

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Arthur-Virten	
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 26, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 23—The Cooperative Housing Strategy Act

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Housing and Community Development): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 23, The Cooperative Housing Strategy Act; Loi sur la stratégie en matière d'habitation coopérative, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Bjornson: I'm pleased to introduce this bill today. It will require the minister to develop a co-operative housing strategy and review it at least every five years. And the minister will be also required to consult when developing and reviewing the strategy and must report annually on the progress made and the activities undertaken in relation to the implementation of that strategy.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Any further introduction of bills?

Bill 207—The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the member from Lac du Bonnet, that Bill 207, The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act; Loi sur le règlement des différends internationaux relatifs aux investissements, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: This bill will allow Manitoba to recognize and ratify this act so that Canada can move on forward in ratifying the act to become a part of it. It has been in use by citizens of Canada for international disputes, and I highly recommend that Manitoba move forward and be part of the world.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition's submitted on behalf of D. Fewiuk, C. Fulsher, G. Fotty and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: In keeping with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to have been received by the House.

Further petitions?

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase—
Cross-Border Shopping**

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito,

Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent and the Minnesota retail sales tax rate is 6 per cent.

(3) The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially for those businesses located close to Manitoba provincial borders.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

And this petition is signed by B. Neufeld, C. Hébert-Lafantaisie and M. Waddle and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Government Services Offices Closures— Public Consultations

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And this is the background for this petition:

Since April 1, 2012, the provincial government has closed at least 20 government services offices in communities throughout Manitoba.

The closures of these offices create job losses and reduce economic activity within the community and decrease the accessibility and quality of services for local citizens.

The provincial government did not consult with communities impacted by these office closures before deciding to close, merge or consolidate the offices.

These office closures unnecessarily increase the financial cost and time commitment required by citizens to access government services that were previously offered in their communities.

Manitobans have a right to access provincial programs and services in a timely manner within a reasonable distance from their community regardless of their location.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government restore the services provided to the affected communities until the provincial government conducts public consultations and provides an alternative solution that maintains or increases the level of service provided in the local area.

This petition is signed by C. Waddell, E. Mandziuk, K. Jackman-Atkinson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

(2) In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

(3) The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent needs-for-and-alternatives-to review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

This petition is signed by K. DeBaets, W. Jefferies, D. Denning and many other fine Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attentions of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from the Canadian Diabetes Association Andrea Kwasnicki, regional director, and Randi Gill, communications manager, who are the guests of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen).

* (13:40)

And also seated in the public gallery, we have with us this afternoon from Riverton Collegiate 15 grade 9 and 10 students under the direction of Don Bodnarus. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Housing and Community Development (Mr. Bjornson).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Federal By-Election Results Government

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, very interesting federal by-elections, Mr. Speaker. They sent messages, I think, to each federal party, but they also sent a compelling message to Manitoba's provincial NDP as well, if they're listening.

Inexplicably, the federal NDP leader came to Manitoba and campaigned by saying that he would do for Canada what the provincial NDP have done to Manitobans, trying to elevate his campaign by getting in the elevator and pushing the down button, Mr. Speaker. He hit the button for the basement by mistake.

Manitobans are not impressed—not impressed—with this big-spend, big-tax government, Mr. Speaker, not at all, and they especially detest the NDP's PST hike. And last night they had the opportunity, and yesterday throughout the day and at the advanced polls, to send a message, and they did.

Will the Premier demonstrate that he received the transmission loud and clear?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see the leader of the PC caucus is back in the House today. I want to give him the opportunity

to dissociate himself from the comments made by the recently elected Member of Parliament for Provencher, who said, when a young student in the Steinbach area was publicly bullied for his orientation, who said that that young student manufactured that public bullying incident. He blamed the victim instead of defending this young person from being bullied in public.

Will the Leader of the Opposition dissociate himself from those newly minted comments by the new member for Parliament from Provencher?

Impact of Tax Increases

Mr. Pallister: I would strongly suggest to the Premier that he get his own house in order when it comes to intemperate comments. He had a comment from a Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson) that was clearly a racist comment, referencing the ignorance of do-good white people. He had several homophobic slurs emanate from his front bench. He did nothing about it. And now he has the audacity to try to make me accountable for the comments of a nominated candidate from another political party. I think not. I need no lessons from the Premier on this.

The NDP vote in Québec yesterday was the same. In Ontario, the NDP vote was up. But the NDP vote in Provencher was down 54 per cent. The NDP vote in Brandon was down by 71 per cent. There's a message here. The candidates got the message. The candidates were listening, and at the doors they were told, no PST hike.

Now, nobody rejected the federal NDP leader here—not yesterday. But the NDP vote tanked last night in this province, and only in this province, for one reason: the irresponsible tax hikes of one leader.

Will that man rise and be accountable today for his irresponsible and ill-advised tax hikes against the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to answer that question.

He needs to know that five of his members of his caucus endorsed the candidate recently elected at the federal level in the Provencher riding. The MLAs from Emerson, La Verendrye, Lac du Bonnet, St. Paul and the member from Steinbach all endorsed that candidate. If he wants to avoid taking responsibility, let him do that today, but his caucus endorsed the candidate who blamed the victim when he was publicly bullied.

When it comes to infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans—and we have listened to them—they've said, we want it invested on core infrastructure, roads, sewer and water and flood protection. And if the member was paying attention, he would have seen today we announced a \$200-million upgrade of the southwest Perimeter in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to allow goods and services to flow to our major export market in the United States while taking pressure off neighbourhoods in southwest Winnipeg. Less trucks, better quality of life, more good jobs for Manitobans.

**Federal Election (2015)
Provincial NDP Platform**

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): And the ribbon-cutting, vote-buying tour continues at pace, Mr. Speaker.

This government and this Premier have no respect for Manitoba voters. This Premier misled Manitobans in the last provincial election in order to get their vote. Then he hiked their taxes and he broke his promise to them. And now he's trying to hike their PST and he's trying to take away their right to vote on it as well.

But yesterday Manitobans had the right to vote, and they did, and the Premier should listen to them. Half of the NDP support in Provencher went somewhere else. Two thirds of the NDP support in Brandon went somewhere else, and don't blame Thomas Mulcair for it.

In the next federal election, the question is: Will Thomas Mulcair and the federal NDP again try to run on the Premier's record, or will they run away from it?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We have a Leader of the Opposition that completely dissociates himself from his federal comment—from the comments of his federal counterparts when they actually blame the victim for public bullying incidents, Mr. Speaker.

We on this side of the House, we have listened carefully to Manitobans, and they have told us, if you're going to make additional investments, do it in things that will actually make a real difference to our core infrastructure, and that's what we've done. We've made sure that we're going to have good jobs for core infrastructure, for roads, sewer and water and flood protection in the province of Manitoba, and those jobs will provide good opportunities for young people as we go forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, the man—the Leader of the Opposition talks about respect for the democratic process. He was a senior Cabinet minister at the table when the largest vote-rigging scandal in the history of Manitoba occurred by the PC caucus in the province of Manitoba and he has never retracted comments for that, never apologized for that. If there's a real respect for democracy, you start it in your own backyard.

**Bill 20
Referendum Request**

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, we need no history lessons or any comments from this Premier when it comes to his lack of integrity in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP vote in Manitoba collapsed very badly last night because people are angry about the PST hike in this province that was forced on them, and especially without a referendum, and that broken law that this government went forward with—they broke the law and hiked the PST illegally. So the people last night sent a strong message to this government.

I'd like to ask the Premier today: Did he listen? Will he do what the people are asking now and kill Bill 20 or at least call a referendum?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): You know, Mr. Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition has some nerve talking about by-elections. He holds the Guinness Book of World Records for quitting twice, both provincial and federal politics. So he's the expert, I know, at by-elections.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're more than happy to talk in this House about infrastructure, and I was very pleased today to join with the Premier and a number of caucus colleagues when we announced a brand new investment on the southwest Perimeter that's going to rebuild the road from Pembina to Highway 1, to put in an intersection at the intersection with McGillivray.

That's the result of the 1 cent on the dollar. Members opposite can talk all they want, but they voted against that investment. They don't care about southwest Winnipeg.

Taxpayer Protection Future Tax Increases

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, we don't need any lessons from a government that went door to door in the last election and lied to people at every door in Manitoba and said they weren't going to raise the PST.

Mr. Speaker, if Bill 20 passes, Manitobans will no longer have any taxpayer protection against this NDP government. It will be the final nail in the coffin for taxpayer protection in Manitoba.

So I'd like to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to give Manitobans a hint at what new taxes they can expect in the next two years.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, speaking of new, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give the members opposite more than a hint. We are going to outline all the new initiatives they're going to see on our highways.

Well, let's start with Highway 75, and I know—and I want to invite the Leader of the Opposition, by the way, to check his Twitter account. I want to announce, by the way, there's two more MLAs that are following my Twitter account. He'll see a—an—a picture from the announcement today. I know it's not 20 years old and it's not for a \$1-million project on 75; that was their idea of a big project in those days, Mr. Speaker. But I want to say to the member for Charleswood they're going to see new projects on Highway 75.

They're going to see new projects on the Perimeter, and, actually, stay tuned, because there's a whole bunch of them. More announcements of new projects coming up, but, of course, the members opposite voted against that.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask—like to ask the government to focus on these questions. The Premier refused to answer any of them yesterday, so we're giving him a second chance today.

* (13:50)

Earlier this year, when the Premier was asked if he was going to raise the PST again, he did not say no. He left the door wide open. We now know that the NDP requested a briefing note on the PST hike where it appears that they were looking at a PST hike greater than the 8 per cent.

So I'd like to ask this NDP Premier to tell hard-working Manitobans: Once he kills the taxpayer

protection act by passing Bill 20, what can we expect with further taxes from this government?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, the only thing that would be killed is the kind of investment—the historic investments in infrastructure, because members opposite voted against that.

And I want to say to the member for Charleswood and the Leader of the Opposition, who seems to have this fixation on ribbon cuttings, I tell you, we're proud, actually, to cut ribbons to open brand new projects, Mr. Speaker. When he was a Cabinet minister, the only thing that was being cut in those days was health care and education and infrastructure programming.

So, Mr. Speaker, I invite the members opposite to get on board, check out the Twitter account much more and—to come, new announcements. We're investing the 1 cent on the dollar in the future of Manitoba.

Employment Figures Request to Table Statistics

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Four years in a row, he cut the infrastructure budget. Now he's out there pounding the ground for it. Go for it.

The Minister of Jobs and Economy, in her first 30 days on the job, lost 143 jobs each and every day. Statistics Canada showed that the minister lost 4,300 jobs in 30 days. She reported she gained 8,000. That's a difference of over 12,000 time—full-time jobs.

Mr. Speaker, where's the minister getting her numbers? Will she table them in the House today?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): I'm happy to assist the member once again—I think this is the eighth time—to let him know that, certainly, our economy has added 8,300 more private sector jobs than over the same period last year. These numbers are available from Stats Canada, as the member well knows.

Further, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has the third lowest unemployment rate in Canada at 5.3. And the last time the members opposite had their hand on the wheel, the unemployment rate here was 7.6.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, this minister's made a habit of misleading this House, and today she's still unbelievable. Twelve thousand jobs; the difference between the minister's numbers and

Statistics Canada's numbers are 12,000 full-time jobs.

Statistics Canada shows the employment rate at 63.3 per cent, a 0.5 decrease in the last month. The NDP shows the employment rate increasing 0.9 per cent, a difference of 1.4 per cent. Statistics Canada shows full-time employment going down by 4,300 jobs; the NDP's full-time employment's going up by 8,000, a difference of over 12,000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, where's the minister getting her numbers? Will she table them today?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just listened to the member provide some information on the record, and I'm convinced he stayed up a little too late last night celebrating, I might suggest.

Mr. Speaker, Stats Canada clearly reports that Manitoba has the third lowest unemployment rate in the nation. So far this year, our economy has added 8,300 jobs than over the same period last year, and these are private sector jobs. I've been listening to members opposite whinge and spin for the better part of a decade about the private sector, and this is who is creating the jobs, and now they're crying over that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that we need no more doom and gloom from members opposite. Our economy is growing steadily. Our unemployment rate is low. We're optimistic—

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

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a spend government who lied to Manitobans in the last election and a minister who tries to defend the undefendable.

There are numbers that the NDP can't run away from, though: inflation that is three times the national average, a 14 per cent PST increase that was the only one in the nation and an economy that is lagging behind every other province. This minister lost 4,300 full-time jobs in her first 30 days, 143 full-time jobs leaving Manitoba's economy every single day since she became minister.

Mr. Speaker, where's this minister getting her numbers? Clearly not from Statistics Canada. Are they from her 192 communicators or are they right out of thin air?

Ms. Oswald: I think, perhaps, the member opposite might be on thin ice.

