

**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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, April 10, 2014**

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Are we ready to proceed with Bill 203?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** No.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** I can save you some of your precious breath this morning, Mr. Speaker. Could we move directly to Bill 202, The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act, sponsored by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), Mr. New York.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the House prepared to move directly to Bill 202? *[Agreed]*

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—  
PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 202—The Participation of Manitoba  
in the New West Partnership Act**

**Mr. Speaker:** All right. We'll now call Bill 202, The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert, who has four minutes remaining.

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** It's a pleasure to get up and speak again on this bill.

I don't know if the members opposite have seen some of the media lately, but the other day KPMG said that we were the best midwestern city to do business in, and, you know, that's including cities

like Chicago. So, you know, we're focused on trading with all our partners, not just going one—waiting on one smaller deal to the west of us. You know, they also might be interested in the CTV report the other day that showed that, you know, we have more cranes dotting our skyline than ever before, and they actually said that there's more to come and that investor confidence is at an all-time high in Manitoba, and that's why we're seeing these giant investments and these cranes dotting our skyline.

Now, that's a stark contrast from, you know, back when they were at the helm and you'd see no cranes in the sky, actually. All of the cranes had left the province because they had migrated elsewhere; 30,000 people went with them as well.

Here, now, we have some—we have a lot of building going on. We have extreme investor confidence. We also have seen deals with the western provinces. You know, we made a deal with Saskatchewan. Manitoba Hydro's made a deal to sell power to Saskatchewan, and I'm sure that there's more to come. Having this focus on this deal is a narrow focus, and since Manitoba does most of its trade, actually, with other partners, it would be remiss of us to not mention that—that we have trade with all of the eastern provinces and with the United States.

And I know that, you know, the members opposite have large claims that, you know, this New West Partnership is going to save hundreds of millions but I guess that's the bonus of being in opposition. You can make these claims and not have anything to actually back it up that they're going to save all this money by doing this trade agreement. I mean, I know that's how they planned on balancing the budget is because of this trade agreement which—there's not based on any fact.

You know, Manitoba had a growing manufacturing sector while the rest of Canada has been losing jobs, so that speaks to our trade. It speaks to that it's a good place to do business here and that we actually are doing trade with everybody, because our manufacturing is growing, 2.9 per cent, and the average for Canada was lower. And you know, like, we've seen expansions. And you look at New Flyer, they just recently got a big deal, employing more people, and those buses are being

shipped all over North America. So we have a very broad focus because—and that's actually working for us, because when the recession hit—I know that the members opposite don't believe in the recession of 2008—our province actually didn't see the big hit that the rest of the provinces did. If you look at most provinces, they lost jobs. Actually, all provinces, except for us, their economy didn't gain. Our economy stayed steady, and steady growth and good jobs. I mean, that's what people in Manitoba have come to expect and that's why they trust us with the government because we're not going to go through those big and boom–boom and bust cycles like they do in other provinces where, yes, it might be good for a couple of years but then the big bust comes and thousands of people are put out of work.

That's why we have a plan where we trade with multiple partners across all of North America because it actually does good things for Manitoba. And we've seen it; New Flyer Industries is a great example of that, Canada Goose, Behlen Industries, Wipak. All of these industries are doing great work, trading with multiple partners all across the country. If we narrow in and only focus on trading with Saskatchewan and Alberta and BC, that would be a mistake. Our economy has done well here underneath us. I know that the members opposite don't like the facts and figures that say that we're doing well, but the facts and the figures speak to how well we are doing in Manitoba. And, you know, you look at our unemployment rate, it's the third lowest in the nation. And, you know, we didn't see the mass layoffs that Ontario, for example, saw in their manufacturing sector during the economic crash of 2008. And I know that members opposite don't believe in it but it did happen.

So with that I thank you very much.

**Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, I guess, listening to the member from St. Norbert, I guess what I don't understand, if all of a sudden our economy is doing so well in Manitoba after the great recession that they talked about, global recession, that really affected Manitoba greatly, why is it that we see all these wonderful things that they're talking about with increased employment, our growth in manufacturing—I just feel that why are we in such huge debt, why are we having to raise our PST if economies are looking so good, and that's really concerning to me.

And being that I'm next to the province of Saskatchewan, in the riding of Arthur-Virden, we

have such an integrated—integral part of our economy is related to the oil industry which really affects all four provinces, British Columbia, Alberta, especially, and Saskatchewan. So we really want to—we would like to see this agreement happen because we get so many people coming in from the other provinces to work in the oil industry, to come to our location and to do business. A lot of times we're seeing that we're seeing with a lot of red tape and that the businesses and the individuals who come to our provinces cannot—are not able to transfer freely.

One thing—I used to own an insurance agency and I found that the red tape—the people coming into the office had to sit down and had to be in the office for two hours. This is time and money that these people have to come into the office. It's not only for individual people who are coming to our province, it's also corporations who want to set up in our province. They get so frustrated with MPI, the way that all the regulations and the red tape and all the documents that they have to get that they go back into Saskatchewan to incorporate. And I've seen that many times in the province.

And so this is one of the—this is probably one of the reasons why I actually ran for politics is because I think we need a voice and we need a voice for the western part of the province along with—to represent all of Manitoba. Because I think it's so important to have that western partnership act to be passed because, again, British Columbia is the gateway to the Pacific Ocean and to trade. We trade lots, and our growing opportunities to trade with China, Japan, southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand are so important. And I think, for our economy, with the—with agriculture products that we've actually produced lots in our province and the manufacturing that the minister of St. Norbert indicated, we have a great opportunity to be part of that.

\*(10:10)

And I also believe, too, that this northeast side of the United States is also growing so rapidly in the Great Plains. I believe that this is an opportunity. If we can become—accord with our own western provinces, we can actually join up with some agreements that they have, because I think, when it comes to Canada and the US, we have more in common with the states below us than, actually, the states across—and, say, Ontario and the midwest in Ontario where there's a lot of manufacturing jobs that are being lost. I think the biggest opportunity here is western Canada, because, again, the population is

growing so rapidly that I would like to see us continue to—or to actually have an agreement that would actually help our economy grow.

The other thing, too, is I actually, when I was campaigning in the last—about three months, I went to Melita, and Melita's a prime example of a hotel that was being put up in our province. With all the red tape and all the departments that caused a lot of delays, that hotel cost over \$250,000 more to be built in Manitoba than it was in Saskatchewan. And it was—again, it was based on red tape. And I found right now, with the—this individual, who actually built another six or seven more hotels in Saskatchewan, and after that occurrence, they will never come back into Manitoba to build another hotel. And so these are concerns that I have.

And the other thing, too, was oil companies. You know, they want to have a transfer of employment and services between the two provinces. And I think if we pass this act, this will actually eliminate some barriers between the provinces to allow people to flow—and workers, especially with our workforce right now, are flowing back and forth from province to province because of their jobs, because of the corporation that actually provides that—these—work—jobs to our province that we really need. This is a great opportunity to have this agreement passed so that we can actually enhance the employment services that we can provide in this province, and I'd really like to have this agreement passed.

The other thing that we also have a disadvantage is—of Alberta and Saskatchewan and BC is already we have a disadvantage with our PST, whereas Alberta doesn't have PST, Saskatchewan is 3 percentage lower than us, and also with higher tax exemptions too, which is another advantage to the employees of different companies.

And the other thing what we also have—they have, we don't have, is lower taxes. You can do your income tax return and just change that return to—from Manitoba to Saskatchewan or Alberta and we can see how much difference we actually pay as Manitobans. And we really feel that, if we're going to be competitive in North America, we need to be part of this agreement and actually follow and eliminate barriers.

And this is where—why I'm here today to speak on behalf of this issue, and which is very important to me. Again, we—like I said, we have a lot of trade between the—our two provinces. We have more in common with southeast Saskatchewan and—with

southwestern Manitoba, and that's why it feels so important that this act gets passed.

