive, it has the business plan to encourage business development in the province of Manitoba for the betterment—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives will have eight minutes remaining.

The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private members' resolution, and the resolution we are considering this morning is titled "Protecting Manitoba's Future," sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 27—Protecting Manitoba's Future

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen),

WHEREAS the Clean Environment Commission recently chastised the provincial government for a remarkably flawed environmental assessment of its hydroelectric activities in northern Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Public Utilities Board has called into question the financial viability of the provincial government's \$21-billion hydro expansion plan to build Bipole III and the Keeyask and Conawapa generating stations; and

WHEREAS it is the provincial government that controls the terms of reference and rules under which these regulators must conduct their activities to protect Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Bipole III routing decision is the leading example of the financial and environmental

damage that can occur to Manitoba without proper evaluation of hydroelectric expansion.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge that this provincial government has put Manitoba's environment, economy and taxpayers at significant risk by failing to allow an impartial and all-inclusive review of its plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to initiate a truly independent needs-for-and-alternatives-to analysis of its \$21-billion hydroelectric expansion plan that includes all environmental and economic factors.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), seconded by the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen),

WHEREAS the Clean Environment Commission—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Mrs. Stefanson: We on this side of the House are extremely concerned about the future of this province due to the NDP's political interference in Manitoba Hydro. Mr. Speaker, the NDP's meddling has put Hydro's finances in dire straits with profits deteriorating 90 per cent in five years.

Mr. Speaker, one reason the company is not yet bankrupt is due to the long-term rate increases to cover off the wasteful spending directed by this NDP government. Rates have gone up by 20 per cent since the NDP directed Hydro to start a massive \$21-billion expansion plan to build the Keeyask and Conawapa generating stations and the Bipole III transmission line to move the power south.

Mr. Speaker, rates will continue to climb by at least 4 per cent per year for the next 20 years to cover these costs. The Public Utilities Board expert, Graham Lane, says rates may increase by 12 per cent per year if things go awry with this plan. So, needless to say, we are very concerned about the way that this NDP government is mismanaging Manitoba Hydro.

The NDP are building this plan on the gamble that export sales to the US will pay for the dams. But this may not be the case. Right now, Hydro is generating electricity at a loss when it's—exports power, and the new dams may be even worse.

Mr. Speaker, the new dams will cost 10.5 cents per kilowatt hour to produce power for the US, but we earn only 3.3 cents per kilowatt hour on average to sell it. When you add in the 3 cents per kilowatt hour for transport costs, this means a 10-cent loss for every kilowatt hour sold.

And, Mr. Speaker, those are the facts in this case. I know that members opposite don't like those facts, and that's why they're chirping in their seats and they're very concerned about this, because Manitobans are very concerned about this—the mismanagement of this NDP government, especially when it comes to Manitoba Hydro. And I think that members opposite should listen to Manitobans when it comes to their concerns with respect to the management of this file. And trying to build \$21 billion worth of power and generating stations and everything else to sell at a loss to the US makes absolutely no sense.

And—but we understand that members opposite have difficulty with math and we understand that they don't—they just want to build it. They think if you—if we build it, they will come. Well, that's not the way things are working, Mr. Speaker. And you don't build—do these megaprojects to sell hydroelectric power to another country at a loss. It's just wrong.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board latest order actually indicates that Manitoba Hydro doesn't expect export prices to reach 10 cents per kilowatt hour until 2028. So this means that all the new dams built to serve export markets could lose money for the years before Manitobans need the power. The Public Utilities Board has raised concerns about these dams. They said they need further evaluation to ensure they are built at the right time. So, instead of listening to the Public Utilities Board's advice and commissioning an independent and all-encompassing review of these projects, the NDP initiated a narrow financial analysis to ensure they get the result they want from the Public Utilities Board. The terms of reference of the—for the Public Utilities Board's economic analysis in—excludes significant portions of the hydro expansion plan such as the Bipole III transmission line and the profit-sharing agreements with First Nations. Past projects like the Wuskwatim generating station show these details are crucial to determining if projects will be viable. Wuskwatim isn't viable. It's losing more than \$100 million per year, and Hydro is rewriting its agreements to limit losses to First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, the same problems we see with the economic analysis are evident with the environmental assessments. The Clean Environment Commission's recent report chastised the provincial government for bringing forth an assessment that would have failed if not for a flawed system that allowed the government to get away with barely meeting minimal thresholds of analysis. The Clean Environment Commission stated: It is simply inconceivable that the NDP's environmental assessment found almost no cumulative effects after the development of 35 hydro projects over the last 50 years in northern Manitoba. It also blames this NDP government for subjectivity, lack of clarity and false precision in the analysis.