Mr. Speaker, RBC senior economist Mr. Hogue reports that Manitoba will be one of Canada's strongest economies in the years ahead, projecting GDP growth of 2.5—[interjection] Absolutely true. A new Bank of Montreal study ranks Winnipeg as one of the top six most attractive places to work in Canada of 19 cities. KPMG Competitive Alternatives ranks Winnipeg first in North American Midwest for the cost of doing business ahead of 25 other Midwestern North American cities.

Mr. Speaker, the doom and gloom of members opposite persists. On this side we're going to continue to work on a steadily growing economy, bringing more jobs for Manitoba families so young—

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

Power Smart Program Reductions Manitoba Hydro Rate Increases

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, with Manitoba Hydro rates up 8 per cent in one year, a historical increase never seen before in Manitoba, Philippe Dunsky testified in a report to the PUB and he said, and I quote: "Ratepayers will be left with the already planned rate increases, but with insufficient assistance to help offset those increases with more efficient consumption."

Question then is: Even energy professionals believe this NDP government cannot be trusted. When will this government do the right thing and show that they can be trusted and reverse the cuts to the Power Smart program?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): In fact, Mr. Speaker, since we've been in office, when we inherited the management of Manitoba Hydro from the privatizers on the other side, we've gone from No. 10 on the energy efficiency scale in Canada to being first.

Mr. Speaker, in 1994 when the members opposite—a Manitoba Telephone System bill, when it was a Crown corporation, is—was half of what it is right now now that it's been privatized. A hydro bill from 1994, now, actually, compared to today, is actually less than in 1994.

We have the lowest rates in the country. One of the reasons we do is because we have clean energy and our Power Smart program has saved the equivalent of two dams and will do more so in the future.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table some more documents for the minister's photo album of shame.

The latest energy savings ratio report, which I just tabled, from across North America shows Manitoba Hydro under this NDP government ranked at 28th. From PUB testimony, Mr. Dunsky says, and I quote: In fact, barring a significant course change, its planned savings will likely place it amongst the laggards in North America within a few short years.

It is clear that this NDP government has made Manitoba Hydro a energy savings laggard with 8 per cent a year rate increases and slashing the Power Smart program. Clearly, this NDP government cannot be trusted.

Mr. Chomiak: The member would know that on a cross-Canada analysis, Manitoba Hydro was No. 1. And one of the reasons they did that is very—when we came into office, we put in a very aggressive plan that is the equivalent of about saving two dams.

And we put in place the pay-as-you-go program, which was geared towards the poorest—not people with seven-car garages but the poorest in the province—that have the opportunity to pay off their cost based on the savings they make. Members opposite voted against that program that provides First Nation reserves with the ability to put in programs, poor parts of Winnipeg to put in programs to save their energy bills, and members opposite voted against it.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has the best suite of power saving programs in Canada, as recognized with the energy efficiency—

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

Mr. Schuler: And when compared to every jurisdiction in North America, Manitoba ranked 28th under this minister.

In fact, Philippe Dunsky goes on to say, and I quote: "Instead, it would appear that Manitoba Hydro is planning to decrease this critical assistance at the same time as rates are set to increase." With Manitoba Hydro ratepayers facing historical rate increases and significant cuts to the Power Smart program, this NDP has hit Manitoba ratepayers with a one-two punch.

*(14:00)

Is this the NDP balanced approach or just further proof this NDP government cannot be trusted?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Free Press indicated that power rates in neighbouring Saskatchewan and Ontario were 60 per cent higher. That's one of the reasons why Manitoba's just signed an agreement with Saskatchewan to sell them \$100 million of hydro, with an agreement to much, much more, because our costs are lower. BC today announced a 15 per cent increase to hydro the next two years and a 25 per cent the next five years after that. Ontario's increased their rates; it's twice the rates here. Saskatchewan rates are way higher than here, 60 per cent higher.

We have the lowest rates because we have the best managed corporations. If they got their hands on it, they would privatize it just like they did to MTS, which they promised not to do. They privatized it, and our rates have doubled.

Emergency Services (Winnipeg) Left-Not-Seen Patients

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, they're ranked 28th. They slashed the Power Smart program and they raised rates on Manitobans. Manitobans are not buying what he is selling.

Mr. Speaker, information obtained through freedom of information requests show that more and more people are leaving Winnipeg emergency rooms without being seen by a doctor. Between April 1st of 2012 and March 31st of this year, 10 per cent of all people who went to the emergency room to seek care left that emergency room before seeing a doctor. These are cuts to front-line services and that are—they are unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health (Ms. Selby) explain why, when it comes to health-care accessibility, the situation keeps getting worse and worse?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Acting Minister of Health): I appreciate the opportunity to answer the question. [*interjection*] Perhaps they don't appreciate the opportunity to hear the answer to the question.

But the member is just wrong. In fact, there are additional investments to care for individuals who are not feeling well. We know that those that are in an emergency situation absolutely must be seen in an emergency room, but those that need care but perhaps not from an emergency room now in Manitoba have the option of seeking care at a

QuickCare clinic. They have the option of seeking care at an access centre. Indeed, they have an option of attending the Crisis Response Centre for mental health issues that the member opposite decided to slag one day after it opened.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, like always, they say we're just wrong, but the numbers don't lie. Even though the number of people going to emergency room has remained consistent over four years, last year 10 per cent of the people who visited ER did not see a physician before leaving. It's called left not seen, and last year over 28,000 people simply got up and walked out of ER, 5,000 more than the year before, 7,000 more than two years ago. These are people who need medical help, and they're waiting and waiting, they receive no care, and then they leave.

Mr. Speaker, why is this minister failing to drive down unacceptably long wait times at emergency rooms that are causing Manitobans to leave without being seen?

Ms. Oswald: When individuals present to an emergency room, they are, indeed, registered, and should they elect to leave without being seen, there is a follow-up call that happens through Health Links. This is a critically important component. Members opposite didn't track anything other than the number of emergency rooms—community emergency rooms in Winnipeg they decided to close overnight during their reign, but I digress.

Individuals now have options to seek care in other environments after hours, which has been one of the primary reasons that individuals go to emergency rooms when they're not in an emergency situation. We now have doctors doing care after hours, QuickCare clinics, access centres, the Crisis Response Centre, Mr. Speaker.

And as a matter of fact, the number last month was 7.88, not what the member cites.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, this is not progress. This is the highest number in 10 years of tracking people who walk out of ER without being seen. And I remind this minister there was no follow-up call for Bonnie Guagliardo, who waited six hours in ER, left without being seen, went home and died there.

This is about accessibility to the health-care system, and this minister gets a fail: ambulance off-load times, fail; wait times for medical treatments, fail; 19 ERs closed or reduced services, epic fail. The minister said—this same minister—said

in May that if there's more work to be done on this, she was prepared to do it. It's obvious there's more work to be done.

The question is: How many more people need to suffer before she gets moving on this?

Ms. Oswald: In addition, Mr. Speaker, to having Health Links follow up with individuals who do choose to leave without seeing a doctor, as I've said, there are alternative environments.

There's also a program run through the WFPS called EPIC where paramedics go directly to the homes of individuals who are frequent users of emergency rooms, perhaps unnecessarily so, and provide stabilization, comfort and care to ensure that we can drive down the number of people that are presenting in an emergency room unnecessarily.

Mr. Speaker, because the Winnipeg region does post wait times, I can tell you the average wait to be seen in a Winnipeg ER at the moment is between zero to 1.5 hours. Going forward with two-tier medicine, like the members opposite want to do, will—

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

Vita and District Health Centre ER Reopening Timeline

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): The Minister of Health (Ms. Selby) recently said, I quote: Rural families deserve access to high quality health care close to home.

On October 17th, 2012, the Vita emergency room was closed on a temporary basis. The community was assured that this would be a temporary closure and the emergency room would reopen in a few weeks. This closure was so temporary that the government put a garbage bag over the hospital signs you see when you enter town so that the residents would know that their emergency room was closed.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Minister of Health cutting front-line services? When will the Vita emergency room reopen, or is this minister's statement just another broken promise?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Acting Minister of Health): Certainly, we do know that the key to keeping emergency rooms in rural Manitoba, indeed, in every environment in Manitoba, is to have a healthy supply of doctors, Mr. Speaker. This is why

there are very aggressive recruitment efforts going on by the regional health authority, and it's why the government has invested in providing more educational opportunities.

We reversed the absolutely short-sighted decision of members opposite to cut spaces in medical schools. We restored the 15 that they cut and, indeed, we added more to a record high of 110 seats. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we've added rural residencies to give students an opportunity to practise in rural environments and, indeed, to put down roots there.

Every jurisdiction in Canada struggles to keep rural ERs open, Mr. Speaker. We're working hard to do that, but there's more—

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

Mr. Smook: After the garbage bag covered the sign for some time, it was replaced with a more permanent cover. The people of Vita were told this was a temporary closure. Now their emergency room has been closed for 13 months. Patients have to travel almost an hour for medical care, which is too far away in an emergency.

Again, this minister, quoted: Rural families deserve access to high quality health care close to home.

Mr. Speaker, why is this minister cutting front-line services, and when will the Vita ER reopen?

Ms. Oswald: The most critical point here, of course, is the recruitment and the education of doctors, which is something we're committed to do. Certainly, the regional health authority is working very hard to ensure that they're recruiting more doctors. They're ensuring that they're employing nurses who can provide nurse-managed care in environments where a doctor is not available. We're ensuring, Mr. Speaker, also, that there are well-equipped ambulances in the fleet in order to respond to emergency situations. We've invested in the STARS helicopter.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not purporting to you that in Manitoba, nor in any jurisdiction in Canada, is it simple to maintain doctors in rural environments. Our commitment is to do just that. Other provinces are choosing to close those hospitals. We're not choosing to do that. We're going to work with the

regional health authorities to endeavour to recruit doctors to reopen those ERs.

Mr. Smook: It's obvious, Mr. Speaker, this minister can't be trusted. The former minister of Health promised the community the ER closure would be temporary, and there's no end in sight. Her replacement is the same as the last minister, lots of talk, no action.

* (14:10)

This government has closed 19 emergency rooms. Patients are forced to drive over an hour for medical care. Fifty-seven weeks ago the minister promised the closure would be temporary. This minister said, quote: Rural families deserve access to high quality health care close to home.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister's next move? Is she personally going to come to Vita and cut down the hospital signs along with her cuts to front-line services?

Ms. Oswald: It's a topsy-turvy day, Mr. Speaker, when Tories are talking about cuts to health care.

I will tell you very clearly what we're going to do. We're going to continue to invest in building health capital in rural Manitoba to create attractive environments where we can recruit doctors. Members opposite's decision in that regard was to freeze all health capital spending, cancel projects, drive doctors out of the province.

Mr. Speaker, what we're going to do is continue to hire nurses. In fact, we've hired three and a half doctors for every one that they fired during their short-sighted decisions of the '90s.

And we're going to invest in our medical school. We're not going to slash and hack away at medical seats and then complain when there isn't a doctor in the community. That would be ridiculous.

Lynn Lake Cancer Rates Health Assessment Request

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, when I was in Lynn Lake in September 2006, it was very apparent that this government needed to get on top of the problem with mine tailings in the community—

An Honourable Member: Mic's on.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the honourable member. Seem to be having some problem with our microphones. I'm just wondering if

we can make sure we only have one microphone turned on. Perhaps the honourable member's microphone from La Verendrye—okay.

The honourable member for River Heights, to start your question over, please.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

When I was in Lynn Lake in September 2006, it was very apparent that there was a very serious problem here with mine tailings in the community. It was also apparent that buildings had been built on top of mine tailings, and this was a major health concern to people there.

Yesterday the CBC reported that there are many, many individuals in Lynn Lake who've developed a variety of cancers. The NDP government has failed for many years to perform critical research into the incidence of cancer in Lynn Lake.

I ask the Premier: When will his government take the incidence of cancer in Lynn Lake seriously and initiate a complete investigation?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): The report raises concerns for sure, and we want to ensure that if there's a higher incidence of cancer in Lynn Lake that that gets reviewed and understood as to what the causes of that are. So we will take this question seriously and have further investigation on the patterns of cancer care—patterns of cancer incidence in that community.

I can tell the member, however, that we have spent \$77 million on tailings remediation in that area, but if there is a higher than normal rate of incidence of cancer in that area, it is an area for concern, and we will further investigate it to see what is the underlying pattern there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, lung cancer, breast cancer, stomach cancer, colorectal cancer, kidney cancer, skin cancers, 19 cancers within three blocks.

This government, in 2003, apparently did some sort of a health assessment. Will the government table that?

But the problem is, I understand, that this health assessment didn't actually look at the health of people. These types of health assessments really are useful—are not useful at all. We must have a proper health assessment of the people who have been living in Lynn Lake.

I ask the Premier: Will he order a proper, real health assessment of the people living in Lynn Lake?

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, the report indicates that there are some serious incidents of cancer in the Lynn Lake area. It is true there had been an assessment done in 2002. I think we have to take the report seriously. I think we have to review the findings. We have to identify if there—we have to identify the—whether there is a pattern of a higher incidence of cancer in that area and ensure that people are treated properly.