And I just wanted to sum it up by saying that I'm here for the voice of southern—southwestern Manitoba, and I want to see this act passed. Thank you very much. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

### House Business

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business, Mr. Speaker.

In accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Increased Flexibility in Application of Nutrients to Soil, brought forward by the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen).

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Increased Flexibility in Application of Nutrients to Soil, and this resolution would be sponsored by the honourable member for Midland.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Now, further debate on Bill 202.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** I want to put on the record, first of all, that I think members opposite really have no sense of some of the kind of co-operative work that goes on throughout western Canada in terms of us working with other provinces.

It's actually very appropriate we're having a debate on this, because last week I chaired the WESTAC meeting, and the WESTAC meeting—it's the Western Transportation Advisory Council. You, Mr. Speaker, know it well. I mean, you were a participant at many of its meetings. Ruth Sol, actually, who's now retiring after more than 30 years with WESTAC. It's an organization that brings together the provinces, the four western provinces and the territories and stakeholders and the labour perspective, the business perspective, and they meet and they put forward a broad vision. We have discussions, we have a co-ordinated western Canadian approach. That's WESTAC. I want to put that on the record.

At the WESTAC meeting we had a meeting of western ministers, and we are working on a common approach in terms of infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, we're investing in a major way. Other provinces are certainly looking at it. You know, I can say that the other provinces I don't think are following the leader of the members opposite—or should I say the non-leadership—in terms of those issues, but they're looking at common infrastructure issues. So we have WESTAC which brings together that element.

Mr. Speaker, I can indicate, too, that I co-chaired the federal-provincial-territorial ministers in terms of transportation, and we had full participation from across the country. And who was the minister from Ontario who was there? Glen Murray, former mayor of Winnipeg. And we had a meeting working on a co-operative approach on transportation issues with Ontario, including discussions about extending the four-laning. Now we've done it to Saskatchewan—there's only 17 kilometres remaining—and certainly there was a significant amount of interest shown by Glen Murray.

We talked about trucking regulations, harmonizing that so we work with Ontario. Now, members opposite haven't mentioned at all the fact we had joint Cabinet meetings with Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the first time in the history of our province and the province of Saskatchewan, we sat down and we put aside any partisan differences—obviously, because there's somewhat different political approaches—but we not only sat down and had a meeting, the first Cabinet meeting, the key focus, one of them was on transportation. So what did we do? We identified the particular concerns.

I know members opposite know, but there's two different RTAC standards. That's the standard of the highest level of road in terms of what's allowed in terms of weights—two different standards. Saskatchewan, Manitoba—I asked the question, why? The answer was basically, always been that way. Well, it may have always been that way; it's not that way anymore. We've moved. Saskatchewan's moved. We now have consistent RTAC rates.

What was the other issue of concern? The other issue of concern was in terms of spring load restrictions. Why? Well, let's take the oil industry, which is very active in Manitoba, very active in Saskatchewan. Two dramatically different systems in terms of that. But not just in southwest Manitoba. I was just in The Pas recently. I went to Nipawin for the Hudson Bay Route Association. So what

happened? We sat down and we now have a science-based approach. We have more flexibility. We're using it, by the way, this spring, in particular with producers, grain producers who are dealing with the grain crisis. We've now waived the requirement to get a permit in terms of them moving grain when we have road restrictions. But what we've done is we now have consistency because we have a scientific-based approach between restrictions between Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

That is what you do in the real world. And, by the way, I'm not including this being in the real world, because what this bill does and what the debate from members opposite shows is the degree to which they don't get that in the real world—and I'll take the transportation side—we are sitting right in the middle of the continent. So it's not just working with western Canadian provinces, which we do. It's also working with Ontario, which we do.

Now, I also want to indicate, by the way, we work very significantly on issues with our neighbours to the south, and I can talk on the flooding side, on the water management side. I can point to the work the Minister of Water Stewardship and Conservation. I can look at our involvement, our participation, in bodies like the Red River Basin Commission. And I want to—again, I want to put on the record Lance Yohe, he's just retired—fine individual. We're a key part of working. We work co-operatively on water issues. We're all in the same watershed. They are dealing with water quality issues. When we have a flood, we end up with significant focus in terms of that. That's part of it, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say that's one of the hallmarks. We work with that across the board.

\* (10:20)

And now I also want to indicate that we also do something else as well. And I know members opposite have some difficulty with this. But, you know, when it comes to infrastructure, we've also been working with our municipal partners.

And I want to put on the record the headline in the Carillon, Steinbach, Manitoba. And the quote, Mr. Speaker, the headline says, Province pours millions into southeast roads: Steinbach's infamous Park Road intersection fixed this summer. Now, in the online article, there's a picture of my colleague, the MLA for Dawson Trail. It's a fine picture with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and myself, and it talks about how the MLA for Dawson Trail extolls the

virtues of provincial investments in southeast infrastructure.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what did we do in the case of Steinbach? We recognized there's significant growth. You know, this government, we talk about steady growth. Well, you see it in Steinbach. And Mayor Goertzen—no relation to the MLA for Steinbach. Actually, I want to point out that the—it's—the mayor is the one that points that one out. But the City of Steinbach, when they put in development, they also have a—they collect a development levy for transportation issues. So they've taken money from developers, and they're partnering with the Province of Manitoba to put in place a \$6.9 million increase.

And it was interesting; when I announced it, members opposite, you know, applauded, initially, and now the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) seems to be, from his seat, indicating that somehow he doesn't agree with investing \$6.9 million—*[interjection]* He called it highway robbery, Mr. Speaker, taking money from developers' fees, working with the City of Steinbach. What has he got against the City of Steinbach? What has he got against the mayor and council who agree to be part of that partnership?

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, what it shows is what's in this bill really doesn't do anything other than point to the simple fact that members opposite just cannot get the reality of what you need to do in this day and age, in 2014. In Manitoba, we are in the centre of the continent, where we have huge potential. And I could talk from the transportation side, in particular. And, you know, if they can't even figure out a way to work with our municipalities like this, you know, the—one of the fastest growing cities—without taking some political shot, it just shows you how out of touch they are.

So I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we're pouring millions into southeast roads. We're putting millions into roads throughout the province. Again, members may—opposite—may disagree with that.

But I want to indicate we're also working more broadly. I talked about this continent. We're working on global connections, whether it's CentrePort or Churchill Arctic Port Canada. I was just at the Hudson Bay Route Association last week, and I talked about our vision as a government—our vision as a province—for Churchill.

We've got a golden age ahead—the next 10, 20, 30 years. We've got everything the world needs right

here in western Canada and particularly in northern Manitoba with our port. They're looking for commodities. They're looking for food. And it's the know-how that we have to—not only to develop that and harvest it, but get it to market that's also very much in demand. We have the ability to do it and we are investing in the port, and we're investing through this new structure into the future of this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, there was a time, 100-plus years ago, when there was predictions our population was going hit 3 million. This Chamber was designed for 130 MLAs. Something called the Panama Canal kind of slowed the growth pattern somewhat. But, you know, there's something remarkable happening in this province right now. Despite all the negative approaches from members opposite, we now have unprecedented growth—unprecedented population growth—the highest in 40-plus years. We have a dramatic growth that's taking place.

And by the way, the ironic part—some of the most negative comments come from the people from the fastest growing communities, like the member for Steinbach.

The bottom line is, we did that by working with all jurisdictions here in Manitoba, with all jurisdictions in Canada, with all jurisdictions, you know, in terms of North America, and we're doing it globally.