The troubling part of all this, though, Mr. Speaker, of both these reviews, is that they are being done to rubber-stamp project approval rather than provide true, scientific assessment, and so I think that that's a serious problem. The NDP want the approvals and they are manipulating the process to get those approvals. So in both cases the terms of reference provided to the regulators by the NDP were narrow in scope and biased to get the answers the NDP wanted. The Clean Environment Commission was told only to review one possible hydro route for Bipole III. They excluded the other possibility of an east-side line. They said: No, you can only look at this west-side line. This is what we're telling you. So, when they asked for a broader range—when the Clean Environment Commission asked for a broader range to conduct a more inclusive review, the Minister of Conservation told them no. And I say shame on him. This is extremely unfortunate at a time when they're building these megaprojects or they're looking to build these megaprojects in Manitoba. They should be listening to the Clean Environment Commission. They should be listening to the Public Utilities Board. They should be listening to Manitobans who want an encompassing and overall review of all potential projects in Manitoba. We know that the bipole line and the route that the—that members opposite are forcing on Manitoba Hydro and forcing on the citizens of this province will cost at least a billion dollars more than a bipole line on the east side. And so to exclude the east-side assessment is ludicrous, and Manitobans know that.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's why the Clean Environment Commission told the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of our province that they won't license any additional hydro projects until they get a full

understanding of the environmental implications of the NDP's expansion plan. So the limited NFAT review approved by the Premier exempted scientific aspects of the hydro expansion plan from review to protect his party's interests, and I say shame on them.

Just like the PST, the NDP are willing to ignore Manitobans; they're willing to ignore experts; they're willing to ignore common sense and the law to get what they want, and they ignore the law in order to get what want regardless of the cost to hard-working Manitobans and the ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro.

* (11:10)

Mr. Speaker, financial damages include massive rate hikes that will hurt all Manitoba taxpayers. Higher rates are—also drive industry out of the province when combined with the NDP's penchant for high taxes and fees. The NDP have a chance to stop their interference in Hydro planning, listen to the experts and allow a truly independent study to be done that looks at all environmental and economic factors. This expansion plan is the biggest capital investment project in Manitoba's history, and Manitobans cannot afford to get it wrong. This NDP government cannot afford to get it wrong, and, as the Clean Environment Commission said, it's time to start over with the review process and get it right.

So I encourage all members of this House to support this resolution. It's time to put a stop to this NDP government's dictatorial ways of the way they do things, the way they govern this province, the way they force Manitoba Hydro to pick a particular line on the west side of the province that makes absolutely no economic or environmental sense, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's time that members opposite get their head out of the sand and realize that this is not the way to govern Manitoba, that Manitobans want this government to listen to them, the Clean Environment Commission wants them to listen to them, the Public Utilities Board wants this NDP government to listen to them, and so I think it's time that they start to listen to Manitobans. Thank you.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): You know, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite give a great example of if you keep repeating wrong information and you keep making up information and you keep saying it over and over again, all 18 and 19 or whatever number are over there will say the same thing. Most of what the

member said in her resolution was wrong, just as most of the diatribe put on the—or most of the misinformation—I'll correct that, misinformation put on by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) is wrong.

Now, let me just talk about a few issues that were raised by members opposite. Let me start out first with the mythology of the 3 and a half cents and selling to Hydro. We provided—Manitoba provided, at Crown corporations committee, a chart of the money that was going and coming and the revenue coming to Manitoba Hydro from US sales. It was not 3 and a half cents. In fact, 3 and a half cents was the spot market. In fact, Mr. Speaker, because of the volume that Hydro has to produce in order to provide for reliability in Manitoba, that spot market sales would spill over the dam. There would be no revenue from that.

That 3 and a half cents is bonus. It's almost 100 per cent profit on water that would be spilled, but members opposite, who know they're wrong, misinform without even looking at the chart. They have the chart. Stand up; look at the chart. The member got it in Crown Corporations Committee.

Let me contrast the member's attitude. Let's look at when they privatized a Crown corporation, Manitoba Telephone System, and our Crown corporation. Manitoba Telephone System has nowhere near the lowest rates in the country. Manitoba Hydro has the lowest rates in the country.

When MTS was privatized, they said it's because there's no capital, Mr. Speaker. What do they want to do to Manitoba Hydro? They want to take away the capitalization. What does the capitalization buy us? It buys us, the next 20, 30, 40 years, the lowest rates in North America, just as we had in the past, but members opposite don't want that. They want to privatize that Crown corporation. They want to go to market rates.

You know, how do you argue with a corporation that has the lowest rates in the country, this year, next year, the year after? How do you say it's being mismanaged? How do you say that? You know how you say that? If you're Tory, you say that. If you're a privatizer, you say that. If you hate Crown corporations, you say that. If you're sorry because you lost two elections that were based on east side, west side, and you lost the elections, you lost the argument, and now the old new leader—now the old, retread leader is bringing back the same foolish, careless, irresponsible arguments.

They say, well, it's going to cost a billion dollars. You know, Mr. Speaker, and they keep saying, oh, we'll use that billion dollars to buy this program, that program. They spent it over a hundred times, and if we don't have that reliability, if that line goes down, we will be left in the cold. And when the line went down for a few days—thankfully—a report came out when they were government—when the Luddites were government, when they were government—that said build the line for reliability, and they did nothing. We've been building this line; we're going to build this line. And when members opposite say it's ill-found out, no one's reviewing it—the PUB's looked at it, the Hydro board's looked at it, the Clean Energy Commission looked at it. We're doing 'na'—we're doing an NFAT on looking at all of those projects.