And one of the things we have done is we have done tailings remediation in that area of \$77 million. *[interjection]* But if there is some—if it's 15 years old, as the member says, from the Neepawa area, then he should take responsibility for it because he was in government back in those days.

The reality is back in the days when they spent nothing on tailings remediation, nothing was done. We've spent \$77 million, but we don't want a pattern of higher incidence of cancer to occur in any community, so this will be properly reviewed by our health officials.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, 14 years, \$77 million, and we still don't have a proper health assessment of the people in Lynn Lake. You know, this is a community which has been represented for many years by an NDP representative, but, sadly, the job hasn't been done properly.

Of course, Manitobans shouldn't be surprised by this environmental health catastrophe, considering this NDP government's consistent dismal record on Manitoba's environmental and health issues.

From, of course, the world's most endangered lake, Lake Winnipeg, and, as we have heard yesterday, long wait times for knee and hip surgeries, when will this NDP government finally demonstrate some concern for the health of the people of this province and immediately initiate a health monitoring program to assess the health of people in Lynn Lake on an ongoing basis?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we take the report seriously. If there is a higher incidence of cancer occurring in this community, it should be reviewed.

I do point out for the member that in 2004 an advisory committee was put together with local residents from both Lynn Lake and Marcel Colomb community with health officials, and the RHA in the area also participated. But I think it's very serious if there's a higher incidence of cancer occurring in that area and we should thoroughly review the report. We should thoroughly review the findings and

understand what is going on there. In spite of the \$77 million that has been invested, if there is a higher occurrence of cancer occurring, then, clearly, more work needs to be done.

We want these communities to be safe, which is why this is the only government that has ever worked to ensure that tailings remediation work was actually done. It never used to be done before. It never used to be reported. It never used to be identified. It was completely ignored. When the PCs were in office, they did nothing about it. We've spent several hundred million dollars remediating orphaned and abandoned mine sites. We will continue to invest in doing that because it's good for communities, it's good for the environment.

But if a higher incidence of health—cancer has occurred here, we will again review it with our health officials and see what additional work can be done in consultation—

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

Perimeter Highway Upgrade Announcement

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, back in 1995, the last time that they had their hands on the helm, I was a young father and I found myself unemployed as a tradesman, as a journeyman. I was really happy today when we were at—to make an announcement that the heavy-duty equipment company says business has never been better and he's employing very good paying, over-\$30-an-hour jobs to journeymen and apprentices, training apprentices as they go.

We know that on our side of the House we know that government building and expanding our core infrastructure creates jobs and it's good for the economy and it makes Manitoba even a better place to live. But we all know that the southwest of the city has seen expansion and growth, just like other parts of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation please inform the House on the exciting update on the Perimeter that we heard this morning?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, it was a great day for Manitoba when I joined, along with the member for St. Norbert and the Minister of Healthy Living, with the Premier (Mr. Selinger)

to announce a historic upgrade to the Perimeter Highway, the most significant investment in the Perimeter Highway since it was built in the 1950s. And that follows our historic investment in Highway 75, and it's going to bring both the Perimeter and Highway 75 up to interstate standards.

But, Mr. Speaker, if anyone doubts that we're getting national attention for what we're doing for infrastructure in this province, last Friday should put it to rest. We were joined by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, every single one of the Conservative MPs for Manitoba to celebrate the opening of CentrePort Canada Way.

The real question, Mr. Speaker, is: When are the members of the Conservative caucus opposite going to get on board with our historic investment in Manitoba infrastructure?

Rural ER Services Rotating Closures

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, it's the party that kiboshed the Heritage portfolio.

Mr. Speaker, this past summer emergency rooms in the great communities of Pinawa, Powerview-Pine Falls and Beausejour started suffering through rotating closures, leaving residents unsure of where to go in an emergency.

The minister—the new minister recently said, and I quote: Rural families deserve access to high quality health care close to home. Which is a contradiction, because people in this area are not getting health care close to their home.

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker, why is this government and this minister cutting front-line services, and when will emergency rooms that are close to home be opened for good?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Acting Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be my pleasure to respond to the member for Lac du Bonnet and remind him, of course, that there's going to be a brand new PCH in his community, personal-care home that will be assisting families in the region to provide the best possible care for their loved ones, for those individuals that need to have that kind of specialized care.

I also want to assure the member opposite that we're going to continue to support home care for

those individuals that are not yet ready for a PCH. We aren't going to attempt to privatize and insert home care user fees like his leader did.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: It's time for members' statements.

Diabetes Awareness Month

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, November is Diabetes Awareness Month. According to the Canadian Diabetes Association, diabetes is on the rise in Manitoba. The number of people living with diabetes in Manitoba is expected to rise from 103,000 people in 2012, to 190,000 by 2032. The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy has indicated that a proportion of the population living with the disease has substantially increased by an entire 1 per cent in the last five years. This disease is especially prevalent in Manitoba's northern region, where in some areas up to 50 per cent of the population is living with diabetes.

The seriousness of diabetes in our province has been long understood by the Progressive Conservatives. In fact, in 1996, then-PC Health Minister Jim McCrae declared diabetes to be an issue that had reached epidemic proportions, specifically for Aboriginal and elderly populations. As well, diabetes instances are higher among lower income groups. All the evidence, Mr. Speaker, points to a greater need for vigilance towards this disease and solutions to curtail its rampant growth.

Diabetes poses difficulties to those it afflicts, whether it is lifestyle changes, discomfort and debilitation, leading to a whole host of damaging and life-threatening effects.

Mr. Speaker, we want to thank the Canadian Diabetes Association for the excellent work that they do in leading the fight against diabetes, and, in particular, we wish them well in the new initiative this year that invites people across Canada to share stories about who they are fighting for at fightingdiabetes.ca.

Our party recognizes the seriousness of diabetes in our province. People must get to know the warning signs of diabetes, make healthy lifestyle choices, and government must be there to provide best quality of care to citizens with diabetes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Mining and Minerals Convention

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mining is an integral part of northern Manitoba's economy. This industry continues to create a demand for thousands of skilled workers in the North of our province and has been a major shaping force in our history. That's why I was thrilled to attend this year's Manitoba Mining and Minerals Convention last week.

During this three-day event it was hard not to feel a sense of optimism. Mining experts, geoscientists, educators, community and Aboriginal leaders, and resource and industry leaders lent valuable insight into the challenges and opportunity facing our mining industry. The convention also included activities that engage the public, such as digging for fossils and panning for gold.

Our province benefits from being extensive, world-class mineral resource deposits worth more than \$3 billion annually. Between 2007 and 2012, the mineral sector was the fastest growing sector of Manitoba's economy. In 2012, this sector provided jobs for more than 5,700 people and another 18,000 employed in spinoff businesses. Almost every family in northern Manitoba has a parent, an uncle or a grandchild involved in some aspect of the mining industry. Investing in the—a vital sector benefits our whole community.

Conventions like these are not only essential to stimulating industry growth and development, but they also get people involved or interested in mining a chance to witness its potential first-hand.

Our mining sector is strengthened day by day. We are creating more opportunities for young people with state-of-the-art Northern Manitoba Mining Academy in Flin Flon, which helps young people find good jobs close to home.

Initiatives like Manitoba's new Mining Advisory Council and two newly developing mines are clear examples of how the mining industry is involved in the 21st century. Projects like the Northern Mining Academy are pivotal to providing education and work opportunities to so many members of our community.

The Manitoba Mining and Minerals Convention is an event where industry representatives, First Nations communities come together to create opportunities that benefit all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Herbert and Helen Kletke

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): It gives me great pride to stand and recognize the Teulon residents, Herb and Helen Kletke. They have dedicated their lives to local agriculture, and now they're being recognized for their efforts. On July the 10th, 2013, the farming couple was inducted into the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame.

They married in 1956 and began farming the three-quarter section of land in 1959. The next year they became members of the Canadian Seed Growers Association. The Kletkes tried out new crops on their farm, such as forage seed and hemp in addition to their seed crop production. They have expanded their base to 17 quarters since they began their farm. In 2012 they received the CSGA Robertson Associate Award for their long-term commitment to the excellent of seed growers.

With the growing of their seed business, the Kletkes focused on new technology, and diversification became evident in an industry-leading technique to treat and coat canola seed and forage seed. They were always prepared to change, learn, innovate and share their talents.

The Kletkes continued to interest in both new varieties and new crops that has made Kletke Seed the nucleus of a lot of new opportunities for local producers in the area. New varieties were introduced to the region from the initial seed select production that took place on their farm.

Herb and Helen have led by example and generously shared farming ideas. Their influence and mentoring has reached farms far beyond Teulon area.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Herb and Helen Kletke on their achievements. I commend them on their ability to face adversity and remain dedicated to the grain industry. The Kletkes are a great example of hard-working agriculture producers to keep the economy strong.

Unfortunately, Mr. Kletke has recently passed on. I would like to take this time to pass on my sincere condolences to the family on behalf of all members of this House.

Support for Ukrainian Democracy Rally

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Manitoba's Ukrainian community joined movements around the world to protest the decision of the government of Ukraine to pull back from talks with the European

Union. Hundreds of thousands of people have been protesting in the streets of Ukraine to express their hopes and aspirations for a greater democracy and protection of human rights.

Last night, I stood with Manitoba's Ukrainian community in solidarity with our Ukrainian brothers and sisters to affirm our commitment to a strong, democratic and independent Ukraine in the European family of nations. At this event, more than 100 people with ties to Ukraine gathered at the Taras Shevchenko monument at the Manitoba Legislative grounds. In front of the symbol of Ukrainian freedom, supporters waved flags and stood in solidarity with friends and family in Ukraine in hopes that the country's government will resume integration talks with the European Union.

Thank you to Ukrainian Canadian Congress Manitoba Council and the many people who helped organize last night's event.

Communities around the world held events on behalf of the Ukrainian community to support the people of Ukraine. We're very proud of the Ukrainian community as it's reflected in our government, our Cabinet, our workers and our staff who are proud of the Ukrainian heritage. We know that our province has a long history as a home and a refuge for people seeking freedom and human rights. Like many of you, my own family made their home in Manitoba after fleeing from Ukraine, in fact, my father in 1938.

Mr. Speaker, here in Manitoba we are fortunate to have the right to freely assemble to voice our concerns as citizens, we value our system and we desire these same freedoms for communities around the world.

Slava Ukraini.

Manitoba Football Hall of Fame-Marshall Quelch

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a resident of my constituency who was recently inducted into the 2013 Manitoba football hall of fame.

Marshall Quelch, who lives near Riding Mountain National Park, was raised in Transcona and played seven years for the St. James Rams intermediate senior team in the '60s. Marshall played as an offensive guard as well as a defensive end and linebacker. He was team captain of the Rams from '62 to '66, and he was with the club for three Manitoba senior football championships: '63, '64 and

'66. In '63 he helped the Rams win the Canadian senior football championship. It was after this win that he was one of 12 Rams named to the league all-star team, and he was named both offensive and defensive squads.

Marshall attended three Winnipeg Blue Bomber training camps, played a few games with the—when the team faced injuries. In '64 he was offered a contract with the Edmonton Eskimos, but, unfortunately, the Bombers owned his rights and would not give him up to Alberta.

* (14:30)

It was after his playing days came to an end that Marshall decided to give it back. His talents have been used by many football clubs. He was the offensive and defensive line coach for the Churchill Bulldogs, assistant coach for the Manitoba Bisons, part of the coaching staff for a short time with the St. James Rods, and he then joined the coaching staff of the St. Vital Mustangs from '75 to '77. Closer to home, he now coaches the Neepawa Area Collegiate Tigers football team.

Marshall participated in a number of different sporting activities over the years. He was a boxer in his younger years. He was a weightlifter, and he held Manitoba records from '58 to '68. He was also a Canadian champion in '59. He held a black belt in judo and was a midwestern Canadian champion in '67-68 and northwestern United States Open champion in '69.

Mr. Speaker, I hope all honourable members will join me in congratulating Marshall for his induction into the Manitoba Football Hall of Fame and his dedication to numerous years of coaching and mentoring our young citizens that will become tomorrow's leaders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances at this time, on House business, the honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen). The title of the resolution is Support for Jobs and Skills Training.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one brought forward by the honourable member for Flin Flon, and the title of the resolution, Support for Jobs and Skills Training.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): It's our intention to proceed with the government resolution respecting the Senate of Canada.

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

Senate of Canada

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call the government resolution, sponsored by the honourable member—honourable Minister of Justice, and the title of the resolution is the Senate of Canada.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister for Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum),

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba abolished its Upper House in 1876; and

WHEREAS the preferred position of Manitoba is the Senate of Canada be abolished; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's all-party Special Committee on Senate Reform held public hearings throughout the province during which it heard overwhelming support from Manitobans for reforming or outright abolishing the Senate; and

WHEREAS some senators have too often served partisan objectives rather than the public interest; and

WHEREAS issues which have arisen in the past year have shaken any confidence Manitobans may have had towards the Senate and shown it to be fundamentally flawed.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the federal government to immediately begin negotiations with the provinces with the aim of abolishing Canada's Senate.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education and Advanced Learning,

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba abolished its Upper House in 1876—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Lakeside?