This legislation is—it misses the point. In the real world, you co-operate, Mr. Speaker, across the board. That's that we're doing. That's why we have steady growth—

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** It gives me great pleasure to stand up once again and put a few words on the record in regards to this bill, bill 210, the partnership of Manitoba in the New West Partnership act, brought to us by the member from Emerson.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that when we stand in this House and put words on the record and you listen to members opposite and they put rhetoric on the record about all the great things that they are supposedly doing, they consistently pat themselves on the back. We believe in the participation with the other neighbouring provinces to the west of us because we really do feel that the way the present government is going about doing business with the

other provinces is we're ending up being a little bit of a sandwich.

We've got Ontario, who seems to be fine doing business over on the east side, and they also communicate with the west side of the—this great country of ours. Then we have Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC that seems to be having a fine time also conversing and working on various projects to grow their economies. And then we've got Manitoba, who absolutely refuses to go ahead and join the New West Partnership, which obviously has many, many positives, far more positives to joining the New West Partnership than negatives, Mr. Speaker.

It's not—it would not only improve trade between the three other provinces, we're also looking at—the act would also—or by joining the New West Partnership, we would also put in place common procurement and research and development co-operation, which we all know that why do we necessarily have to recreate the wheel. Why do we not join up with the other provinces and—

**An Honourable Member:** You might have to tender then.

**Mr. Ewasko:** You might have to tender, as the MLA from Steinbach chimes in. It is the tendering process, and some of that we've seen in—well, as most recent as yesterday in Estimates with the Education Minister, chatted about tendering a student financial aid computer program and software to help thousands and thousands of Manitoba students work through and help them get financial aid, and also look at their different options as they graduate from high school and enter post-secondary institutions.

And what do we have? We have a tendered contract that the business or the corporation that ended up winning that contract actually has missed their deadlines for the last four years, and we're still waiting on the minister to come clean with some information. All we know is that the original tendered contract was something around \$12 million and we're up and above \$15.5 million already, and he just doesn't have any information that's forthcoming that's ever going to see that those dollars spent turn into an actual program that is going to benefit Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

But back to the New West Partnership. Right now, our trade is with the northwest partnership member provinces. We're looking at about 43 per cent. As the member from Thompson stood up and mentioned the WESTAC meetings that he was at,

I know that the members across the way, they feel it's very important to go and have meetings, but what is coming from those meetings, Mr. Speaker?

He also shared that a lot of the provinces are looking to him and looking at their plans, the NDP's plans, for infrastructure. Now, he didn't say that they were looking at it in a positive way. He actually said that they were just looking at it. So what I'm thinking is that the other provinces are taking a good look at what Manitoba is doing and they're basically saying this is a good template for what not to do in their provinces, Mr. Speaker. And, again, I think that the minister is going about patting himself on the back when it—when he shouldn't necessarily be.

When we join the New West Partnership in the future, and I'm hoping that a lot of the members across the way today will see that this bill passes before 11 o'clock today, we also see the power in numbers, Mr. Speaker. As we already said, within research and development and that co-operation through other provinces, we're looking at those three provinces having roughly 9 million people with a GDP of more than \$550 billion. So why would we not want to partner up with provinces that have such a successful track record?

\*(10:30)

I know that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had said that he definitely was not looking at becoming a partner with the—within the New West Partnership, and so he said, and I quote: I think we always have to find a way to help the whole country to come together when we do these things because, at the end of the day, we don't want regional blocs, we want one economic union for the whole country.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when you look at that quote—again this comes back to the sandwich—we're stuck in between Ontario and then, of course, the provinces that are part of the New West Partnership. They are unwilling to actually have those sit-down conversations with us, and I think that if this government would get out of their silos or out of their ivory towers and actually take a trip to those other provinces and start cultivating those relationships, I think we would be far better off. There are definite doors that can be opened for this wonderful province of ours.

And I know the member from Thompson also mentioned CentrePort. CentrePort is an absolute fantastic initiative that was brought forward which are going to bring in ties to the rest of North



America—to the west, to the east and, of course, to the north. And I think that if they would of absolutely—if this would have been a different government, I think that a lot of these things would have been well under way already. I think there's a lot of businesses that have turned their backs on CentrePort due to the poor management of this government.

I mean, for one example, Mr. Speaker, who would have thought that they would have needed water out for CentrePort? You'd think that in the planning that would have been something that would have been considered, but, no, this government again decided to move forward, rush through planning and forget that they might possibly need water to have bigger industries or development happen on the west side of the city.

Joining the New West Partnership would give Manitoba the opportunity to position their selves as an economic player behind the mere strength of our population, Mr. Speaker. Again, strength in numbers. Why recreate the wheel?

The problem is that this government doesn't feel that they need any advice or to have any co-operation with anybody else besides the people that are actually within this province, Mr. Speaker, because they are more of a dictatorship type of government. They've proven time and time again that they don't necessarily listen to or appreciate the fact that we do have democratic rights in this province, and whether that's through the tendering process, whether that's the raising in the PST.

Just the other day—what's going to happen when during the 2011 election they were saying that they weren't going to raise any taxes, 2013 they raised the PST by one point or 14 per cent? We uncovered and we knew that they've actually been entertaining the fact to raise the PST by two points back in 2011—two points, which is about 29 per cent, Mr. Speaker. What's going to happen when they raise—the NDP government raises the PST to that 9 per cent? That's just going to hurt us when we're trying to attract businesses.

And so this is another reason why I commend the member from Emerson for bringing forward this bill on joining the New West Partnership, and I strongly feel that the other side of the House should maybe take some time to do some research, take some time to put their own arrogance and shelf their opinions as far as what is best for this province and

actually take a good look at this act and support it today, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further debate on Bill 202? *[interjection]* Oh, sorry.

**Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia):** I know I'm short, but—thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to thank the opposition for two very entertaining speeches on this new western 'partnership.' However, entertainment and facts and actual—a plan are two different things.

I actually am part, and I'm proud to be part, of a very strong partnership. And the partnership started in 1870, and it's called Canada. And Confederation—I'm a nationalist. I'm surprised that the members from Emerson and Lac du Bonnet do not believe in our country, do not believe in Canada. I believe that, as a country, we need to work together. And I am proud Canadian, and when the members opposite said, and I'll try to quote, no co-operation with anything else, that's just factually wrong.

And I'll tell you, when I was minister of Trade, I was—pleasure to make a lot of differences on the Agreement on Internal Trade. If I can remember when I first became minister of Trade, there was a book about a foot and a half thick on all the disagreements on all the issues on internal trade. There were some that were 50 years old. And it's interesting because on the barriers on internal trade, Manitoba took the lead on breaking down the barriers. So simple things like margarine, which was—had an issue for 50 years, were broken down. When I was minister of Liquor, I was pleased to break down the internal trade barriers on liquor laws.

I was pleased that our government actually moved forward on CentrePort. Now, the members opposite may say that they're interested in trade, but this is a wonderful opportunity to have an inland port, to grow our trade industry, to focus on the future. Our side of the House, the NDP voted for that, and the member from Lac du Bonnet, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), all members of the Conservative Party voted against CentrePort. They voted against the biggest trade area that has been done in Manitoba's history.

The other thing that's interesting is—let's put some interesting facts on the record. Our total exports increased 12 per cent in 2013, the largest increase of any province and three times the Canadian average. Now, for that information, a lot of the trade goes to the east. Lots of the trade goes to

the west. In fact, we have a huge increase in European trade, in Asian trade.

And so I don't believe that we want to restrict ourselves to a small trading bloc. I believe that the world is our oyster, and I think we have to continue to expand our trade partnerships. We have to expand our trade opportunities, not just to 1 million, 2 million, 3 million people but to the entire world. And I think that's what we've been doing.

We've seen expansions of Boeing. By the way, Boeing aircraft, components of Boeing aircraft, are made in my constituency. They're part of a great fleet of planes that are exported around the world, and it's a world trade. The Grey Goose expansion, we have Winpak, which is, again, a huge industry that expands around the world, and that, again, is found in the great constituency of Assiniboia. And these companies, along with others—Crown Construction is actually building construction industry equipment, shipped around the world, here in Manitoba, found in the constituency of Assiniboia.