Further, you know what I like about members opposite? They're consistent. And one of their consistencies is they want nothing to do with First Nations—they want nothing to do with First Nations. We're trying to partner with First Nations; they're trying to destroy it. In fact, their leader said Hydro shouldn't be used for any social programs in the north. Can you believe that, Mr. Speaker? Can you believe that in a region where there's 90 per cent unemployment, the Leader of the Opposition not only wants to cancel the projects, but he says they shouldn't be used for social programs. The best social program is a job. People have been shunted aside for over a hundred years and members opposite want to shunt them aside for another hundred years.

Okay, what's the option? Let's talk the contrast again. What are the options if we don't build hydro? And, by the way, you can't build hydro in a month; you can't build hydro in a year. It takes seven or eight years to develop hydro. You just don't turn on the switch. Oh, the members say, let's go to our favourite 'comparatal' province; let's go to the province of Saskatchewan. Let's see what they're doing. Okay, what are they doing? First off, their hydro, their rates of electricity are way beyond ours, they're way higher—that's the first issue.

The second issue is, they have an expansion plan—plan to build their infrastructure. Oh, they do. What are they doing? They're spending \$15 billion—\$15 billion. The member for St. Paul said he couldn't even count that high. I understand that—\$15 billion, Mr. Speaker. And what are they doing with that \$15 billion? Have they taken it to their PUB? Have they taken it to a NFAT? Have they taken it to their board—I guess it's gone to their board. They're

renewing coal and they're looking at nuclear—let me repeat that—they're renewing coal and they're looking at nuclear. So what do they want us to do? Do they want us to go nuclear in a province that's blessed with hydroelectric resources? No, that's what they're doing.

Look at Ontario. Okay, let's go natural gas like Ontario. Let's build a whole bunch of cogeneration natural gas. Whoops—whoops—what happened to the government of Ontario when they built their natural gas? They're a half a billion dollars—they had to cancel the projects. Why? Because they didn't want natural gas plants in people's backyards. Doesn't that sound familiar? Don't you remember the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), Mr. Speaker? He didn't even want hydro lines in his constituency—he didn't even want hydro lines in his constituency. And then he says, well, let's shut it down, the boreal forest, down that side, and save money. You'd never get it off the ground. You'd never get out of court. This isn't the old days, you can't go riding in on your white Charger and say, we're just going to put this through. There's people that live there that say they don't want it. Nobody wants it.

When the Premier of Newfoundland wanted to put a hydro line through a park, he couldn't. He had to spend \$100 million to go around it. When I spoke with the previous minister of Energy in Alberta, he was fit to be tied. He couldn't get a transmission line between Calgary and Edmonton, that very—the very deep ecological and environmentally protected area. He couldn't get it, Mr. Speaker. It's very hard to build transmission, but transmission we must build. We need it for reliability, and we need to make profits. We have, in sales: 7 to 9 billion dollars; we have in commitments—that's rollovers for agreements we have now—\$29 billion that will pay.

Let the member look at the chart he's got. We're not getting 3 and a half cents from the United States. He knows that—he knows that's not true. The member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) knows it's not true, but they keep repeating the same mistake, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I find it incredible that members will use every opportunity to attack, to go after the management, to go after the workers, to go after First Nations, to go after the government, to go after the PUB, to go after the CEC. They have criticized everybody that has anything to do with hydro because they don't want to build. And why don't they want to build? How could they be so

stupid as not to build, because we're going to run out of power in 2022.

* (11:20)

And what argument have they used as an alternative? Well, again, I go back—Saskatchewan, coal and nuclear; Ontario, natural gas. They're both in trouble. The Alberta minister's been in the paper at least five or six times in Alberta saying he wants Manitoba hydro. They need 12,000 megawatts of power, Mr. Speaker. They'd like pure, clean Manitoba hydro. Saskatchewan wants Manitoba hydro. We have an MOU with Saskatchewan. Minnesota, we have contracts with. Wisconsin, we have contracts with. We have sales for our hydro. We have a future for our hydro. The other thing about hydro is, unlike coal plants or unlike nuclear plants, once you do the upfront capital, it lasts for a hundred years.

I know members opposite have trouble sometimes thinking a week ahead of time, but you have to think ahead. If we're going to run out of power in 2022, as our demand is going up, we require power for domestic usage to keep our rates the lowest in the country. No matter what they say, no matter how often they cry out, no matter what they—whatever kind of means they use to block hydro, they cannot get away from the fact that we have the lowest rates in Canada and probably North America, that we're sharing now our hydro with our First Nation partners. And that isn't easy, Mr. Speaker, because we're dealing with a legacy of difficulties, and we're dealing with a history of broken promises and we're trying to work in partnership.