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Yes, I listened very carefully as the member read out the resolution, and the last part of the resolution, I suggest maybe it be tabled as read. After government, he said, moved to, and there's no move in it. Just for the record, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: That would be the normal course of practice for the Speaker, obviously on advice from the Clerk's table, where there may be discrepancies. As I've always done in this House, I've asked members to consider the resolution that would've been printed in today's order paper, and that is a question that I will pose to the House.

The—and is it the agreement of the House to consider the resolution as printed in today's order paper? [*Agreed*]

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba abolished its Upper House in 1876; and

WHEREAS the preferred position of Manitoba is that the Senate of Canada be abolished; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's all-party Special Committee on Senate Reform held public hearings throughout the province during which it heard overwhelming support from Manitobans for reforming or outright abolishing the Senate; and

WHEREAS some Senators have too often served partisan objectives rather than the public interest; and

WHEREAS issues which have arisen in the past year have shaken any confidence Manitobans may have had towards the Senate and shown it to be fundamentally flawed.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Federal Government to immediately begin negotiations with the provinces with the aim of abolishing Canada's Senate.

Mr. Swan: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I think that members of this Legislature and Manitoba believe that it is, indeed, time to roll up the red carpet. This afternoon is an opportunity for the Manitoba legislators to speak strongly and clearly in support of

the federal government moving ahead to consult with provinces for the abolition of the Canadian Senate.

The Canadian Senate is an outmoded, archaic, expensive and, increasingly, scandal-plagued institution. Manitoba will be happy to play its usual role as a leader at working with the federal government and the other provinces to get rid of the Red Chamber.

And, Mr. Speaker, this follows the unanimous statement of this Legislature back in 2006, which confirmed that the preferred position of Manitoba is that the Senate of Canada be abolished. Now, it would be easy to spend a lot of time reciting the scandals, the waste and the inappropriate activities of various senators, and while scandals aren't new to the Senate, I would suggest everyone would agree the pace is certainly increasing.

Of course, every day that goes by contains new revelations about the Senate. There's, of course, the expenses of a senator who purports to live in Prince Edward Island but maybe doesn't, another senator who purports to live in Saskatchewan but maybe doesn't, concerns about the expenses of a Québec senator, concerns about another Ontario senator. We have another senator who recently has left his caucus because of a sexual harassment scandal. We have a Québec senator who left in 2011, the same time as he was convicted of fraud.

But, of course, these aren't necessarily new. We know that it wasn't so long ago that there was an Ontario senator who'd been appointed to the Senate, had sat for some 21 years, who rarely showed up. Usually he would spend a few days at the start of the session in the Senate and then he would head to Mexico. So it was this so-called reform party of the day who actually hired a mariachi band to hang out in the lobby of the Senate and gave out burritos. Well, that senator was the first senator ever stripped of his—of office staff, of salary and his expense account, and that senator then resigned in order that he could start receiving his pension.

You know, there's another Ontario senator who decided to read his book into the record. He'd written a book; he read it into the record because he knew that the parliamentary staff responsible for Hansard would then have to translate it into French.

We know there was an Alberta senator who very tragically suffered from Alzheimer's and dementia. She was declared legally incompetent in February of

2012, yet she kept showing up to vote in the Senate until June 2012.

We know there's a Manitoba senator who thinks it's okay to work on election campaigns when he's supposed to be doing his work in the Senate. And, Mr. Speaker, if it—perhaps if it wasn't for the antics of the mayor of Toronto, the Senate jokes would be even more familiar than they are now. But, you know, it's not a joke. It's not funny. It's not funny that we continue with this archaic antidemocratic institution which I would submit is far, far beyond repair.

And let me say at the outset that there are many individual senators who I'm certain are fine people. I actually have had the chance to meet some of the senators from Manitoba. I'm actually quite friendly with a former senator in Manitoba. There may be other ways they can serve their country rather than sitting in an outmoded, antidemocratic institution. And at that, the people representing the Senate in Manitoba do not represent Manitobans.

And I look at a story that was written actually back in 1998 by Paul Samyn, then a national reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press, and the first few paragraphs really sum up what this institution is all about. And here's what Paul Samyn had to say: If you are thinking of becoming a senator, you might want to consider moving to Wellington Crescent. And if you can't afford a home on Winnipeg's most exclusive street, try to at least get a place nearby.

It doesn't matter if you're a Tory or a Liberal. When it comes to choosing Manitobans for the upper chamber, it seems prime ministers don't like to look much farther than a few blocks along a leafy crescent that winds along the Assiniboine River.

And, at that time, six of the last eight appointments to the Senate from Manitoba had lived in a very, very small geographic area, which, perhaps not surprisingly, is where the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) makes his home and where the Leader of the Opposition makes his home.

But, beyond that speculation, things really haven't changed. I know there's been the odd appointment, perhaps, from slightly outside of that area, but by and large most of the province has been shut out of having any opportunity even to serve in the Senate, for what it's worth.

I live north of the Assiniboine River. Mr. Speaker, I don't know the last time there's been a

senator that's been appointed with an address of north of the Assiniboine River.

And, if you want to talk north, I don't know there's ever been a senator that's been appointed that purports to represent a community north of Gimli. Even in southwestern Manitoba, the city of Brandon doesn't have a senator. There are huge areas of the province that have simply been neglected by successive prime ministers in choosing senators. And you know what? It's time that we did away with a pointless institution.

*(14:40)

Now, of course, I've tried not to be partisan. I haven't even mentioned the senators or which party they came from, but I think it's fair to say that there has never been any question where New Democrats stand on this issue. And, in fact, we can go back to the very founding of the forerunner of the NDP, the CCF and the Regina Manifesto, and section 9 of the Regina Manifesto called for the abolition of the Canadian Senate. And I'm proud to be a New Democrat and I'm proud to be part of a party that has supported this for years and years and years.

And I look at quotes of the legendary J.S. Woodsworth who represented Winnipeg North Centre in the House of Commons. Well, what did he say about the Senate? Well, he said it was holding back the progress of Canada and he described it as one of the most reactionary assemblies in the civilized world and, you know, J.S. Woodsworth had it right.

I'm proud to represent this Legislature in the same neighbourhoods that were represented by Stanley Knowles in the House of Commons, the long-time member for Winnipeg North Centre, and what did Stanley Knowles say? He said, well, we don't need a second chamber and certainly not a chamber where the members are appointed and not elected; this is contrary to the principle of democracy. And Stanley went on. There had been some minor reform, some minor tinkering, and what did Stanley say? He said these reforms are meaningless. All that it means is you put one lot on a pension for life and then get somebody else in there, and, you know, as we watch senators coming and going, I think Stanley had it right as well.

And, as is so often the case, more and more Canadians every day, every week are coming around to the New Democrats' point of view, and I would suggest a majority of Manitobans, a majority of

Canadians believe it's time to do away with the Senate, and that's why we have a chance this afternoon to make it very clear where this Legislature stands.

And, of course, some people may not have a negative view of the Senate; they may just not know what the Senate does. Well, there's a couple of examples just recently that tell you some of the ways the Senate actually obstructs the will of the people of Canada, and there's an example from just a couple of years ago.

The House of Commons passed a bill which, I believe, was actually supported by all four parties in the House of Commons. It was a bill on climate change to make sure that Canada met its commitments and that steps would be taken to deal with pollution and with climate change. That passed the House of Commons and it went to the Senate, and under orders of the Prime Minister's office, the Conservative majority in the Senate refused to pass that bill. The matter is now back to the House of Commons, but, of course, the government of the day, which now has a majority, has never chosen to reintroduce that legislation.

And I'll give another example which involves one of my favourites colleagues. There was a Senate committee that considered certain amendments proposed to the Criminal Code which, again, came out of the House of Commons after a lot of debate and a lot of negotiations, with the support of at least three I think four of the political parties, and a Senate committee decided they were going to propose some fairly radical changes to what that bill would do. I don't want to enter into a bigger debate into the question of legalizing marijuana, but like most Canadians I had some doubts when the Senate committee proposed that maybe growing 199 marijuana plants was not evidence of criminal activity.

And I know my predecessor, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), certainly had concerns. He went and presented in front of the Senate, as did the Attorney General of Alberta, now the premier Alison Redmond—[interjection]—and the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) knows his history. It was now-premier Redmond and the former attorney general who presented before the Senate committee, and after that committee was done the Senate committee wanted to hold our Attorney General and Alberta's Attorney General in contempt. Well, the only thing that was in contempt was the Senate of

Canada for again trying to thwart the view of Canadians as expressed in the House of Commons.

And, you know, other people will say, well, why don't we just improve the Senate? Well, Justin Trudeau says, we'll just improve the Senate because then I'll appoint Liberals and then it will be all better. Well, I don't think that's the way to go.

And there's actually been 28 separate and distinct proposals to reform the Senate since only the early 1970s, and every single one of those proposals has failed. We know in the Meech Lake Accord there were going to be proposed reforms to require the federal government to choose senators from lists of persons nominated by provincial governments. We know the Meech Lake Accord failed for a number of very, very good reasons. We know the Charlottetown Accord would've proposed an equal number of senators from each province elected by members of the Legislature or a majority of voters and, again, we know the Charlottetown Accord didn't go forward. We don't think that sticking Senate reform in with a host of other constitutional issues is going to be the way to go; we think the way to go is to simply have the federal government start the process of negotiating with provinces and getting rid of the Senate.

The Supreme Court of Canada is going to rule on what the appropriate formula is. It may be unanimous that every province has to be in support or seven provinces representing at least 50 per cent of the population. But, whatever the case is, the federal government can now begin the process of consulting and work. Some will say, well, this could never happen.

Well, I think there are some good arguments. For example, what could the federal government do with the 92 and a half million dollars that the Senate costs Canadians every year? Well, I'm willing to bet that there's a lot of very, very good ideas that people—well, I've just got a couple. I think one place they could put the money is to start to speed up the pace of bringing clean water and appropriate sewage to First Nations communities, an area entirely within federal jurisdiction.

We know the pace under successive governments in Ottawa has been too slow, and I'm not sure if the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) disagrees with that. Perhaps he's proud of the federal government, and I don't just say one particular flavour; maybe he's proud of the way that Ottawa has treated First Nations people. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I

don't, and I know no single member on this side of the House agrees either.

Perhaps we could use the money to narrow the gap between First Nations' students and First Nations' schools and other students in provincial systems. I think that would be great as we pursue jobs and the economy. I think we could certainly find ways to use the money.

I'd be quite happy to have the federal government use the money perhaps to restore some of the cuts to the labour market agreement and continue to allow provinces to use their own expertise and their own ways of improving people's skills. Or perhaps maybe we could have the federal government increase support for criminal legal aid for the first time in seven years—a system that used to be shared equally between the federal government and the provinces. The federal government now pays only 16 per cent of the cost of criminal legal aid in the province of Manitoba. So, you know, I think there's a lot of different areas where that money could be well spent.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope I've set out the case well enough. I'd like to conclude with a few comments that were referred to in a great speech that Craig Scott, an Ontario MP, made in the House of Commons a couple of months ago, and he cited two references. The first is from a book called *The Unreformed Senate of Canada*, page 45. It was a book written in 1867 by somebody named David Reesor, and here's what the author has to say: We know what the tendency is in England and what it was in this country when the government had the appointment of the Legislative Council; the effect will be to find a place in this House for men distinguished for the aid they have given at elections to certain men or parties, and not as a reward of true merit or legislative ability. This was written in 1867. This man was a prophet at what was going to happen in Canada's Senate.

And nothing really has changed over the past 146 years, and neither have the words of our first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. And what did Sir John have to say about the Senate? He said, there should be a large property qualification for the upper house, which was then the representative of property. Well, that was John A's—Sir John A. Macdonald's view of the Senate. If there was to have been a Senate in any time in Canada's history, I'd suggest it should have been a Senate that represented people rather than property and rather than capital.

In 146 years, I think it's been clear that substantial reform to the Senate of Canada is never going to happen. And that's why I'm hoping every member will support this motion to have the federal government consult whether it will be unanimous consent to the provinces or a 7/50 formula. We think that getting rid of the Senate of Canada will save 92 and a half million dollars a year; it will further allow the will of the people to be expressed; it will take away what has unfortunately become a repository of patronage and waste and greed and scandal.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit, it is time to roll up the red carpet.

* (14:50)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, a pleasure to say a few words today on this motion.

I wasn't sure, when the minister reminded me of the fact that the Senate was going to hi—or hold the minister of Energy, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), in contempt, whether that was an argument in favour of the Senate or opposed to the Senate, Mr. Speaker, but I remember that time in history, and, certainly, I came to his defence because I thought it was ridiculous in terms of what they were suggesting. There might be other things I think you should be held in contempt for, but certainly not for the issue that was before the Senate at the moment.