So I think what we have to do is continue to look at how we grow our economy. The members across the way, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) was actually factly—factually incorrect. He said that we are higher taxed. I know that I do—I have a financial investment business. I've been able to operate it for only about 15 years. But in that case, I would like to let the member know that if he has his small business with \$450,000 of income, they pay no tax, zero—zero per cent tax. And I think that's an important fact that the members opposite should know. So that helps grow small businesses that grow into bigger businesses.

And as a point of history, when we took office, the small business tax rate was 17 per cent under the Conservatives. It's now 12 and a half per cent. That's a big drop, and it's a drop under our government. We got rid of the corporate capital tax. We dropped the business investment—there's all sorts of taxes that we dropped that the Conservatives thought that we needed the highest tax in the country. And I'm shocked that they talked about it but they never did it.

\*(10:40)

Now, they also talked—the member from Emerson talked about the whole red tape issue. I'm pleased to say that when I was Minister of Industry, we brought in BizPaL. And for the members opposite, that was brought in with the Conservative

government as our partners. And what we did was we cut more red tape than had ever been done in the history of Manitoba, and that was through BizPaL. And what we did was we moved forward on cutting a lot of the business red tape. We made sure things were submitted online. When I set up my first corporation, I actually had to drive from Cranberry Portage, Manitoba, to Winnipeg to fill out paper forms to get it signed and then drive it back to Cranberry Portage. I'm pleased to say you now can do things online. You can actually submit payments online. You can actually do things in this century. And I know that the members opposite don't believe in change, but I think that we've really moved forward on getting rid of some of the red tape.

I know that we looked at the forms that hadn't been changed for years, where we decided to merge forms or eliminate forms. We made sure that you could save them online and submit them weekly, monthly, yearly, whatever you wanted to do. We made sure you could pay on Visa rather than just go in cash or cheques. We made sure that we could move forward on expanding to the world, whether that was the bilingual World Trade Centre, whether that's CentrePort, which has had numerous businesses locate there.

I think what we need to look—and by the way, for the members opposite's information, and I know the member from Emerson is new, but when I got elected, Boeing was about 450 people; I'm pleased to say that it's well over 1,200 people now, I believe. It's expanding. *[interjection]* I'd like to show you all the new expansion. And I know the members opposite laugh at the expanding businesses, but it is an important thing.

I'd also like to let the member know that on trade, it's important to look at where we're going in trade. CentrePort becomes important because inland ports are cost effective, they create manufacturing, they create new industries to locate here. So I am a strong supporter of CentrePort. I think that they—CentrePort, as Canada's first foreign trade zone, will provide tax and duty relief. It'll support businesses. And I know that I have talked to many businesses that will come here.

And just for the members opposite's information, in 2009, we were the first province to proclaim the labour mobility legislation. That was important so people could move with full labour mobility for financial services. And we're—continue to improve on the labour mobility. For the members opposite,

there's still lots of discussion on the three western provinces on labour mobility. They have difficulties with a number of industries and individuals moving from province to province. And that is still an issue. I think that we need to deal with it, not just in three provinces but across the whole country. And Manitoba was a leader.

We're simplifying corporate registration and reporting requirements. I just reported on two of the companies that I'm involved in. Those are simple. We did it online. We registered the name online. We no longer had to do it in person. That was fabulous.

The tendering is much easier now in government. There's a central tendering process where you can actually go there, if you're a business that wants to do business with government, you can actually go online. It's called MERX. It actually works. I would advise the member, if you want to do business, you can do that across country.

And, by the way, Manitoba's exports for the west was 43 per cent. We also export east and, actually, that's higher than what we export west. But I think what we need to do is continue to work as a country. I'm a proud Canadian. I'm a proud Canadian which believes that as a country we're small in the world context. We have to work together in order to compete effectively in the world. So I don't think our market is just Saskatchewan. I don't think our market is just one small area. I think it's the world.

The world's our oyster. We should seize it. And under this government, we will continue to do so. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** And I listen to the debate this morning, and I keep having this recurring question coming back to me. If the NDP talk about trade and they talk about trade around the world, then why are they so afraid about New West Partnership? It's about trade. So if you really were interested in trade, you would at least attempt to join the New West Partnership.

But, Mr. Speaker, this—I was also interested to listen to—the member from Thompson was up, talking about Churchill and the great expansions of Churchill and the trade potentials of Churchill. If I remember, it was a scant year ago this government was predicting the demise of Churchill after the Canadian Wheat Board was—monopoly was taken away. And, apparently, Churchill is going to survive in spite of the Canadian Wheat Board, in spite of this government throwing \$85,000 out to have a

referendum on the Canadian Wheat Board; can't have a referendum on the PST but we could have a referendum based on the Canadian Wheat Board. So they—when they talk trade, it really is amazing.

Perhaps what they're really concerned about in the New West Partnership is that they would have to actually co-operate with other governments and work with other governments. This government is focused on taking money off of the kitchen table and putting it to their Cabinet table because they've said over and over and over again in this House and out in the public, they have maintained that they—this NDP government is the builders of Manitoba economy. Not the entrepreneurs who are out there, not the business people, not the citizens of Manitoba. But they claim to be the builders.

So maybe they're afraid of going out and even talking to the partners—the current partners of the New West Partnership—and seeing how they could actually join the New West Partnership to reduce the barriers that exist out there. The New West Partnership is just one of the tools that Manitoba could be using to increase their trade, to lower the trade barriers, harmonize regulations. We could have much less red tape if we were to join the New West Partnership, and that would help Manitoba. Companies—I realize government is afraid of competition. They like monopolies. They like to be the monopoly of everything. So this is—could be why they're not really interested in the New West Partnership.

And what we're looking at is common procurement, research and development corporation—co-operation. We have already seen cities like Saskatoon taking on the—welcoming the grain trade and the research and development in developing new grains, new research into livestock, and yet here we are in Manitoba, we're watching these very important jobs drift across the provincial line into Saskatchewan. Perhaps if we were a member of the New West Partnership, we could actually be at the table and working at this and having joint partnerships, rather than watching these jobs disappear and go to other provinces.

It's all about eliminating the barriers. This government has put up barriers to its own citizens, so it's not really surprising that they are not interested in trading and becoming trade partners with other provinces. They tout the national trade agreement, the AIT, but yet, if that is so good, then why

wouldn't just another trade agreement be even better then?

You don't solve all your problems with one fell swoop. There are always smaller agreements—although this is not small, by any means—but this is just another tool that Manitobans could use—Manitoba businesses could use, the Manitoba government could use—to help make us more competitive to trade both in western Canada and around the world.

You know, we see CentrePort—the potential of CentrePort, and it has really suffered because of the lack of planning by this government, in that CentrePort was built but without adequate water supplies, and that—we've missed businesses. I was in Regina at their version of CentrePort, and they're—the businesses are booming. They've fully serviced it. The roads are in place, the water's in place and they're welcoming businesses every day. But in Manitoba at CentrePort, we've had—we've missed some opportunities because of the lack of water service to that.

\* (10:50)

Now, the government has finally come together to propose building a water plant to supply that. But in the meantime we have businesses that want to build today and not wait for more promises because they know, from this government, that promises and action are two different things.

So they're—they need to build now, not—and we should've had the water into CentrePort years ago, and it's been one of the great hindrances in making CentrePort, really, the true potential that it has.

So, Mr. Speaker, this—for a government that pretends to want to trade and yet at the same time they don't want to join a New West Partnership, so what is it? Either you want to trade or you want to deal with other jurisdictions or else you don't.