Members opposite don't even want to talk about First Nations, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to work with First Nations, and we also need hydro for the future. So cost-wise for the future and for sharing the opportunities for all of Manitoba, it makes perfect sense to build hydro. Everyone outside of the Conservative caucus who has any conception of the world energy prices and crises knows that it's the right thing to do, and we intend to do the right thing. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Well, we are glad to see that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro is back. We hope that he found, amongst other things, his voice again. And we listened to—carefully to what he had to say and we heard a lot of yelling. We heard a lot of ranting. We heard a lot of raving.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don't think we heard very many facts. We didn't hear very much other than smear, slander and innuendo, and that does not help the debate in this Chamber. We have a very important future ahead of us with \$20 billion of potential new construction, and what we have is a minister who gets up, rants and raves and goes off on tangents and addresses anything and everything except for the facts.

He put on the record about Crown corporation committee, Manitoba Hydro and all the documents. Well, actually, I'd like to point out to him, all the documents we asked for, we're still waiting for. We neither seem to get them with the FIPPA nor do we get them if we ask for them in committee. We—the only way we ever get anything seems to be in brown envelopes, and that's where we seem to be getting inundated day after day after day. So I'm still waiting for those documents that—evidently we're going to wait for those documents—*[interjection]* And my colleague from Steinbach says, Staples has run out of brown envelopes because they're all sitting in my office full of Hydro documents.

The minister ranted and raved without putting any facts on the record about lowest rates over the next 10 years. This is the minister who brought in the largest hydro rate increase in the history of Manitoba Hydro, 8 per cent in one year, 8 per cent in one year, and, in fact, he's already committed himself to a minimum—a minimum—rate increase every year for 10 years of a minimum of 4 per cent. Already there are jurisdictions, when you compare city to city, other jurisdictions that have lower hydro rates than Winnipeg does, and the minister should check the facts. But facts are never anything that he lets get in his way, and when he has too much trouble, then he gets into coughing fits.

He also went on to talk about his record of privatization. Now, we know that there are serious high-ranking New Democrats who are running advertising campaign warning all Manitobans about the NDP member for Kildonan's (Mr. Chomiak) hidden agenda to sell off Manitoba Hydro—their words. These are high-ranking NDP officials who are saying that there is a hidden agenda by the member for Kildonan, by the NDP government, to get Manitoba Hydro sold, to privatize it.

And what we have is a minister who does the old bait-and-switch trick. He points out to everybody else what everybody else he thinks is doing while he's doing exactly what he says he thinks others are

doing. And they've done this now consistently and they mentioned it for several elections. While they were getting Manitoba Hydro ready for privatization, they were accusing others of doing exactly the same thing.

And, Mr. Speaker, now we have it unmasked. Now high-ranking, senior NDP officials are actually going with television and radio ads and are putting on the record that it is this NDP government that is getting Manitoba Hydro ready to sell. And we've quoted that ad on the record. I would recommend members opposite go and read that if they don't have a radio that they can listen to.

The minister went on to say that he talked about foolish. And, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to this House that we have had ample—ample—time in question period. Over and over again we have asked questions, serious questions, very well-reasoned questions about Manitoba Hydro. What we get are nothing but foolish—foolish—answers. In fact, the last few days have been disgraceful in the kind of answers that we have gotten. In fact, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) should be ashamed of himself for the kind of performance he put on yesterday. In fact, I would suggest to him that he's only just a little bit better with his answers on Hydro than the member for Kildonan, because that's a hard act to follow.

The member responsible for Manitoba Hydro went on to say that even NFAT is covering everything—everything. Well, actually, and that's not true because the member for Kildonan has so gotten off of facts that he now lives in his own little bubble. Actually, he's the one who told the Public Utilities Board. He's the one who has told the Clean Environment Commission. And he's the one who told the group running the NFAT that the east-side bipole line may not—may not—be looked at. It's not an alternative that may be discussed, although they would like to. And those are the facts that he either chooses to ignore or in his little bubble just doesn't even know exist anymore. He has gotten himself in so deep into this one that he has no idea where any fact may begin or end and reality ends or begins.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to say about sharing with First Nations. This is the minister who said he would meet with some protesters the other day and then sent a staff member over to meet with them. This is a minister who won't even meet with individuals from the First Nations who have serious concerns.

Basically, the documents that I have been presenting during question speak-meeting-question period, Mr. Speaker—those documents have all been sent to the NDP member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the minister. And then he gets up and he says, well, why don't they table that letter? Why aren't they tabling the documents? Because they were all sent to him and they were cc'd to me. He has them all. In fact, most of them come from the corporation that he's supposed to oversee. And in these documents you have individuals coming forth, and it's often the women of the First Nations who come and they say, we are so angry. We are—we feel so betrayed by what's going on.