I think it's difficult to listen to the minister when he talks about issues of democracy and ensuring that there's proper representation and see that he has any credibility, Mr. Speaker, because when you look at his own actions within his own party, it's difficult to come to this with clean hands—and that's a legal term, I know, and he'll recognize it. But it's difficult for the government to come to this with a pure heart when they themselves haven't been acting in a democratic way.

We've talked this morning about trying to get a by-election in a riding that's been—not had representation for almost a year, Mr. Speaker. And this party, which now professes to care so much about democracy and democratic reform, not only wouldn't allow that particular bill to come to a vote but spoke opposed to it, doesn't want to have representation within this Chamber for the good people of Morris.

So it's hard to believe, in fact, that they care as much as they say about democracy. And so it's one

thing to point the finger out east and point towards Ottawa when they themselves, within their own powers, won't allow a democratic function to come forward. So they don't have much credibility when it comes to this particular issue. I'd say they have precious little credibility when it comes to the issue of democracy.

They also talked about the issue of waste, Mr. Speaker, and, certainly, I can look at some of the things that have happened in the Senate and agree that they are inappropriate and that they're wrong, and we're glad to see that the Prime Minister has taken action on those, of course, blocked by the NDP, of course.

You know, it's sort of ironic that the federal Conservative government, they found an issue that was wrong, they tried to take action, and then who didn't want the money paid back and who didn't want them expelled from the Senate? It was the NDP. The NDP, they fought day after day after day to try to find—to try to keep those senators who had done wrong, who had taken money inappropriately from the public, they tried to keep them in the Senate. I don't understand where they're coming from. One day they're defending the waste; the next day they're talking against it. They can't simply—don't get their stories straight and they don't have any credibility. Now, I know, of course, not only were they defending the senators in Ottawa and trying to keep them in the Senate, they desperately wanted them to keep their position in the Senate, which they now say they want to abolish, but, regardless, they desperately tried to keep them in their position in the Senate.

They won't even take care of their own waste within their own government, Mr. Speaker. We see countless examples—countless examples of waste within their own government, their own waste within the government here. We look at the bipole line. Over and over, we've heard about how many billions of dollars more it's going to cost to have the bipole line on the west side as opposed to the east side. Well, they don't 'tare'—care of that waste, and yet they're looking at waste everywhere else. I'd say to the government they'd have a lot more credibility on this issue if (a) they wouldn't have spent so much time defending the senators who did wrong and trying to keep them on the public payroll when they shouldn't have been on the public payroll, and they'd have a lot more credibility if they'd look at the waste within their own caucus, within their own Cabinet. But, of course, they don't do that, so they come to

this position in a bit of a hypocritical position, I would say, and so that is certainly unfortunate.

But, ultimately, what this is is a great big distraction for the government. They know that they're under fire for the issue of their PST tax increase. Certainly, their federal candidates heard it at the door. I know the federal candidate in Provencher was hearing it at the door, hearing it in the riding, of course, of Dawson Trail, about the PST increase. And I—that's why they sort of only blipped on the electoral map yesterday in terms of support, Mr. Speaker. So they had a sit-down in their caucus and go, oh, boy, we're under fire, we're under a lot of pressure because of the PST tax increase. How are we going to deflect? How are we going to divert? Oh, let's go to the Senate.

What the Senate has become, Mr. Speaker, is the new Devils Lake—the new Devils Lake—because in the past when the government didn't know what to do when there was some sort of difficult position, they'd run down to Devils Lake, they'd try to launch a lawsuit, they'd say, oh, we're going to fight Devils Lake. Now, of course, we knew what happened with that; they ended up putting some sort of a rock filter.

And now they needed to find a different Devils Lake, so they've come up with the Senate. The Senate is their new Devils Lake. Whenever they needed a distraction, they raise the Senate. They try to get everybody—oh, look over at this shiny bottle over here; look at the Senate, let's not talk about the PST.

Even though, of course, that they and their federal colleagues have spent the last few months defending those senators who took money inappropriately, and who shouldn't have been on the public dime, they wanted to keep them on the public dime, Mr. Speaker. But, I mean, that's—they'll have to defend their own record.

But, clearly, Mr. Speaker, this is something of a distraction, to try to take away from the pressure that their getting on the issue of the PST, and to take away from the dismal performance the federal NDP and, by extension, the provincial NDP had in yesterday's by-election, and really every other election, more recently, in the by-election, of course, in Fort Whyte. And we'll see what happens in the by-elections—if they ever call it—in Morris, and now, ultimately, in Arthur-Virden. I suspect they won't do any better. And then they'll have to raise the Senate again to try to get everybody to look in another direction, but it's not working very well.

Now, it is interesting to me that the member—the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) would bring this forward because every time we raise an issue related to Justice, related to his portfolio, he stands up and he screams that he can't answer it because it's before the courts; he doesn't want to talk about it because it's before the courts.

Now, ironically, the issue of the Senate is before the courts, understandably, in a different way, in a reference, but it's been brought before the Supreme Court in terms of a reference. Section 53 of the Supreme Court Act allows for the government to bring forward a reference to the Supreme Court and ask questions since—that is what the federal government has done. The federal government has brought forward a series of different questions that are going—and are currently being deliberated by the Supreme Court, Mr. Speaker.

Now, one is on Senate term limits, and the question being whether or not term limits can be applied on senators without the permission of the provinces. And the provinces have weighed in with that. They've gone before the Supreme Court and they've made presentations.

Also, before the Supreme Court is the issue about Senate appointments, whether or not there can be a scheme—a mechanism—to have consultations for senators if, ultimately, they decide to go in that direction. So that's before the Supreme Court right now.

The issue, Mr. Speaker, about a property ownership for senators, which is a bit more of obscure issue from terms of the public debate, where that's before the Senate right now in the reference case.

And, of course, the germane issue in terms of this debate, also before the Supreme Court, is the issue of abolishing the Senate and how that can be done.

And there have been different representations, and, of course, not surprisingly, the Manitoba government is, of course, offside with the colleagues out west, where we've heard from Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, who, I believe, all have said, that the Senate can be abolished with the 7/50 formula—seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population.

Manitoba has come forward with the position that it has to be unanimous. Essentially, Manitoba's position is every province has to agree before

abolishing the Senate, which would essentially make it impossible. The Manitoba position is one to not to go forward with abolishing the Senate; it's to agree to a scheme that will essentially make abolishing the Senate impossible. Their particular idea is to bring forward a position—they've argued it in the Supreme Court with their lawyers—with taxpayers' funded lawyers—is let's abolish the Senate, but let's do it under a scheme that will make it absolutely impossible to do it. Well, that's ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. And maybe that speaks to why they defended those senators in Ottawa so strongly; maybe it speaks to why they tried to keep those senators on the public payroll when they shouldn't have been on the payroll; why they tried every day to ensure that those senators who had used taxpayers' funding inappropriately would still be on the public payroll, because maybe they have some sort of a different motive. But, certainly, they are trying to bring forward a scheme that won't actually allow the Senate to be abolished.

Now, they certainly can—I've spoken about the Senate before. I've spoken about it in other forums, and I've made my position public about the Senate. It wouldn't take much research to find out what that position is, Mr. Speaker.

But, certainly, we want to make sure that whatever happens is done in a way that it can happen. And trying to bring forward a resolution now before we even know what the rules are, before the Supreme Court has even ruled, is nothing but a distraction. And trying to say that we're going to go under a formula where every province has to agree is essentially saying, you're not in favour of abolishing the Senate, Mr. Speaker, because you're trying to have a formula that simply isn't going to result in success. So they're trying to have it a hundred different ways.

Clearly, the thing to do here is not be looked at to distractions. And I know they're trying to get everybody to stop thinking about the PST and looking at the PST.

I think that the federal government has done the right thing by referring this to the Supreme Court, asking for their advice, saying, how is it, can we go about either reforming or abolishing the Senate? And the right thing to do is, of course, wait to see what those results are, and then we can make a decision about how we'd proceed, because at least we'll know the rules.

* (15:00)

This is like a sports team who runs on the field, has no idea what the rules are or what game they're playing, and starts kicking the ball every direction, Mr. Speaker. And they have no idea, ultimately, what they're going to do. Well, eventually, they end up looking foolish, as they do look foolish right now.

We need to hear back from the Supreme Court. We need to hear back what the reference case says. Tell us what those rules actually are. *[interjection]*

Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe if the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) would have spoke up so strongly, she'd still be in Cabinet, Mr. Speaker—within the Cabinet. But, certainly, she's a—she's very—got a strong voice now, apparently. Maybe that's actually why she got removed from Cabinet; I don't know.

But we do—we do need to hear from the Supreme Court of Canada about what the rules are. What are the rules going to be in terms of Senate reform? And then all of these discussions can take place within that context.

But, ultimately, we know this is a great big distraction, and I don't think Manitobans are going to be fooled by it, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to get up to support this resolution. It is the historic position of this party, whether as the CCF or the NDP, to get rid of this institution that serves only Liberals and Conservatives in this country and doesn't serve the people of Canada.

Now, I know that the member from Steinbach's feeling a little bit rough last night. He was afraid to run in the federal election, I believe. Risk—were—feared risking his reputation. He has this nice, cushy job here, comfortable in opposition, quite happy to sit there day after day, having no responsibility, having no courage to fight for the people of Manitoba or the people of Canada, to sit there throwing verbal bombs across the House but never, ever to step up and serve the people with courage and resilience. Instead, he wants to sit there, comfortable in opposition, but it's no surprise that he didn't run in Provencher. When he had the chance to run for the leadership of his party, did he do that? No.

In fact, did anybody who was elected on that side of the House run for leader? No. Instead, they went back to the discredited politics of the 1990s, to a leader—to a leader who'd actually abandoned them

and then they begged him to come back. How outrageous is that, Mr. Speaker?

So the position of the member from Steinbach surprises me not at all and, in fact, when he has the opportunity to step up, to stand up for Manitobans, to stand up for Canadians, in fact, he refuses to do so. He's comfortable in opposition; I respect that. I'm sure he's just looking forward to earning his salary, earning his pension and hanging in there to hope that one day, too, he'll get appointed to the Senate, like all his other cronies.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to revisit the origins of the Senate. I know that they—the members don't take much interest in history. In fact, I think they eliminated history from our classrooms not so long ago. So, let me just revisit the history of the Senate, so that they have a proper understanding of what the origins of this resolution are intended to do.

Now, it gives me no pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to talk about Mike Duffy. Honestly, I'm embarrassed that he doesn't even know his own address. I find no comfort in talking about Pamela Wallin, who, as I said before, has more AIR MILES than Chris Hadfield. I have no interest in talking about Patrick Brazeau, who has shown himself to be, frankly, no better than a common thug.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's not just limited to the Conservative Party of Canada. It's also the Liberals. Mac Harb made a—though he has repaid his expenses, I believe, nevertheless, took the public purse for a ride, and then when he was caught, then he decided to pay it back. Another member of the Senate just recently was alleged to be involved in a sexual harassment case in his office. This is the kind of shameful display that we get from the other side, that we get from both the two traditional parties in Canada. It's no wonder why Canadians are turning more and more to New Democrats across this country.

But the reasons for the creation of the Senate, Mr. Speaker—and this is the argument I want to make—the reasons for the creation of the Senate, once upon a time in 1867, really, frankly, no longer exist. Reason No. 1, of course, was that it—Confederation in Canada was a pre-democratic achievement. We didn't really believe in democracy, frankly, when Confederation came together in 1867. Lots of folks, women, people of colour, Aboriginal people did not have the franchise. They were not allowed. In fact, unless you owned property you weren't allowed to vote at all.

And so consequently, Mr. Speaker, this thing called democracy, this thing called the House of Commons where members were elected democratically from across the country was perceived as a bit of a threat to the elitist establishment in Canada of the time. So the Senate was created as an elitist check on democracy, that democrats—so the idea went—didn't really know what they were doing. Democrats, which we all are, weren't to be trusted. You never know what those crazy democrats were going to do. They may just vote to empower women. They may vote to create equality across the country. They may vote to make sure that all Canadians share in the blessings of this country, and so the notion was that we should not—should not—trust the House of Commons, and the Senate was created as an elitist check on democracy. Well, no one would defend that position today, save the member from Steinbach and some of the others who maybe were born in the 19th century as well.

So reason No. 1 no longer exists, an elitist check on democracy. We on this side of the House, we believe in democracy, Mr. Speaker. We practise it every single day, and consequently we don't need an elitist check on democracy. That's what, frankly, if I may just say, that's where this notion—this kind of silly notion, if you ask me personally—this idea of sober second thought comes from. When it was revealed that, in fact, the Senate was an elitist check on democracy, this other terminology was created to try to hide the fact that elites wanted to retain power in Canada. We on this side of the House don't believe on that, and that's reason No. 1 in my opinion why the Senate needs to go and needs to be abolished.