Increased transparency between the three governments would be something that you would think—between the four governments, if you were to join this New West Partnership—you would think that that would be something that would be desirable. But apparently, with this government, tenders tend not to be—or contracts tend not to be tendered out and sole sourced, and it doesn't matter the size. Doesn't matter, break the law, it doesn't matter with these guys. They will do as they see—what they think is best for them and not what is best for the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's—it really is unfortunate that this government, although they talk about trade, yet they are not in favour of joining the New West Partnership. And, you know, when you look at the western—the three western provinces that have created the New West Partnership, it is unfortunate that we are missing out great opportunities there. And perhaps this government, if they really were serious about trade and creating partnerships, they would at least ask the three western provinces to join instead of being afraid of trade and trade—afraid of partnership agreements with other provinces.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that they continue to live in their own little world and not look at the opportunities that are out there. So I urge them, if they're really serious about talking about trade and doing trade and doing partnerships, let's join the New West Partnership today and let's get on with it. Thank you.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Municipal Government):** You know, here we go again. The Conservatives talking and talking and talking and talking and talking, and then they talk some more and talk some more. Mr. Speaker, they're full of hot air. When we—when they ask us to contact our colleagues in Saskatchewan and Alberta and British Columbia, we do it all the time.

Mr. Speaker, when I was Agriculture Minister—when I was the—when I was Agriculture minister farmers wanted to know why it is that we did not have cattle insurance in this province. *[interjection]* Now, the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) across the way could be a smart aleck if he likes. And they—and I know they made fun of this in question period the other day. When our minister got up and talked about this, that member and his colleagues who claim to represent cattle country were laughing and, in my view, acting pretty inappropriately when our minister described what we were doing in terms of cattle insurance, which will be a real benefit for his members and my members who farm, who contribute to our—not just our local economy in Dauphin or in Carman or everywhere else—*[interjection]*

And there he goes again, Mr. Speaker. You know, he won't take this issue seriously at all. He's going to try to play politics from his seat. He can chirp and he can heckle all he likes, but that doesn't help a single farmer in this province. It fits into what I said at—just a few minutes ago about Tories talking and talking and talking, and that's it. One of his

best allies in that is the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), who does that as much as anybody, chirping across incoherently. But you know what? That doesn't help a single farmer in Vita, Manitoba, either.

Mr. Speaker, what helps—

**An Honourable Member:** It's the bellowing I could do without.

**Mr. Struthers:** Yes, I was being a little nice, saying—referring to it as chirping.

But nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, what does help farmers in Carman and Vita and Grandview and Ethelbert—what helps them is a government that can sit down with partners outside of our boundaries and put in place—implement cattle insurance.

When I was Agriculture minister, I sat down with Mr. Jack Hayden, who was the—members opposite know Jack—he's a very good guy. He was a municipal leader. He was a very good Agriculture minister. Jack and I disagreed on things. We disagreed on the Wheat Board. That was public. But you know what, we had a—adult discussion about the Wheat Board, and I must say if Jack and the others had agreed with me, maybe we'd be moving some grain on behalf of farmers these days. But members opposite—members opposite like to live in their own narrow little world on that issue too.

But back to the issue at hand. We, Jack Hayden and I, talked about the advantages to the Manitoba and Alberta farmers, the ranchers, when it comes to providing insurance. Because Mr. Hayden and I and the Alberta government, and, eventually, Mr. Bob Bjornerud, who was the Agriculture minister in Saskatchewan—another fine fellow who disagreed with us on some issues, but on this issue we agreed. They understood that farmers do not want to simply stand there with their hands out to get government cheques.

Farmers want to be paid a fair price for the produce that they grow, whether that be grains and oilseeds or whether that be hogs or cattle or poultry. They want to grow that produce and sell it on the market and get a fair price for it. If that does not work, they want an insurance package that they pay dues into like any other insurance fee. They want that in place, and they want all those things in place before you end up with government, whether it be federal or provincial, programs to help the farm community.

Now, we're not opposed to negotiating with the federal government on programs that help the farm community. We understand that means a lot for farmers and their families and the communities that depend on them. But what we understood was that the best insurance plan is one that is broad and comprehensive and has not just ranchers from Alberta signed up, but let's see what the possibilities are if we sign up ranchers from Saskatchewan and Manitoba as well. Would that improve the insurance program that we're offering?

Well, the answer, very clearly, was yes, so we said yes. Alberta said yes. Saskatchewan said yes. We worked out an agreement that—to offer this to farmers. And you know what, we did that without the phony-baloney resolution that's brought forward here saying we should be part of the New West Partnership. We did it without that. And that's only one example—and only one example—of how we can do things with our neighbours to the west without playing the politics of this resolution. That's just one example.

Nobody on this side of the House is afraid to trade with anyone. We'll trade to the west with Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC. We'll trade to the east with Ontario and Quebec and the Maritimes. We'll trade to the north—something members opposite are always afraid of doing. And we understand that our biggest trading partner, not only for Canada but for Manitoba, is to the south of us. 53 per cent of our trade goes east. 47 per cent of our trade goes west. That's a pretty good—that's a pretty healthy balance.

We are—of all Canadian jurisdictions, we are the least reliant on the American market—least reliant. They are still our biggest trade partner, so if we think we should take the advice of members opposite and myopically look narrow-mindedly at the west and not every direction, then that's a—

\* (11:00)

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Municipal Government (Mr. Struthers) will have two minutes remaining.

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 9—Reducing Red Tape in Manitoba

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution we have under consideration this morning is entitled

Reducing Red Tape in Manitoba, sponsored by the honourable member for Tuxedo.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** I move, seconded by the member for Morris (Mr. Martin), that,

WHEREAS small businesses and entrepreneurs bring innovation to industries through new technology and new ways of doing things; and

WHEREAS entrepreneurs create jobs, produce goods and services and grow the economy; and

WHEREAS only 8 per cent of businesses surveyed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business have confidence in the provincial government's ability to support businesses in the province of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS compared to other provinces in Canada, it is harder for Manitoba businesses to thrive in Manitoba because of the growing accumulation of red tape and regulations; and

WHEREAS Manitoba recently received a D- on the CFIB Red Tape Report Card; and

WHEREAS the president of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce wrote to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development that Manitoba is, and I quote, "establishing an uncompetitive tax framework when compared to other provinces," end quote; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's economic prosperity and health depends on the entrepreneurial intensity, confidence and spirit; and

WHEREAS business growth in Manitoba has been negatively impacted by high inflation, low wage growth and high taxes.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to reduce red tape to encourage a more favourable climate for small business and entrepreneurs in Manitoba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to take action to reduce the overbearing tax schemes for businesses to create an environment in which small enterprises and entrepreneurs can thrive.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo, seconded for the honourable member for Morris,

WHEREAS small business—dispense?

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House to consider the resolution as printed on today's Order Paper?  
[Agreed]

*WHEREAS small businesses and entrepreneurs bring innovation to industries through new technology and new ways of doing things; and*

*WHEREAS entrepreneurs create jobs, produce goods and services and grow the economy; and*

*WHEREAS only 8% of businesses surveyed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) have confidence in the Provincial Government's ability to support businesses in the province of Manitoba; and*

*WHEREAS compared to other provinces in Canada, it is harder for small businesses to thrive in Manitoba because of the growing accumulation of red tape and regulations; and*

*WHEREAS Manitoba recently received a D- on the CFIB Red Tape Report Card; and*

*WHEREAS the President of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce wrote to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development that Manitoba "is establishing an uncompetitive tax framework when compared to other provinces;" and*

*WHEREAS Manitoba's economic prosperity and health depends on entrepreneurial intensity, confidence and spirit; and*

*WHEREAS business growth in Manitoba has been negatively impacted by high inflation, low wage growth and high taxes.*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to reduce red tape to encourage a more favorable climate for small business and entrepreneurs in Manitoba; and*

*BE IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to take action to reduce the overbearing tax schemes for businesses to create an environment in which small enterprises and entrepreneurs can thrive.*

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Okay. I'm pleased to bring this forward in the Legislature today to—for debate. I am

very interested to hear from members opposite what they have to say to this because I have met with business owners and employees from all industries and all sectors of our economy right across this great province of ours, and I have heard loud and clear from them that the excessive regulatory burden that exists here in Manitoba is hurting their businesses. And when it hurts their businesses, we know that that hurts our economy. And when it hurts our economy, it has a negative impact on job growth here as well.