And I'd like to point out to the minister, the Keeyask community centre, where is it? Under his leadership millions and millions of dollars have been forwarded with no centre ever built. And what about the sewer and water system? Mr. Speaker, when it comes to announcements, when it comes to ribbon cutting the Minister of Hydro is there. But, when it comes to running his corporation for oversight for making sure there's accountability, for listening to the very people he's supposedly is there for, he has no time for them.

There are serious allegations and serious concerns coming forward and he has no time for them. The only thing he has time for is to play BrickBreaker on his BlackBerry and seemingly whatever else he whiles away his time instead of dealing with the men and women that are calling my office and coming to my office and explaining to me the difficulty he's having.

* (11:30)

And it's too bad that they don't meet with their own MLA, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who also has no time for them and who else—also does nothing for them, Mr. Speaker. The member for Thompson does nothing. He wants to blow through. He blows through their towns and like—you—like the Queen, he waves at all of them, eats a little bit at the council office and blows back out. Like some visiting Caesar, he walks through these First Nations, but does he actually talk to the men and women who are concerned about accountability? For them, the member for Thompson has no time. But to sit in his seat and heckle, that he has time for it. But to actually go and speak to the men and women who are being affected, I would recommend he does that.

The minister, then, put one other—amongst others—falsehood on the record in which he said,

everyone supports us. Well, other than Ed Schreyer, his—who he's a protege for—all kinds of NDP Cabinet ministers, the Public Utilities Board, the Clean Environment Commission, we have former engineers from Hydro, we've got former chairs of the various organizations, all are saying, please be careful and be accountable.

And that's what this motion says. And I would recommend to the NDP member for Kildonan, minister responsible, he should actually read this and start looking at the facts. He would do all Manitobans a great favour.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Yes, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for giving me the opportunity to talk on this PMR, Protecting Manitoba's Future.

I think, if I was a betting man, I think I'd go buy stock in U-Haul trailers, because it sounds like the opposition is going to be moving to the green pastures of Saskatchewan and Alberta. It's sad because they sit here and they rant and rave and all we hear is the—is ranting and raving. All we hear is the negativism.

And I just want to go on record and say that some of the projects that we have built in Manitoba—only because we have a vision and leadership to move forward: the MTS Centre—they would've cancelled it; the football stadium—yes, they would've cancelled that; museum—Human Rights Museum—don't even want to talk about it, they'd cancel that; the new airport—let's not have that. And the whole thing is is that they have no vision, and it's sad, sitting on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and realizing that, you know what? We're in this by ourselves. We have to obviously direct and go with our vision, because we don't see any alternatives.

They say Manitoba Hydro—you know, cut that. Let's not go with the Bipole III. They're willing to just let things run in the ground. That's very irresponsible. We have to have a vision, and our vision is the growth of Manitoba. Our vision is for all Manitobans—not just some Manitobans. We have a vision for the south, a vision for the north, a vision for the east and west, for First Nations, Mr. Speaker. We have a vision for northerners. And when it all comes together, Manitoba has the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada. Manitoba has one—*[interjection]* Thank you, thank you, thank you. A little late, but thank you. I also want to say that Manitoba is one of the most affordable places to live in the country.

Now, nobody can dispute the honourable member of the—of Hydro, his passion. I mean, I have a lot of respect for the Hydro Minister. He—we won two elections on Hydro, and you know what? The next one is a foregone conclusion. We're going to win that one too. You know, you're going to see, obviously, them changing their names. And, you know, I'm trying to be—help them there, but that's fine. But what we are going to do is we are going to bet on the future of Manitoba. We're going to be here. The Blue Bombers are going to win a Grey Cup. The Winnipeg Jets are going to win the Stanley Cup. We believe, okay? They don't, okay? We believe; they don't. We believe in Manitobans; they don't, okay? That's important.

We believe in the social program that Hydro is going to build in the north. It's going to create jobs for First Nations. I'm from the north. We need the opportunities. It's not just mining. We need Hydro. We need the opportunities so they can get out of the situation they're in, which is Third World conditions which we have to give them opportunities—and Hydro is those opportunities. We need you guys to be onside. We need you guys to be onside to help us work together and to create Manitoba that is not only a province of Canada, but it will become the best in Canada—[interjection] Thank you, thank you, you're right on time.

I also have to say, Mr. Speaker, is what would the alternative be? Well, we know they would slash, okay? We know that—you know, I have a dream—no, they don't have a dream; they have a nightmare. Their nightmare is what if we did win the election? What would we do? Well, I can tell you what they'll do. I can tell you what they do. They lied. They lied, and I want to go on record. They lied about MTS, and a lie means there's intent. Their intent was to get rid of MTS, no question about it. We can all stand here and realize that their intent was to get rid of MTS, and they did. And then, the opposition members are saying, my phone doesn't work, you know, down in Morris. My phone doesn't work down whatever. They don't, you know, they don't realize that, you know what? That used to be ours, and you would probably, if it was still ours, MTS, you'd have phone service right through Manitoba.