The second reason, Mr. Speaker, is equally important and goes right to the origins of Confederation. It's no secret that Sir John A. Macdonald—who was quoted by the Minister of Justice, our Attorney General (Mr. Swan), when he was speaking on this point—it's no secret that the first Prime Minister of Canada really didn't envision the provinces to be very strong. In fact, Macdonald believed that if the provinces were as strong as your average municipality; they were way too strong, even at that. He believed in what we said in my federalism classes from years ago; a unitarian state—provinces, if they had to exist—should exist in name only. They were also not to be trusted. And so the idea to ensure regional representation in the House of Commons was to create the Senate to ensure that the regions were represented because the provinces couldn't or wouldn't or shouldn't do the job.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in 2013, I think we know that the second reason for the creation of the province, the representation of the regions no longer exists as well. I think the reality is that the provinces are quite capable of representing—and territories—are quite capable of protecting, defending the regional interests, their own regional interests and their collective regional interests, for that matter. The Council of the Federation is a great example of working together arm in arm to deal with the issues of the day. They speak directly to the Prime Minister in terms of creating a Canadian—another different, more often than not, pan-Canadian vision of this country. The labour market agreements is one example of the premiers coming together representing the diverse interests of Canada and telling the Prime Minister that maybe this wasn't the best arrangement that was being proposed by his minister, Jason Kenney. Maybe they needed to revisit the issue.

And so consequently, my point in saying this, Mr. Speaker, is that the provinces are, in fact, strong in Canada. They can, in fact, defend the regional interests of this country and they are more than capable of participating in this great experiment we call Canada, which for all of us on this side of the House continues to be a badge of honour.

* (15:10)

So, finally, Mr. Speaker, it's said, well, maybe we should have an elected Senate, you know, and as a way of dealing with the problems, the current problems in the Senate—and, frankly, I don't know if it's just me. I'm a New Democrat. I'm on the left side of the political spectrum. I believe in the power of government to make a difference in our societies to 'cweate' equality and equity, but I, for one, don't believe that we need more government in this country.

And we only need to look south of the border, Mr. Speaker, to see what happens when the Senate and the House of Representatives in Congress try to work things out. It's paralysis; nothing goes forward. We've watched the US in the last year, I think, twice go to the wall with the Senate and the House of—yeah, the fiscal cliff on the one end, not the fiscal cliff across the—not the House, or the two fiscal cliffs across the House who've oddly happened to be sitting together right this moment.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don't think anyone wants that kind of paralysis in our country. Canadians are

asking us to get on with the business of govern this—governing this great country and get on with the business of building this great country. And that's what we're doing.

And, you know, we're not alone in feeling that the Senate should be 'embolished'. Sometimes we reach across our provincial borders and make sure that we're not just speaking on our own, and so I don't need to tell you that the fan favourite from the members across the way, none other than the Premier of Saskatchewan, Brad Wall, says this, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, I just fundamentally do not believe that we will ever, ever meaningfully reform the Senate. Unquote. And then he goes on to say, quote: Abolition will be difficult, but meaningful reform is impossible and the status quo is unacceptable.

Well, I don't always agree with the Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but, on this matter, I certainly think that he—I certainly do agree with him. I think he's nailed it frankly. We don't need the Senate. We don't need a status quo which is clearly unacceptable. Reform is pretty much well-nigh impossible. We no longer need an elitist check on democracy. We don't need the Senate to represent the regions of Canada. We don't need more and bigger government in this country only to create paralysis. What we need to do is get on with governing this great country, building Canada and abolishing the Senate for the benefit of all the people of this great country.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, and it's always a pleasure to get up and speak on resolutions in this Legislature. I found it incredibly interesting this morning, the Minister responsible for Justice was suggesting in his speech that instead of pushing for two by-elections in Manitoba, we should actually be pushing for, as Conservative legislators, is for the Prime Minister finally to appoint the two senators. So in the morning we have the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) pushing for more Manitoba senators, and in the afternoon we have the same individual, the same member pushing to abolish the same Senate. You know what, those are the kinds of mixed messages that we have in this Chamber experienced for over 12, 13 years; in fact, more, so Manitobans have been getting these conflicted messages.

And, Mr. Speaker, this debate reminds me of our good friend, Gary Doer. Every time they—the politics would get hot in this Chamber like the Crocus debacle, which was terribly botched by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), every time there was

a hot-button issue you could count on Gary Doer firing up those two government jets and they would fly into North Dakota, Devils Lake, and haul all the media with them. You know, there were legislators in North Dakota said there wasn't so much excitement in North Dakota since the last time the president visited; that's how many people would fly in. And they would talk about Devils Lake and he would come in this Chamber and rant and rave about Devils Lake; anything, anything but the Crocus debacle where thousands—tens of thousands of people were cheated out of their pension money. No, no, they'd never mention that.

But Devils Lake—and it reminds me of that issue. It's sort of like Halley's Comet; every time the NDP wants a distraction, they grab for something. Now for them, evidently, they don't find Devils Lake as interesting anymore. It used to be the topical issue for them, years gone past, and now they've got a new issue. And that is Senate reform. Now they've become the champions. In fact, the last time we spoke about Senate in this Chamber, we had a legislative committee set up and we used public money and we went across the province and listened to people and listened to more people and had meetings and more consultations and roundtables and more discussions and came forward with a position—the position, I might add, that was unanimously accepted by this Chamber.

Now, does that resolution—does that agreement reflect on what we have here today? No. Now we find out the NDP has a new, new position on the Senate, because what they're trying to do is capture some kind of a wave, and I would suggest to them that one of the things they should do, when it comes to public opinion waves, they should pay more attention to what happened last night. In fact, both of their NDP candidates will not get their deposit back. They couldn't even get 10 per cent of the vote and maybe they should be a little bit more attuned to where Manitobans are in this province instead of trying to distract Manitobans and put resolutions in front of this Chamber.

What they should be doing is putting a resolution forward saying that they apologize for having gone door to door to door in the last provincial election. All 57 NDP MLAs knocked at every door and said, we would never raise taxes in Manitoba to pay for our commitments, and they went even further. It was the member for St. Boniface, the Premier, who went and said it would be nonsense, the concept of raising the PST. And what's the first

thing they did when they got back into this Legislative Chamber? They put a budget forward that raised taxes on hard-working Manitobans that finally have to decide should they insure their house or they—should they not insure their house. And I told the story about the Salvation Army, which now holds back toys from the toy mountain so that when houses burn down that children can come in and at least get something back because they lost all their toys and the houses aren't insured.

That, Mr. Speaker, is what we should be debating in this House is an apology from the NDP. Did they learn nothing from last night, absolutely nothing from the results? They lost 70 per cent of their vote in Brandon-Souris and they come with something foolish like the Senate which is in front of the courts anyway. Let the courts decide with this. If you want to be an MP, run as an MP. We should be doing the work—we should be doing the work—we should be doing the work of legislators in the Manitoba Legislature and we should be dealing with an illegal PST.

You know, they talk about democracy. They talk about the Senate, that it's not democratic. Why don't they look at their own record? They passed a PST in a budget and then they realized it was illegal. So now what they have to do is retroactively pass legislation to get themselves a get-out-of-jail-free card. You want to talk about democracy, you want to talk about what's right and just, let's have a debate here about how the NDP misled Manitobans in the last election when they said (a) they would stand with the taxpayer protection act, and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) should get up and put those comments on the record. We'll give him the opportunity. He should get up and say whatever and we look forward to it. We look forward to him explaining to Manitobans how he went door to door, the member for Kildonan, door to door as a candidate and said he would not raise taxes, he would honour the taxpayer protection act, and that the PST was nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

And it's shameful that we have an NDP government that wants to point fingers at a Senate—that an NDP government that wants to say that somehow we have to get rid of a Senate because it's not democratic. And look at their record here in Manitoba. There are things that we should be debating in this Chamber. There are things that we should be talking about in this Chamber, and I would suggest we have far more pressing issues that face Manitobans than the Senate, Mr. Speaker. We have

issues that affect Manitobans, their day-to-day activities. They sit at their kitchen table—unlike the 37 members opposite who are living the high life, there are Manitobans sitting at their table and counting out pennies and deciding where they can spend their money because they're overtaxed by this government, that they were promised there would be no PST increase and now are forced to pay it on their insurances and on everything else that the NDP has passed.

* (15:20)

Those Manitobans would like to see this Chamber talk about real issues that affect them, the real things that impact them. And, by the way, those same Manitobans—those same Manitobans—spoke last night and they made sure that not one NDP candidate even got their deposit back. And I say the people are always right; in this case, they are definitely right, the message they sent. We got a message as legislators. We got a message here in this Chamber, and the message is loud and clear: that Manitobans want us to deal with these substantive issues, and that includes how Manitobans are struggling under this NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to members opposite that there are a lot of things that Manitobans would like us to deal with. We have had a lot of legislation in this Chamber. We've had a lot of issues that come forward. This morning there were some very interesting debates. It was good, good to hear. We talked about multiculturalism. There would be a very good topic for us that we could have brought forward, talked about the kinds of things that was done under the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). Instead of debating the Senate, we could be talking about the great things that were done by the honourable member for River East and the immigrant nominee program. What a great and visionary program that is, and what it has done to build this province. We could be talking about the ways we can do things even better, the way thing—we could make our new Canadians even feel more welcome. We could be talking and debating about all those kinds of issues. Instead, what does the NDP have as first and foremost?

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if we go back to the Throne Speech, they listed as their top priority 15 top priorities. They listed basically everything as a top priority, and it's interesting, in the Throne Speech, not once was Senate reform listed as one of those priorities. So out of the 15 priorities, the 15 top

priorities of this NDP, the Senate reform wasn't one of them. But what are we using valuable time in this Chamber to debate? What are we using valuable time of legislators to debate? We are using it to debate Senate and federal issues—[interjection] And members opposite find this laughable, and we understand that. Members opposite are trying to put lipstick on a pig from last night's results, and we get that. They're trying to be jovial and we know that they're trying to be looking like they're happy. But this is a serious issue—and by the way, Manitobans heard a Throne Speech with the NDP's 15 top priorities, and I'd like to know why one of those aren't the issues that we're debating today. Why don't we debate one of those top priorities? Senate reform wasn't even mentioned. Senate reform wasn't listed. So we know full well this is nothing more than a distraction.

And I would like to point out to members of the opposite side, perhaps we should be talking about some of the things that are going on in Manitoba Hydro. There's a constant stream of debate being—taking place. It won't take place within the NDP caucus, so it has to take place amongst Manitobans who are concerned about what's going on. We could actually be debating some of the things that the former Premier, the Right Honourable Ed Schreyer has said about the things that have—that were done by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and the new member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers)—the new minister from Dauphin. We could actually be debating the wrong-headed decisions made by the member for Kildonan when he was there.

You know, we heard the—one of the ministers get up and talk about First Nations and that the savings from the Senate could actually go to First Nations. Yes, actually, that'd be a good idea, considering all the money that was squandered by the member for Kildonan that went into TCN for all kinds of projects that now some are kind of starting, others have—the money is missing and new monies are going to have to go in. You know what, Mr. Speaker? They're absolutely right. That's some of the places some of this money could go, and it would be a good place for it to go.

But to take an issue that is actually a federal issue and try to create a distraction with it is really, really unfortunate. We have now in Manitoba—we now have in Manitoba a province that has gotten itself so deep into debt. I understand that the Alberta debt is now at about four-point-some billion dollars and there's all kinds of concern being raised. Here

we're sitting at between 20 and 30 billion dollars of debt, and we have a New Democratic Party that thinks that's a positive. They actually think having a massive debt is an advantage. That's how this NDP manages the people's money. Mind you, I would like to point out that Manitobans last night—time—last night had the time, took the opportunity to vote on the NDP legacy, and we know what happened; I've mentioned that already.

So, Mr. Speaker, the debt in Manitoba is substantial, and I would contrast that with the issue of the Senate, which, by the way, is in front of the courts, should be dealt there. That's where it's being debated, and we—I understand that the Province of Manitoba might even be sending a lawyer there to make its case. So we could be taking this time and talking about Manitoba's crippling, crippling debt that is going to be foisted on future generations. That would be a really good place to go with debate here in Manitoba.

I know that under the NDP they feel that debt is a positive, debt is a good thing; they feel that running massive deficits is good news story, Mr. Speaker, and yet Manitobans are increasingly concerned with where the irresponsible governance of this government is going. And I think they would really like to know where this government stands and what they plan doing about it. Instead what the government does is once again brings up the Senate debate, something that had been dealt with a long time ago. Or, for instance—now, I understand that the new minister responsible for municipalities is in Brandon. And I understand that he got up and he apologized to the AMM and he apologized to all kinds of individuals there, saying that, you know, maybe they didn't handle the forced amalgamation of AM—of municipalities, they didn't manage it in a proper way.

Well, Mr. Speaker, do you think maybe they got it wrong? Well, there's another issue we could be debating here instead of talking about Senate reform, which is in front of the courts and a federal issue. There would be a really good place for us to go. We know that now the new minister responsible for the municipalities has done a little bit of a *mea culpa* and apologized for the previous ministers, calling them insolent children, talking about them as if they had no right to be there and talking down at them and walking out on them and disrespecting them.