And so I am hoping that members opposite will see fit to pass this resolution here today, and I look forward to working with them further on the reduction of red tape which is what small to mid-size businesses and all businesses in Manitoba are looking for, Mr. Speaker.

There is an uncompetitive environment that has been created under this NDP government over the last 15 years in this province, Mr. Speaker, and I think what it has resulted in is unnecessary regulatory burdens or red tape on businesses in Manitoba. So when those businesses are looking at opportunities to expand their businesses here in Manitoba, when they're looking at whether or not they want to do business in Manitoba, the NDP government has sent a very strong message to businesses in Manitoba that Manitoba is not open for business under this NDP government. So it's unfortunate.

We know that businesses are choosing not to locate in Manitoba; they're looking at our neighbours of Saskatchewan, Alberta, other provinces, in the United States, Mr. Speaker. They're looking at other areas to set up shop, to do business, because they have less regulatory burdens in those jurisdictions than they do here in Manitoba.

And, again, I'm sure that members opposite—and I'm sure the Minister for Jobs and the Economy has been out and met with various business owners and employees of those businesses across this province, Mr. Speaker—I'm sure she has. And if she has, I'm sure she's hearing the same thing we are, that this kind of regulatory burden is a negative thing for businesses here in Manitoba. And it's forcing businesses to make a decision to choose to expand elsewhere rather than here in Manitoba because we know that other jurisdictions in this country and, indeed, in the United States don't have that kind of regulatory burden, and so, when they choose to expand, they're looking to expand elsewhere.

But I do want to quote, the CFIB survey found that 26 per cent of business owners may not have gone into business if they knew how much red tape was involved, and that's a significant number and I think it's unfortunate.

In particular with the deficit, and I can hear that—I'm sure the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard)—she seems to be excited about this issue today. I look forward to her words of wisdom, I'm sure, that she'll offer to this debate, perhaps on the record, and maybe not heckling across the floor of this Legislature. But she should be ashamed of herself, and we're looking at projected deficits in this province of—

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

I regret to interrupt the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), but the volume was increasing in the House, and perhaps if I might suggest that the honourable Minister of Finance and the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), if they wish to have a private conversation, may I suggest a loge on either side of the House or perhaps another room in the building might be more appropriate.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, with projected deficits of—and again, this is projected deficits, but—put forward by this NDP government and the Minister of Finance—projected deficits of \$518 million for 2015 and \$365 million for 2016, the Province should be embracing no-cost solutions that will help businesses create jobs and grow here in the province of Manitoba.

Well, reducing red tape does not cost the government anything and it allows businesses to focus on the core operations, making local businesses more competitive. And we know that that's what businesses are trying to do. We want to make sure that we reduce that regulatory burden so that they can go out and do what they do best—the entrepreneurs here in our province, the small-business owners, the mid-size business owners—they should be not caught at their desks filling out unnecessary regulatory papers that, you know, don't exist in other provinces. They need to be able to free up their time to be able to do what they do best, and that is create jobs in our economy here and to help grow our economy here in Manitoba.

There's an economic cost to red tape, and we know that the CFIB has done a great job here in the province of Manitoba. In fact, they—I was happy to be a part of their red-tape awareness week the end of January this year, and I want to commend the kind of research that they have done as an organization. And, of course, we know that the research, according to the CFIB, that regulations cost Manitoba—cost the Manitoba economy more than \$945 million every year, and this equates to about \$730 per household. That's a significant cost just for doing business in Manitoba.

We know that regulations in Canada cost small businesses almost \$2,000 more per employee than regulations in the United States, and the cost of red tape and regulations in Manitoba's economy is estimated to be 1.6 per cent of our GDP. So Manitoba's—you know, this NDP government isn't taking red tape seriously.

Now, we know that they have created this red tape reduction advisory council. They did that in 2012. But we know also that it's being ineffective. In fact, the CFIB is a party to that council and says that it is accomplishing little and decries that, I quote, there are no plans to measure or report the regulatory burden, end quote, by the council, which is exactly why I have—and it's on the notice paper today—I'm bringing forward a bill—Bill 213, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act—which will do exactly that. And that's why we need to move forward. Just setting up an advisory council is not going to reduce red tape. Taking actual action in that area will be—is what's important here to actually reduce that regulatory burden and the red tape on small businesses here in Manitoba.

\* (11:10)

And so I look forward to also having a debate down the road with respect to that bill, and I hope that after years of introducing this bill in this Manitoba Legislature, I hope that members opposite will actually look to take action with red tape reduction and support our bill here in the Manitoba Legislature.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's important when discussing this to look at other jurisdictions. What are other areas, other provinces in our country, what is our federal government doing to reduce red tape and that regulatory burden for businesses? And in 2009 the federal government met their goal of reducing red tape by 20 per cent. Thirteen federal departments and agencies worked together to streamline regulations,

eliminate duplicate requirements, get rid of overlapping obligations and reduce document filing frequency; that's something. If this government wanted to take action here in Manitoba, they could do, and wouldn't that be great for businesses and for our economy and job growth here in the province of Manitoba?

We need only look to Saskatchewan where in 2013 the Saskatchewan government reviewed and updated over 100 regulations, policies and procedures. And that year Saskatchewan passed the Regulatory Modernization and Accountability Act which forces annual reporting for ministries and agencies with regard to their regulatory modernization activities. So we need only look to our neighbours and see what they're doing to attract small businesses and mid-size businesses to their province.

We also looked to British Columbia where in 2001 the province promised to reduce regulation by one third, and through deregulation and regulatory reform efforts British Columbia exceeded its target and, to date, in fact, the government has reduced regulatory requirements in British Columbia by over 42 per cent.

So—and Alberta, the same thing. Alberta has a regulatory review secretariat that leads regulatory reform and it works to support the government's goals and priorities by placing an emphasis on looking at the impact of regulation and stakeholders.

So I am, you know, I am—I'm trying to encourage members opposite to support this resolution, to look at other provinces, what they're doing to help grow our economy. Because small businesses and mid-size businesses are the backbone of industry in our provinces and we need to reduce the regulatory burden on them to help grow our economy and create jobs here at home in Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy):** Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to stand in the House today and put a few words on the record [*interjection*]-not, it seems, to the amusement of members opposite, who are premature, I would suppose, in their ejections concerning what I have to say today. But certainly, yes, one would imagine what it is like to be their partners, but I digress.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I think it is very important that we look at the context of the work and the business that we do in Manitoba, and what we



can do in partnership with business and with industry to work as hard as we can to make Manitoba the most competitive place possible.

And I listened carefully to what the member opposite was saying about her discussions and her work with businesses, and what she said was, well, the member must be hearing the same thing that I'm hearing concerning the issue of red tape. And what I can say to the member is when I meet with industry and meet with businesses, this is not being presented to me on any occasion that I can recall as a No. 1 concern. Without question, the No. 1 concern of business and industry here in Manitoba is the importance of growing our skilled workforce, No. 1 across the board. This also would be the case nationally and internationally. But speaking specifically here in Manitoba, when I speak to businesses they talk about how important it is that we work in partnership with them, have our education system, both K to 12 and post-secondary, working together to provide a variety of options for our young people to pursue their careers and pursue their dreams.

And so I would say to the member opposite that I've had a number of very good discussions, more good discussions to come. But I would question her assertion that what I am hearing as their No. 1 concern regards red tape, because it is uniformly not. It is that on the importance that they want us to place in building a skilled workforce.