Now, what would they do with Hydro or our oil and gas, our gold? What would they do? Now, they'd try and use a union opposition there. You know, listen to them rant and rave. But we know they would run it to the ground—[interjection] Thank you. They would run it to the ground and then they'd sell

it, and it'd be a fire sale. And you know what? I even have a vision. I know what they'd do. They would buy it. They would try—as they privatize it—they'd create shares. They would buy shares and they would sell it at—just like they did at MTS. And you know what? The Premier might even retire and accept a job. Like at MTS, he would accept a job as one of the key positions at MTS, and this is the truth. I'm not making this up. The former premier did accept a job with MTS and he is making the big bucks, and this is after. This is after they said they wouldn't sell MTS.

And I—like, I want to say that we are the party of all Manitobans. We're there—[interjection] Thank you. Thank you, right on time. Thank you. We're there for all Manitobans and we're at the gates. We're at the gates of Manitoba and we will not let Hydro escape. And I'll tell you, this cold, dark hand will never, never—I don't know where I heard that—never let Hydro go because it is—okay—our oil and gas, and it is important to all Manitobans, north, south, east, west. And I'll tell you something and, again, I bow my head to the honourable Hydro Minister saying, you know what? We got to show the passion. We got to show that Hydro is important and we can't sit there and criticize—jump on board, jump on board the train of happiness. Get going with us—[interjection] Thank you, thank you. Right on. And you know what? We won't put you at the back of the train, we'll move you right up to the engine. We'll move you right up to the engine so that we can stand and we can say to all Manitobans that hydro is going to move on forward; that hydro is the economic engine that Manitoba can look forward to for the next 10, 20, 30, 100 years, because it's clean, okay? We're not talking nuclear; we're not talking coal. You know, we don't have a whole bunch of Lexi, you know. We—I have—you can see the car I drive, Mr. Speaker. It's a Lumina, and my mom's 1998 Lumina, and I'm going to run that into the ground because I know I'm helping Manitobans recycle, reuse and reduce.

* (11:40)

So, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for letting me go up. Thank—keep it up. Keep it up, because I want you to realize, on this side of the House, we have enthusiasm; we have passion; we have integrity; we have honour. And when you sit over in this side and you say, you lied, that hurts me, because there was no intent—there was no intent to lie. We had a flood—we had a flood that we had to deal with, and as a responsible government we stood up and said, hold it. We've got to look at all

Manitobans. We've got to create—not like Alberta did—but we've got to create for the next flood. We've got to build, not slash, and I'm very proud to be sitting on this side of the government. I'm very proud that the honourable members clap, and I really have to say that I respect the ranting and raving, but you know what? Get on the board, get on the love train right now and come with us. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I hope the honourable member for Arthur-Virden is ready.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): That's quite a—quite an act. I thought that the minister was an act to follow.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add, you know, in regards to this whole process, this bill is called Protecting Manitoba's Future—or this resolution, private members' resolution brought forward by my colleague from Tuxedo, Protecting Manitoba's Future. And it's a very serious circumstance. I understand the members of the government want to take this lightly, don't want to do proper consultation. They've been told by the PUB they haven't done proper consultation on the economic side of it and they've been told by the Clean Environment Commission they need to clean up the process before they move forward with these processes.

So, Mr. Speaker, they can put all the rhetoric they want and they can rant and they can laugh about the process all they like, but this is about the future of Manitoba. This is about the economic viability of this Province, and this government has taken it extremely lightly. They have not heeded—they haven't even heeded their own former leader of their party, the—Premier Schreyer, former governor general, former come—representative of wash—of Australia, high commission to Australia, who has indicated many times that the government needs to responsibly take another look at—take a second sober look at—like the Public Utilities Board said, don't proceed until you take a full economic analysis of these processes.

They got what they wanted out of the private—out of the Clean Environment Commission, Mr. Speaker, but when you set something up to get the results you want and don't allow anybody to look at any alternatives, you're going to get what you want. And that's exactly what Mr. Collinson said in the Free Press this week, former worker from—on energy systems from United Nations, worked on these types of projects, and indicated very clearly that if the government puts the parameters in place they want to

get the results from, they'll get it. And that's exactly what happened with the—with that process.

And, Mr. Speaker, even at that the Clean Environment Commission said, here's 42 or 43 other recommendations you need to do before you proceed with this, and yet the government—the minister stands up and rants about how wonderful this is, all the contracts he's got, the rollovers. The only rollover going to happen here is the rollover on top of Manitobans by the people that have pushed the government to not look at the types of discussions that they need to have with the people on the First Nations and others on the east side of Lake Manitoba. They were not consultations. They were conversations, maybe, that the minister had with them, but they were not a sound conservation—or conversational—or process. The conversations that he had with many of these people did not result in consultations.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the kind of economics that's involved in this, it's not just Mr. Schreyer. It's others. I mean, Len Evans was a member of their own Public Utilities Board, very credible member from Brandon East in his days in the Legislature. That's why they probably put him on the Public Utilities Board. And, of course, they took him off after he indicated that maybe they should review the process. And Tim Sale, former minister in this very House when I was first elected, has indicated to this government that they should take another look. Not saying, don't do it. We're not saying don't do it. We're just saying look at it and be cautious about what—how you're proceeding, because the conditions in the world economy have changed. The markets in the United States are finding cheaper power than what this government can deliver, even in today's market, never mind the costs of rebuilding.