Well, you know what? Maybe it's time that the NDP government started to respect people a little bit. Perhaps the member for Dauphin looked at some of

the results from last night's election, and maybe he gets it. Maybe he understands that there is a message being sent and he's going to try to do some damage control.

But, Mr. Speaker, putting forward a resolution on a federal issue that's in front of the courts is not what we should be talking about. That's what we should be debating in this House. I would suggest that the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), maybe he's the one who should have put forward a motion, you know, an apology bill to all of the municipalities who were so poorly treated by him when he was minister. Maybe that would've been a good place to start.

And, you know, maybe, one of them would like to get up and say they've got a change of heart and they want to withdraw this motion, put a different motion forward. And I—we'd agree to that. We would act like—we'd actually like to see real issues debated that affect Manitobans that we have an effect on here in Manitoba. And, Mr. Speaker, the AMM duly—the municipalities' duly elected individuals who work hard, who make sure their budgets are balanced and do it with credibility, those are the people that this government attacks, and, frankly, I think that's shameful, and there would be a great place for us to debate today instead of debating a federal issue that is right now in front of the courts.

Mr. Speaker, another issue we could be talking about is that 50 per cent more people use food banks now than five years ago. There would be a really good issue to talk about. Why is it that under—it seems to be the harder these NDP Cabinet ministers work, the worse it gets. And that seems to be whether it's health care or the environment or whether it's food bank use, whether it's justice, it makes—seems to make no difference. The harder this group works, the worse it gets. So to distract from that, the fact that we've got so many young people and children using food banks, instead of dealing with those issues today, instead of debating that issue today, we are now debating an issue in front of the courts that's a federal issue. That's how you define a distraction. That's how you define trying to change the channel.

* (15:30)

You know, there was a—in fact, there was a Cabinet shuffle just a while ago, and all the media reported that one of the reasons why there was this Cabinet shuffle is that the government wanted to restart, they wanted to reboot their government. They

wanted to change the message. Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe this is part of the rebooting. Maybe this is why they're doing this. They're putting forward a resolution about a federal issue in front of the courts, and this is how they're going to reboot their message. Manitobans see through this. They see through the fact that Senate reform is something that is right now in front of the courts, and that's where this should be discussed and debated and what we should be dealing with here is the fact that we have so many people that are using food banks, that are struggling, that are having difficulty because of the policies and the actions of members opposite.

This government has been one of the worst things on the working class in this province. And last night drew a lot of that, I think, out and proved where Manitobans are on that particular thing.

But, when it comes to democracy, maybe what we could recommend is if the NDP feels this is the issue—this would now be their 16th top priority—if this is, in fact, a priority, perhaps the NDP might find their long-lost love that they once used to have for a referendum. And perhaps what we could do is we could do a two-for-one. We could have a—two referendums all in the same time, one on Senate reform and one on the PST increase. Now, there would be a suggestion.

Maybe, you know, we know the member for Dauphin used to be the absolute biggest advocate for referendums. He was Mister Referendum himself. There wasn't a referendum he wouldn't run out and hug. There wasn't a referendum he wouldn't go out and fund; in fact, he even funded a referendum for the Wheat Board, and as soon as it came—and he was minister of Finance at the time—as soon as it came for a referendum on the PST, he actually retroactively put legislation forward to kill it, to wipe out the referendums. Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps we could have a compromise. Perhaps we could have a hands-across-the-aisle moment here in this Legislature, and we could have a two-for-one referendum and we could hold it on the PST and the Senate proposal in front of us today.

And then we would once again be able to go to Manitobans and say, you know what, you decide. The NDP believes these are top issues. and I would suggest Manitobans would agree with them on the PST. And I don't know if Manitobans would necessarily agree with them on Senate reform, but they would have the opportunity to vote on it. And then we could clear the air, because that would be

substantive and that would be meaningful. Give Manitobans the opportunity, and I'm sure when the New Democrats go back and they look at the history of their party, they'll find that there was actually a time period in their party's history when referendums were top of mind, that they believed in them, that they thought it was a good thing.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing this NDP has done, they have certainly run away from that policy and those beliefs, and it's not that long ago when we had the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) stand up and talk about referendums. You know, perhaps we could have him stand up and talk about a referendum for Senate reform because the Senate is—has been there for a long time.

We know that the issue is now in front of the courts. We know that the federal politicians are talking about it. In fact, we know that there are all kinds of positions being taken, and we would suggest that maybe, maybe a referendum would be the right way to go. You know, the referendum huggers and those who used to fund referendums over the years, maybe now would be a good time to stand up and say, let's put this in front of the people. If this is in fact the 16th big priority, main priority, of this government, then perhaps that's what should happen.

Instead, what the NDP is trying to do is trying to distract the public; it's trying to distract the Legislature from the work that's going on here. We have a lot of legislation that has to be debated and has to be discussed. I know that there's all kinds of amendments coming up yet this afternoon—the hard work that's being done by the Progressive Conservative caucus. My colleagues and I appreciate the member from Brandon, our member from Brandon West, who has done an amazing job on his Justice portfolio, putting forward all kinds of amendments, and some of them actually even pass. We're really pleased with that. Those are the kinds of things we should be doing here. Those are the kinds of issues we should be debating. That's what we were elected for, Mr. Speaker, is to deal with the issues that are first and foremost and in front of Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Senate reform which is in front of the courts and is a federal issue, perhaps that could be left for another time. Perhaps it should've been in the Throne Speech and identified as a priority. Perhaps it should be a bill. Maybe the government would like to put a bill in front of the House, and then it could go through a debating

process. There's a proper way to debate it. It would go in front of public hearings. We could get the public out. We could have their input on it.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I think there would even be agreement on our side to go for a two-for-one referendum, on not just the PST increase but also Senate reform.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to members opposite that we get back to the hard work here—hard-working Conservative caucus. We've certainly put in a lot of time. I believe, this year alone, when this session is over, we will have sat for seven months—not that the NDP party wanted to sit for seven months. No, no, no. They were forced to sit for seven months. And under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition and my colleagues, we held the NDP feet to a fire. And I think last night's results in the by-elections showed some—where Manitobans are on that, and they felt that it was worthwhile—our endeavour—what we did to hold the government accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not convinced that Manitobans are sitting at their kitchen tables right now and talking about this resolution. But what they are talking about is the fact that they must make tough choices, that they must make tough decisions and it was forced upon them by this NDP government, by every member sitting across the way. All 37 members forced them to make the tough decisions that they are making with their money—their hard-earned money—and they are struggling with making ends meet. And Manitobans, I believe, would like us to spend time and show respect to those individuals, those families that are struggling. We know that there are a lot of single-parent families, there are a lot of families where there might be one or maybe both parents unemployed, there might be health issues in the family, there might be other issues that are taking place in their lives, and that's where Manitobans would like us to debate. Those are the issues they would like us to bring forward.

You know, when I went door to door, Senate reform wasn't one of those that came up, Mr. Speaker. That wasn't one of the things that people would mention at the door. In fact, I spoke to some of the federal candidates running in the last election, also from other parties, and they said that the PST increase and the hardship that that has brought to families was the No. 1 issue that they were facing at the door—that they felt that they were explaining far

too often that the PST was a provincial issue and they were running on a federal issue. It's interesting that the federal politicians seem to get that the PST—the provincial PST is a big issue, but the provincial NDP here seems to want to debate federal issues.

And it just shows that we have a tired, out-of-touch government that wants to now make itself a federal body that debates federal issues that are in front of the courts and don't want to debate the issues that are impacting Manitobans—Manitoba families who are struggling. We know that all indicators are showing that Manitoba families are struggling and having a tough time, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we should be debating in this Legislature and not debating federal issues that are in front of the courts and that are actually a federal issue.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

*(15:40)

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of the government resolution, brought forward by my colleague from Minto.

And, in some ways, it feels a bit like the movie Groundhog Day, where it seems that I get an opportunity to reflect on having chaired the Special Committee on Senate Reform again, and that we're still looking at the same issues that we looked at, surprisingly, which is six years ago now, because the committee was set in 2008. And here we are, five years later, still dealing with these issues and seeing that our federal government is doing nothing to deal with the issue and things are just sliding further and further into this pit that we call the Senate.

It's an issue that as time moves on—and as I think back to the committee that I had the privilege of chairing—that it's getting me to reflect on the work that we actually did, and even though I have to say it was very interesting and I have to say I learned far more about the Senate than I ever thought that I would or thought I would need to, things really—when I reflect back on the work that we did, that probably we were trying to make some lemonade out of a bunch of sour lemons. And, when I think back to all of the work that we did and the number of people that actually came to these committee meetings, when I look at the numbers now, I think, well, perhaps people really thought the whole situation was futile or that there really wasn't any reason to do this. People perhaps didn't think about the Senate,

because as I look at the numbers it's really, really quite sad when in Steinbach we had two people who came, signed up to speak, and, I mean, Steinbach at that time was already a city. Or I know that one of my colleagues will recall in Carman that we had no one sign up and then one individual decided to make our travel to Carman worthwhile—

An Honourable Member: Senator Plett?

Ms. Braun: I don't recall.

It was a very ambitious project that we had with the Senate committee. It was decided because we were an all-party committee that we would attend as many places in Manitoba as we possibly could. So we drove to St. Laurent and had six people sign up and present in St. Laurent. Brandon, the metropolis of Brandon, we had all of three people who signed up and presented. In Dauphin we had two. In Russell we had all of—and I know that the member who was representing that area at that time worked very, very hard and he got seven people to sign up and present. And in Winnipeg where I'm sure we were well over 700,000 people, we had 20 who came to present. Flin Flon we had a great turnout because the member there made sure that we had nine people who signed to speak on it. Norway House we had one.

So, as I think back to the time that we spent, all the miles, all the gas, that I really have to question whether or not these folks really had a sincere belief that the Senate could be reformed or whether there were—was just great disinterest. I know we were mandated to see how should we go about an elected Senate. And these individuals, even though the majority of them indicated that they were—actually prefer to have the Senate abolished, they did put forward what the mandate of that committee was, which was how to go about electing a Senate. And in that we had 31 written submissions, and I sometimes wonder if we subtracted all of the senators who actually came out to make the case for having an elected Senate, that that would reduce that number as well which, again, to me that was rather self-serving as they indicated to us what they thought the important work was that senators would do.

And not to discredit the process, I found it very interesting. It gave me an opportunity to work with my colleagues opposite. We shared some interesting conversations and we worked together, and I know that the vice-chair who was from the opposite side, we worked together to actually come to consensus as to what we could actually put into the report. I know that the member from St. Paul indicated it was a

unanimous report, and I have to correct him on that; it wasn't. We had the member from Inkster, I believe, at that time, who did speak in opposition and that he would not care to support the report that we had.

So I think that, you know, the process itself was well intentioned. I think that we tried very hard to come up with something that we could agree on, and, in hindsight, when I look at it, it was actually an extremely narrow—a narrow view.

I had a number of conversations with a lawyer, who was a constitutional lawyer, who pointed out that our efforts were actually quite futile because there was so many hurdles and hoops that we would have to go through, that it would never amount to anything. And, in—as I reflect back, he was quite right, because here we are, almost six years later, still dealing with the same issues and still fighting the same battles, and watching money going down that black hole that I was referring to earlier.

So I think we would be well suited to push the federal government to abolish this body that really, in many ways, is creating more problems than it is solving them.

A number of years ago I attended a conference in the United States, in Wisconsin specifically, and I remember their concern, because, with their house of representatives, and their Senate, they were wondering how we managed to accomplish anything. And, given that our Senate was abolished in 1876, I said we had actually managed to do quite well. And looking at the other provinces who've followed suit, I think that all of us are managing our affairs quite well.

So I think that—in concluding, I think that when we look at the kind of controversy that is occurring in Ottawa with the Red Chamber, I think we are finding that the amount of money that is continuing to go down that black hole could be well spent in many other ways. And, when I think of the programs, especially in the areas of research and development that the federal government has cut, environmental issues that need additional funding, I think that I can see where that money could be put to much better use than funding all of these what truly seem to be patronage appointments.

So, although I have to say it was a wonderful experience chairing this committee eight years ago, I think the issues remain there; nothing is resolved. I think that, even though the report was accepted at that time, when I look back on it, I really question

whether or not it actually amounted to much of anything other than giving us an opportunity to travel around the province and hear from a very, very few number of people. I think that, when you look at the numbers and at 51 presentations, 31 written submissions, from a province that has well over a million residents, I think that's a pretty sad state. And, as I say, I really think we tried to make some lemonade out of something that really wasn't possible.

So I think that my colleague who's brought forward this resolution is right on with the suggestion that we need to abolish the Red Chamber. It isn't serving any purpose. The money that is spent could certainly be used in far greater advantage than it is currently.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to put—speak a few words on the resolution which has been forward by the NDP and by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan).

I think it's fair to say that, given recent events, it's clearer than ever that fundamental change is needed to the Canadian Senate. But, that being said, torching the orchard because of a few bad apples is probably not the answer. Abolition is a hysterical response to a problem that really calls for some thoughtful solutions.