I also listened to what the member had to say about the attitudes of businesses here in Manitoba. And, again, I would have to suggest with her that we are having different conversations and perhaps travelling in different circles.

I hear the member opposite ejecting again from his seat prematurely. I would suppose that—in fact, the CFIB gave the government of Manitoba and a deputy minister therein an award this year for being effective in terms of breaking down barriers concerning highways. Now, I noticed that the member neglected to mention any sort of praise that was given to government from the CFIB. I felt that maybe the member was a little bit selective in her commentary, but I thought that I would put that on the record because I do think when there is an acknowledgement to a deputy minister concerning work being done on highways that we should be forthright about that, and I would commend him as well.

I would say to the member, though, going back to her point that is omnipresent, negativity, pessimism abounds whenever I hear her speak about businesses. But, Mr. Speaker, when we look to the businesses that are coming to Manitoba, we can look no further, I think, than people like Mr. Eugene Roman, who is the Canadian Tire chief technology officer, who, of course, is instrumental in bringing their new cloud computing centre here to Manitoba, which will create 80—or more than 80 jobs.

And he said Winnipeg's a special place. I know that to be true. The member opposite seems not. He said Winnipeg's a special place. It has many benefits that we saw. We looked across Canada, he said. We did a national search, and our conclusion was Winnipeg is the place to be. Mr. Speaker, this is not somebody from our side of the House saying it. This is not a partisan comment. This is the leader of a very important business in Canada speaking about the fact that they did comparative analysis and chose Winnipeg to make a multimillion-dollar investment that is going to help their business thrive and grow.

Mr. Speaker, you know, housing prices in Winnipeg is another issue that businesses talk about, about the fact that our economy is soaring and thriving and growing. I noticed the other day in the paper, there was an article, assessed values increase 19 per cent. And the reporter from the Winnipeg Free Press, on the 9th of January, said the strong growth in the inner city marks the continuation of a long-term rebound from the dark days of the 1990s when dilapidated homes in the most impoverished inner-city neighbourhoods weren't worth the cost of repairs or renovations.

There's a renaissance going on in those areas. Our economy is thriving and growing. You know, when we look at what Cereals Canada had to say when they announced new corporate headquarters in Winnipeg, they said the city offers an affordable locale for Cereals Canada operations and future staff with access to a large workforce population that has many ties to production in agriculture.

And the chair of Cereals Canada went on to say a great deal of thought and consideration went into making this decision. Through this process, it became clear to us that Winnipeg will best serve the long-term needs of the organization. So she may be talking to people that have negative views, Mr. Speaker, about competitiveness, but I can tell you the list goes on and on for these that are feeling very positive.

Now, I was also listening to the 'bate'—the debate and some of the conversation that was going on, Mr. Speaker, about taking an indiscriminate cut to regulation across government. And members from this side of the House asked a question: if you could just provide us with a list, the regulations that you and these businesses don't like, we would be happy to act on them.

And it was in response to that, Mr. Speaker, that what you could hear was the crickets. Brip, brip. That's all you could hear because there was zero, absolutely zero concrete material that could come across from the other side. So they talk about regulations and red tapes in this abstract way. But when you ask them for something concrete, once again, what do hear? You hear the crickets. Because they have absolutely zero—zero—to add to the conversation.

\* (11:20)

But let me tell you about something concrete that we have done with industry recently, Mr. Speaker. When we sat down and did round table discussions concerning the 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase and how it would relate to core infrastructure, we heard from the many people that we talked to about authentic and meaningful changes that we could make to processes that would help us increase our economic activity in Manitoba. And the Heavy Construction Association, the chambers of commerce, other members of business said to us, could you please act to change the nature of funding for these projects into a multi-year, project-planning process? Check. When they asked us, could we change the tendering schedule to release it earlier to help take greater advantage for the construction season, we acted on that one, as well. Check. When they asked us to work together to bundle projects to make the whole process of application more expedient and fair—absolutely, we committed to do that. And the list goes on, in our \$5.5-billion plan.

When members opposite speak with absolutely no ability to name a concrete regulation that they want to change, what we know is they are apt to continue along the path of reckless, reckless decision making, opposing regulations that actually protect consumers from being exploited by unethical businesses. They have stood against protecting workers from getting hurt on the job. They have stood against protecting good employers from getting undercut by shady competitors, those ones who put workers and consumers at risk. They seem

to have no apparent concern about regulations that exist to protect drinking water from pollution, protecting taxpayers when projects go awry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely open and willing to discuss with industry the concrete, meaningful and authentic changes that we can make, as we did in our \$5.5-billion plan. But an indiscriminate, slapdash, two-for-one approach to regulatory elimination that could possibly hurt workers who need protection, who could possibly hurt our population when it comes to public health, I don't think that this is the approach. And when asked a simple question by members on this side of the House, just give us a list. Give us your top five. Give us a couple that you dislike. What do we hear? We hear the crickets. Thank you.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and speak to the resolution put forward by my colleague, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

As a former provincial director of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, this is a file I know all too well. I spent six years meeting face to face with small business owners throughout the province of Manitoba. And the minister may disagree, but red tape was an issue to those members. Now, of course, and now, I would imagine the minister hears more about the PST hike than about red tape, but an issue nonetheless.

Mr. Speaker, the term red tape takes its roots from the 16th century practice of public administrations that bound important official documents in red tape. The colour denoted a higher level of importance, a signal to senior administration on how to treat that file. Red tape today refers to the approvals and processes required to get government approval on a particular course of action.

We've seen across this country a number of jurisdictions implementing changes and trying to take—get a handle on red tape reduction, to make it easier for businesses to actually conduct businesses, as opposed to work in the backroom and fill out government paperwork. For example, the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick partnership on regulation and the economy aims to remove regulatory burdens and encourages open, greater workforce mobility and efficient government services delivery. Ironically, Mr. Speaker, in the hour preceding this, we talked about the New West Partnership Agreement, which also, between the provinces of BC, Alberta and

Saskatchewan, has created Canada's largest barrier-free interprovincial marketplace.

Now, I may surprise the members opposite by actually giving them credit where credit is due. I remember working with minister—the minister of—I think at the time it was called Competitiveness. It was a two-year experiment the government initiated, on the idea that somehow they weren't competitive, so if only we had a Minister of Competitiveness, that would make a difference.

But this government did do a lot of work in terms of initiative called BizPaL, which is a business permit and licensing initiative. It's an online service that automatically generates a list of all permits and licences that are required by all three levels of government—federal, provincial and municipal—to start and operate a given business along with the pertinent information on each permit and licence, and I know the government has done a tremendous amount of work expanding BizPaL throughout the province of Manitoba.

As well, credit again to the government for implementing a single business number in 2004 as Manitoba's common business denominator.

There's a common thread, Mr. Speaker, in all the government's initiatives when it comes to red tape, is they are focused more on the service delivery of red tape, trying to make it easier for government—or for businesses and individuals to comply with the red tape burden as opposed to actually reducing that burden. It's also interesting observation that the Premier's own Economic Advisory Council has previously recommended a focus on reducing red tape.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to meet with a constituent of mine, Valley Agro Services Ltd. in Morris. They called my office concerned about an \$80,000 piece of equipment sitting on a customer's field because the Office of the Fire Commissioner was unwilling to approve a portable grain dryer and the issue surrounding B149.3 field dryer standards.

Despite commitments by this government to conduct field inspections of new certified dryers within two weeks, this did not happen. Instead this dryer sat on a farmer's field for weeks despite meeting or exceeding the new standards effective October 31st of last year. I am pleased to advise that after multiple phone calls and meetings a temporary certification was issued, but there was no guarantee

that future delays will not occur when this company, Valley Agro Services, orders another B149.3 field dryer for a farmer.