And I know that the Wuskwatim project is up and going right now, Mr. Speaker. And even the former Public Utilities Board person there, Mr. Lane, has indicated that they're losing a hundred million dollars a year on that project right now and for the foreseeable future. Ten years is a billion dollars that this government has, you know, taken out of ratepayers' pockets.

They are going to—obviously, Mr. Speaker—that's probably, is all I can assume is that that's the reason that we're seeing a 4 per cent increase per year; 8 per cent this year, but 4 per cent a year for 20 years. That's a very hard projection to make. And I would assume that, if you follow Mr. Lane's logic

on this area, that pretty well all of the cost that this government has come in with on these projects has been upped by 50 per cent. It would assume—one would assume that the 4 per cent will have to be raised as well. And whether or not we have cheap power or energy is not the issue. We all want to make sure that we have reliability. But what's reliable?

And I would—you know, the member from Flin Flon just said he was very supportive of this government's decisions. Well, I ask him to go back to his people in Flin Flon, because I happen to know a few of them there as well. And the ones that I talk to are saying, well, we didn't ask them to build the hydro line over to The Pas and then back down south, wrap it around the south side of the city to get it back up east so we can ship it southeast, Mr. Speaker. No, we didn't ask for that. We didn't ask for a line that was more insecure by being five—the very fact that the line is 500 kilometres longer than it needs to be would throw the whole question into being of why you're going to build this thing in the first place.

And are they then going to go ahead with Keeyask and Wuskwatim, as I've been asking in question period of the minister, Mr. Speaker? Many times I've asked, is he going to go ahead with this project based on the old rules under Clean Environment Commission, or is he going to put the new rules that the Clean Environment Commission has asked be put in place before we continue to proceed with these major, major, \$21 billion worth of projects?

And Mr. Speaker, I—it's astounding that a government would even consider that. And, of course, coming from a minister that can't keep track of projects that are already being built by Hydro in some of these areas, can't tell my colleague from St. Paul where the money went and where the facilities are and what kind of plans they're going to have. I mean, they're just—poof—they're gone. This is not a credible government that can blow money like this on projects that they can't even find—no accountability, can't answer questions in this House on those.

And yet he demands that we're going to build the line; we're doing an NFAT. Well, he's not doing an NFAT, Mr. Speaker. He's doing it on part of the project, but he said we're doing it on all of the project, and he's not. This is coming from a minister that says we're mining for oil in this province. Well,

heaven sakes, that's pretty much a joke in Arthur-Virden where 99 per cent of the oil is being drilled for in Manitoba at the present time, but, anyway, the minister will have to deal with that one.

Mr. Speaker, it presents an interesting dilemma for this government. How do you gain back your credibility when you are grasping at straws because you know that most of the decisions that you've announced on this project are wrong, that the facts on the economics have changed over the 30 years since Hydro started looking at selling power to the United States. And it was a very viable alternative at one time, I'm sure. I know people that had worked on those projects for years in Hydro, but all of them have told me that they need to rethink the process, and I would go on to say that that comes from engineers like Will Tishinski, Mr. Laliberte and, of course, Mr. Collinson himself for the work that he's done on these areas. They've called the government to task on looking at reviewing the whole process.

* (11:50)

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very disconcerting to see that this government's going to go ahead and build these projects without a complete review as outlined by even the Clean Environment Commission process, that even they interrupted last fall for some period of time, three months or so, 'til they could get the process finished this March. And now they want to proceed with it, but it's very doubtful that even their own backbenchers understand the type of process that they're going forward with.

And, of course, that comes from a parallel to forced amalgamation of municipalities, which just came out of the blue last fall in the Throne Speech. It comes from things like don't telling them about the PST that just was dropped in the budget like that, Mr. Speaker, and surprised a lot of their own members. Certainly surprised Manitobans, and we've heard from thousands of those across the province on websites and emails and direct letters and the list goes on and on and on.

So, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to—some of my colleagues have referred to the minister responsible for Hydro, and I would say it's the minister irresponsible for Hydro in many of these cases.

So with that, I look forward to hearing perhaps some more positive input from the government in regards to how to build a responsible future for this province.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the last speaker putting on the record that this side of the House, the government, is going to put something on the record with regards to the positive future of Manitoba and the positive future that Manitoba Hydro presents to us. And that's exactly what we've been doing all morning.

I'm pleased to be following, of course, the—as many other members have mentioned, the Minister of Hydro, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and his passion, of course, is very evident to us.

And, of course, I want to mention the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) because, as a member from the north and somebody that works very closely with First Nations, that has a first-hand knowledge of the good work that Manitoba Hydro does in these communities and the importance of Manitoba Hydro to the growth and the future of the north, I think shows in his passion for this issue and his passion for the work that we're doing here in this House.