And it's interesting that in the report which I have here of the Special Committee on Senate Reform, dated November the 9th, 2009, which, indeed, was chaired by the MLA for Rossmere, as she put a few words on the record a moment ago—and if one looks at the recommendations, there is not a recommendation there for abolishment of the Senate. There's a recommendation relative to electing people to the Senate, so it would be more accountable to people, so it would be more responsible. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a view that I have held for some time. And it would seem to me that, you know, this resolution could more usefully have been following the recommendations of the special committee which was chaired by the MLA for Rossmere.

* (15:50)

I want to review for a moment this all-party task force. And Manitoba Liberals were ably represented by Kevin Lamoureux, who was the MLA for Inkster then. The all-party committee on Senate reform, as has been described, toured the province, met with individuals in Flin Flon, Norway House, Dauphin,

Carman, St. Laurent, Steinbach, Russell, Winnipeg and Brandon. And after hearing from Manitobans around the province, the committee brought forward the recommendations. And they did this after due deliberation and discussion, and the recommendations were as follows: section 5, recommendations: If the federal government moves forward on its commitment to elect senators, it should respect the view of all parties in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. The committee offers the following recommendations on Senate elections: (1) Elections should be held in the province to elect nominees to the Senate that will be forwarded to Ottawa. Elections should be administered through Elections Canada with costs being the responsibility of the federal government. The method of voting should be first past the post. There should be regional representation among Manitoba's allotment of six Senate seats, with three in Winnipeg, two in south Manitoba and one in northern Manitoba. Elections should be held in each of the regions, and the persons with the most votes in each region would be placed on the list of nominees that would be submitted to the Prime Minister. The current proposal of eight-year term limit by the federal government is in keeping with what was heard from presenters.

So that was the recommendations of the committee. And I think in reviewing what should've come forward here and noting that, you know, the committee did not recommend abolishing the Senate but rather talked about electing the Senate, that maybe we should've addressed this in the resolution that was here today.

Now, I want to, you know, look at, you know, certain aspects of the Senate. It should be said, in fairness to senators who have worked very hard, like the former leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party, Sharon Carstairs, who was a senator for quite some time. She did a lot of hard work on palliative care improvements across Canada and particularly in Manitoba.

And, indeed, the quality of the palliative care program that we have in Manitoba, particularly in Winnipeg, is, I believe, in part due to the efforts of Sharon Carstairs and her contributions in this area. She is not the only senator. There have been a variety. There have been some reports which presented and represent significant contributions, that of Michael Kirby and Marjory LeBreton in 2002, *On the Health of Canadians, Recommendations for Reform*; that in—of 2006 of Michael

Kirby and Dr. Wilbert Keon, *out of the shadows, transforming mental health, mental illness and addiction services in Canada*; that of 2009 of Art Eggleton and Hugh Segal, *In from the Margins: A Call for Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*.

Now, it's interesting that, you know, we have a government here in Manitoba—in which we have increasing amounts of poverty, an increasing number of people using the food banks, and we could probably have benefited from some of the recommendations that were made by the Senate report, as was true for transforming the health-care system and the mental health services in this country, because we continue to see major issues with long wait times in health care. And with mental health issues, they're still some of the most common problems that I get people coming to me with as an MLA.

And so here we are today with, you know, fairly precious time on our agenda, with a lot of bills yet to cover which the NDP would like to get passed, with—in my view, there should have been much more of a focus, Mr. Speaker, on the major failings of this government and what needs to be done to make the changes to have improvements: (1) the neglect of the middle class by this government, the failure to support ordinary, everyday Manitobans; the failures of this government in terms of infrastructure needs, and particularly flood prevention and mitigation and water management and other areas as well as highway and bridge infrastructure; the fiscal deficit and the growing debt we have in this province; the fact that this government has put in place an illegal increase in the provincial sales tax without having a referendum; the increase in food bank use which is up by 50 per cent approximately since this government came to power; the fact that we have 10,000 children in the care of Child and Family Services, approximately 10 times the number of kids in care in our province as in other jurisdictions around the world—the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia. There are clearly, and must be, major reforms and major improvements in this area.

In health care, the problems in our emergency rooms, we have a major inquiry on Brian Sinclair. We have a situation where we still have long waits for knee and hip replacement surgery, more than a 50 cent—50 per cent increase in the wait time in the last 14 years. We have a diabetes epidemic which is raging with an increase in the number of people with diabetes, particularly type 2 diabetes, by

approximately a hundred per cent increase over the last 14 years.

We have in town today the National Aboriginal Diabetes Association, a very important area, but it's not getting the attention because this NDP government is trying to have us spend a lot of time discussing the situation of the Senate than paying to attention to the real problems, the problems of Lake Winnipeg, the most threatened lake in the planet, and the lack of attention to environmental issues by this government.

The problem of mine tailings and health issues in Lynn Lake, the fact that we have a report by the Broadbent Institute showing that the level of social well-being in Manitoba is the lowest in all of Canada, these issues clearly need a lot of attention and they're not getting it because of the fact that the NDP are trying to divert our attention from these issues onto issues of what's happening with the Canadian Senate, which is primarily a federal issue and we should really have the attention that we need appropriately to issues in the province here which desperately need attention.

And it is worth noting that there are certainly costs associated with the Senate, but it's also worth noting that a number of the activities in the Senate and the reports also can have a significant impact on saving costs, the virtual hospital and other activities in palliative care helping people across Canada deal better with issues at the end of life, improving the quality of care and service to Manitobans, but saving dollars at the same time. And, indeed, in many of these other reports, there is recommendations which would be for improving the quality of the life of Canadians and saving costs. So when the government and the NDP talk about the costs, they should also be talking about the savings from those activities which are done by senators for the betterment of people across the country.

*(16:00)

Now, as I have said—and I will conclude in a moment—we are at a point in the history now where I would put it quite bluntly. Never in the history of our country has it been more clear that there's a need for a Senate which is so constituted to be an effective break on the unilateral and despotic actions of the current Prime Minister. Rather than abolishing the Senate, it needs to be reformed and the proposal of the—Manitoba's all-party special committee on the Senate for Senate elections is, and remains, an effective way to improve the democratic

accountability and the effectiveness of this Canadian Senate. And, if we were debating anything, that's what we should be debating, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon. Thank you.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise to put a few words on the record, in regard to the resolution brought forward by the Attorney General (Mr. Swan), and I want to thank him for this resolution. I know that we do have many issues before us, but I think a discussion on the basic principles of democracy is always a worthy topic for ourselves as legislators, and this conversation, of course, given the current shenanigans that we've all been witnessing as Canadians in the Senate, I think, is very appropriate, to have this discussion at this particular time. So the Attorney General, once again, should be acknowledged and thanked and congratulated for bringing this before us.

I have listened with interest to members opposite dancing around this issue. Of course, you look at the current composition of the federal Senate, it's stacked with Conservative appointees and, to a lesser degree, Liberal appointees. So I'm sure in the back of their collective minds that all of them are hoping for a cushy retirement appointment to the Senate. So they're—they've been very careful in the words—the language that they've been using. I listened to the honourable former leader of the Liberal Party, for example, when he suggested that torching the orchard because of a few bad apples might not be the best course of action and, well, that's a valid position, and, you know, in other circumstances, I would probably agree with that. I think he may have a little bit of a vested interest here because if any of us could conceivably end up in an appointed Senate sometime in the future, I would suggest it might be him, if Justin Trudeau should ever come to power in this office and if that were to happen—

Point of Order

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I think that in view of the comments that are being made by the MLA for the Interlake, it's worth putting on the record that I have long been of the view that this is not a career path that I was ever of any interest to me, to be in the Senate and, therefore, I am actually in a position to speak impartially on this. So thank you for raising the question.

Mr. Speaker: I'm not sure if the honourable member for River Heights was raising this as a point of order. I'm still trying to understand. Was the honourable

member for River Heights raising this as a point of order?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Well, then I must respectfully rule and, if there's no other advice regarding this matter that there is no point of order. It seems to be a dispute over the facts that are occurring in debate here this afternoon.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for the Interlake, to continue with his comments.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: To continue, Mr. Speaker, I was about to say that, if the member for River Heights ever was appointed to the Senate, that I would say he would be a worthy appointment. You know, he's a former leader of a political party here and very knowledgeable and, having represented people that I represent in Selkirk-Interlake when he was a Member of Parliament, I know his work well. So I'm sure he would fit in very nicely there and would do an honourable job, I have no doubt of that, unlike a lot of current senators who are behaving in the opposite vein.

But to continue, the member—the points raised by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) and, I believe, Steinbach, that this is a federal issue before the courts, well, again that's certainly dodging the issue, you know. This is not a federal issue; this is a national issue that is of interest to all of us as Canadians. So—and, as Manitobans, we have a very keen interest in this as well, given that, you know, our percentage of senators is somewhat lacking, I think. If there is one problem that I see with the Senate, it's this imbalance toward eastern Canada, where Québec and Ontario make up, I think, half the Senate seats. I, as a western Canadian, take some issue with that. So, if there ever were reforming as opposed to abolition, which is our preferred course of action, I would like to see that particular aspect addressed.

Interesting, if I may, I want to just offer congratulations to Larry Maguire, former member of this Legislature, who was just elected last night. I think it's—I think all of us would second that. But I think his narrow margin of victory in a seat that is traditionally a landslide for members opposite, this is indicative that the Prime Minister's current handling of matters in the Senate is sadly, sadly lacking, and this was probably one of the main reasons that Mr. Maguire won that seat by so narrow a margin. I look,

of course, to other issues such as the—their, you know, dissolving of the Canadian Wheat Board, for instance, I think, should have had a little greater press. And I would think there's probably a number of grain producers in southwestern Manitoba that would have voted Conservative in times past did not this time because of that. But that's for the pundits to do their analysis on.

I, of course, was a member of the task force back in 2009, and I listened to the words of the chair of that committee just a few moments ago, and she was right that turnout was somewhat lacking. And I really think that was most unfortunate because this is, as I said, an important national issue. It's a—it's—deals with the foundations of our democracy, and I think all Canadians, Manitobans, should be a little bit more involved in the political process. There should have been a better turnout for that. You know, I give a lot of speeches to my constituents over the years. The two most important speeches, of course, are to the veterans and to the graduating class to try and instill in them some appreciation for democracy. So, you know, and as a part of my speech, I quite often make reference to an election back in Germany in 1930 when only, I think, 20 per cent of the population turned out to vote, and they elected Adolf Hitler. He was actually elected. So that's a sign that the public should remain engaged in the democratic process. To do so or not to do so can often result in fiascos and disasters such as we saw back in Nazi Germany.

Now, the Prime Minister, you know, I look back to when he was in opposition and leader of the National Citizens Coalition. Their position back then was a Triple-E 'sented'—Senate. What did that stand for? Equal, elected and effective. And, if only that were so, that, you know, there might be greater support for the Senate in this country. And what a profound shift from his position in opposition to his position in government. Mr. Speaker, it's just bizarre how a politician can so reverse himself. And, rather than working toward that Triple-E Senate, what did he do? Exactly what every other Prime Minister has done before him, started the Senate with political patronage appointments, you know, and Duffy, Wallin, the other—[interjection] How many?

An Honourable Member: Fifty-nine.

* (16:10)

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Fifty-nine. Fifty-nine appointments to the Senate. Bizarre, to say the least. And it goes right down to Don Plett, who was the Conservative president, president of the

Conservative Party for a number of years, you know, and you look at Duffy and Wallin spending—Mrs. Wallin, over \$300,000 on networking events. Not only were these people at the trough, but they were deliberately sent out on the taxpayers' dime to go out and campaign on behalf of the Conservative Party. That was a disgrace. And if anything has brought the Senate into disrepute, it's that way of dealing with things.

No wonder the members opposite are dancing around here and trying to get this off our agenda, suggesting that it's a federal issue before the courts. That's just nonsense. That's misdirection, and it just goes to show that it would be business as usual if they were in power.

Mr. Plett—just one anecdote before I sit down, I have to say that, you know, him going out doing the work of the Conservative Party while he's sitting in the Senate on our payroll—classy example in the Interlake. You know, where but the Interlake would we expect Conservative interference? And in the last election—well, all elections, I think, that I've run in—but the election in 2011, the Conservative Party had duly nominated a young man from Poplarfield, actually, lives just down the road from me. His name was John Zasitko. He was duly elected but didn't quite measure up to the standards opposite, and Mr. Plett came in and personally fired Johnny Zasitko, removing him from the slate and putting their own hand-picked chosen to run against me, whom I then subsequently defeated.

But I would really like to see this come to a vote, and I'd love to continue on a wide range of topics here, but I think that—I think it's time to sit down, and if nobody else chooses to speak, let's put it on the record what we really think of this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on the resolution?

House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the resolution will please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the resolution will please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The question before the House is the government resolution on the Senate of Canada.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allan, Allum, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Irvin-Ross, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pettersen, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Nays

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Mitchelson, Pallister, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 29, Nays 18.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the resolution carried.

The hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 26, 2013

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