I also appreciate the opportunity to speak to this particular PMR because the—this issue—there's no better issue, I think, that contrasts our parties, our values, our vision for the province. This is the issue. Well, you know, maybe, I guess I could take a step back. It could be our vision of, you know, providing services for Manitobans versus their vision for cuts or our vision of protecting health care or their vision of two-tier health care. I mean, there's a whole plethora, but this is one that I really appreciate the opportunity to talk to and I know all of us, because we believe in Manitoba Hydro and we believe in the future that it—and the prosperity that it provides for Manitoba.

This is the vision of growth versus stagnation. This is the vision of investment versus keeping your head in the sand. This is the vision of building versus mothballing. And investment here, I think, Mr. Speaker, is the key word, because the members opposite like to imagine themselves to be the party of business, you know, understanding business interests, that they are the ones—they are the only ones that can speak in this House to how business works. And, of course, when we talk about Manitoba Hydro, we know that Manitoba Hydro is a business. It's not a business like any other business, but it is a business and we understand that. And we understand that, in order for business to prosper, we need investment. There needs to be investment in business, and it's short-sighted to see it any other way.

Hydro is a business with a healthy future, but we also understand that Hydro isn't only a business; it's also an essential service for Manitobans, that it's also an engine of growth in our economy, and we also see it as the future of Manitoba. And that's very clear on our side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

You know, this PMR, in particular, asks for more analysis, more review, more in-depth analysis of the plan for Manitoba Hydro going forward as if this is not something that's already under way, it's—as if it's not something that is taken to—into account. Our modern and responsible approach to hydro development respects the environment, it works when partnershiped with First Nations and, first and foremost, it seeks to keep Manitoba Hydro affordable and prosperous going into the future, and that's the number one goal of Manitoba Hydro and our vision for it.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, the CEC report, we want to thank the members of the Clean Environment Commission and everyone who participated in this process and the thorough analysis that they undertook. The report makes it very clear that, you know, we're working with communities, Manitoba Hydro has made a number of improvements to its Bipole III development plan. But we also know that there's more work to do and we acknowledge that and that's part of the process, and that's why we undertook that process with the Clean Environment Commission.

You know, this PMR, I think, is a bit of a red herring and it's a bit of a diversion for members opposite here in the House. You know, we talk about our vision and our vision for growth and for investment. You know, this PMR says, well, we should look at the financial picture and we should decide, you know, what is the best way for it. Well, they've already made up their minds, Mr. Speaker—we know that. The Leader of the Opposition has been very, very clear he wants to mothball, he wants to cancel projects, he wants a chill, okay—what he may call a chill, what we would call a freeze and a complete stoppage of all projects in Manitoba Hydro. So their ideological minds have already been made up.

For them to now come to this House and to come to Manitobans and say, well, no, we just want to look at it, we just want to decide is this the best way forward. We know what their position is, they've already made that clear. The debate on their side of the House is completely a red herring and it's

completely frivolous at this point because we know they want to cancel it. We want to build it. We want to do it in a responsible way. We want to make sure that we're doing it in the best way possible. But we know what their vision is, we know where they stand; they know where we stand.

And that's why it is my pleasure—I love being able to stand up on issues like this, and I can go to the doorstep any day of the week and I can say, do you believe in investment? Do you believe in building? Do you believe in a Manitoba Hydro that's affordable for all Manitobans or do you believe in cancel, cuts, stop, go backwards? That's the vision—that's the vision of members opposite.

So for them to say, to come up with this, you know, it needs—there needs to be more process. Well, we are in that process, Mr. Speaker. We are consulting with First Nations. We are going through all of those kinds of discussions and dialogues with those affected. But we're not going to wholesale, say, no, we're cutting, we're stopping; that's not going to happen. We are not going to do that because we believe that Manitoba Hydro is Manitoba's oil, it is our future and we—it's been very clear.

And I think it was mentioned previously by previous speakers, that we've run now, I think, three elections on this issue: do you want to cancel hydro or do you want to build hydro? Well, news flash to the opposition here, Manitobans want to build hydro. It's not that complicated, but they can't get that through their heads because it's an ideological—this

stagnation. They are done; they are not going to discuss it anymore. They understand they want to stop it.

And the Leader of the Opposition, I mean, we really appreciate when he puts his viewpoints, whether it be on hydro, on two-tier health care—we love it when he's able to just clarify for all of us because we're just—you know, we think we understand it, but he—it's nice when he puts it on the record and lets other folks know as well.

Speaking of putting it on the record, Mr. Speaker, I heard one of the members opposite—it didn't make it on the record, but one of the members opposites say, well—when we were discussing whether coal or nuclear may be the options that are considered by Saskatchewan, maybe those are the right options, maybe that's the way to go forward for Manitoba Hydro. And the members opposite said, yes, sure, why not, let's consider it. And they all applauded.

Well, it's just—it's couldn't be more stark, the difference, because we—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) will have two minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, July 25, 2013

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