The members opposite, they like to talk numbers. They say name a particular regulation, and I just made reference to the field dryer regulations that this government has. But let's talk about numbers. Let's talk about a big number: 360,295. Mr. Speaker, in 2001 the British Columbia government counted and publicly reported on the number of regulatory requirements imposed on citizens and businesses. They also committed at that time, in 2004, to an overall one-third reduction in the number of requirements. In 2001 their baseline was the aforementioned 360,295. By 2004 they had surpassed their initial goal, reducing the number of requirements by over 36 per cent. Today they have reduced that requirement by almost 45 per cent and have a total regulatory account of just over 200,000.

**An Honourable Member:** They said it can't be done.

**Mr. Martin:** Apparently, it can be done.

This was achieved with a regulatory cap known as net zero increase policy. This places the limit to the number of regulatory requirements that can be imposed. Under this policy there can be no overall increase in the number of regulatory requirements until 2015. Where a new regulatory requirement is introduced under the current scheme, an existing requirement must also be eliminated.

Red tape reduction, Mr. Speaker, streamlines and simplifies processes to make it faster and easier to deal with government. Reducing red tape benefits everyone. For citizens it means fast, easier access to services saving them time and money which can be spent with family and friends. For businesses it means simplified processes, saving them money that could be reinvested in the growth of their business.

We all recognize that the burden of unnecessary red tape places on our businesses and citizens. But we also have to recognize that red tape can also create unnecessary confusion and increase the cost and time of doing businesses—and accessing government services.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have mentioned the number of 360,295. And so the obvious question is how does this relate to Manitoba and how many regulatory requirements do we have and how can we best address the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard)

request that we provide her a list of these regulatory requirements that we'd like to see removed?

Well, the problem is I don't know. I don't know what the number is here in Manitoba because the government simply doesn't know that number. The government over the years has consistently been unwilling to initiate any kind of regulatory count here in the province of Manitoba. So we need to go to third parties, third parties like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business which estimates the cost of complying with regulatory requirements here in the province of Manitoba cost businesses almost \$1 billion annually. Only 8 per cent of small and medium-sized enterprises here in the province of Manitoba believe that the current administration actually consider how new red tape will impact businesses. This is the worst rate in the entire country.

\* (11:30)

So, Mr. Speaker, if we're looking for a low-cost initiative to actually help the provincial economy, help grow our economy, I think reducing red tape should be a no-brainer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** I find it interesting that the member just spoke was talking about that he doesn't know what red tape we have and what red tape to claim, yet they're just throwing out a blanket statement saying that they want to cut red tape.

Now, we've—I clearly heard the minister invite the members opposite to make a list and bring it to the minister, and they'll have a look at it, but they don't seem to want to have to do the work. It's really easy when you're in opposition to just say that you're going to cut something. Let's cut red tape. But, obviously, I mean, their party's rhetoric is really good with saying they're going to cut stuff. I mean, they want to cut health care and they want to cut education and they want to cut infrastructure. They want to cut things across the board. So it's really the party of cuts. I guess PC stands for progressive cuts or party of cuts. I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, which one it is.

You know, they want to talk a big game about red tape reduction. Well, let's talk about something that happened last year in this Legislature, where we had a great debate about keeping Immigration, one of the best programs in the country—actually, the best program in the country. It was recognized by every

other province and the whole country. And what happened during that debate? They voted against keeping a fantastically run, great program. And now I have constituents who come to my office and say that they're having a hard time running through the immigration system because of all the red tape that they're finding with the federal government, that our program was a lot easier and a lot more supportive.

So when they talk about red tape, I guess they have a—they try to disconnect from their federal cousins sometimes, but really, you know, I think when—you know, when it come—push comes to shove, their federal master lords over them and they have to do what he says. I mean, you want to talk about red tape? Okay. Let's talk about environmental red tape.

This is their federal counterparts, and what they did to the environment recently, they've gutted environmental regulations. They went from thousands of lakes and river systems and streams being protected to only a handful. And, interestingly enough, that handful is only in, oh, Conservative ridings, Mr. Speaker.

You know, they want to talk about cutting red tape. You know what? I'll talk about red tape. The people who went through that tragedy in Lac-Mégantic would gladly have more red tape and more safety regulations on the rail lines than what those poor people went through. That is an example of cutting red tape. The federal government decreased the safety, the inspections on trains and on railway systems, and that is an example of cutting red tape. Look what happened, Mr. Speaker. And we've seen countless examples across the country of derailments. Unfortunately, Lac-Mégantic was absolutely a tragic event that saw the red tape reduction ending in people's lives being taken.

But, you know, red tape, they talk about it like it's always a bad thing; it's not. There's regulations in place for a reason, so companies can't just run a rail line and run through a community too fast or run tankers full of oil that hasn't been marked properly so that way they can—the fire departments can actually know what was in them when they're burning.

You know, they talk about red tape reduction. Well, how would they feel about is that—if red tape reduction—is that cutting things for, like, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg? Would they cut the red tape on that? Is that what they're talking about, that we'd just be allowed to willy-nilly and go out and pollute the lakes? I mean, I think we already

went through that before. The—their last Leader of the Opposition, before he went to wherever he went to, he was willing to just cut the regulations and allow the lake to be polluted even more.

You know, there's good reason for some of the stuff that goes on. We invited the members opposite to show us where there might be some improvements of—be able to be made. The minister said she's absolutely open to looking at where the regulations that they want to bring forward and look at them and say, is it a good idea or a bad idea?

But just running around with scissors like their Leader of the Opposition likes to do is going to get somebody hurt. That cutting of red tape just for the sake of saying that we're cutting them—I mean, we know that the Leader of the Opposition ran around saying that he cut thousands of regulations and pages, but, you know, we can't seem to find them. I guess maybe someday he'll table them in the House, these thousands of pages of regulations that he happened—3,000 pages of regulations that he happened—that he says that he has cut, but nobody can seem to find where these pages were cut.

So it seems interesting that they're talking about, you know, cutting regulations, but they don't know what they want to cut. I mean, we see how—I wonder how the small businesses that they were talking about would feel about the tax structure that they had when the opposition was in power. Would they like to see that 9 per cent small business tax back on them? Is that what small businesses are saying? We've cut the 9 per cent business tax to zero; the only one in the country.

So they talk about trying to make it better for small businesses, but they didn't do that. We did that, Mr. Speaker, we helped small businesses. We also have online services to help them navigate the systems and figure out everything they need. We have a great system for safety that helps a small business if they're having some safety issues and problems. We have safety officers that'll go out and help them. But I guess that's another example of their red tape.

Last year they voted against protecting highway workers, Mr. Speaker, a safety bill to protect workers, and they voted against it. That's the kind of red tape they're talking about? I will gladly say that I support our red tape; we should be protecting workers.

Their side of the House, during the election when they were talking about what they would do with safety, they said companies can self-police. Oh, yes, we've seen how well that works out for employees and for the members of the public when companies self-police. You cannot have it both ways.

Now, I invite the members opposite to talk to the minister, because she said she was absolutely one hundred per cent open to talking to them about what regulation, when and where, that they can work on and possibly cut. Well, we're not going to just run around, willy-nilly with scissors and cut red tape, that they so-call red tape. That actually would damage the safety and the lives of people. We're not about to do that. We value the environment and we value safety of workers. I mean, obviously, they don't see that value; they voted against that safety bill.

But, you know, it just seems so—they're always so negative and down on Manitoba. I've never seen anything quite like it, actually. They're always talking about how terrible it is here all the time, but meanwhile, everything else, all the indicators point to being it good, like KPMG saying that we're the best midwestern city to do business in, cranes dotting the skyline so that we have more building and more stuff going on. You know, they want to talk about how bad it is, but then they don't really give us examples. They just—it's really easy, I guess, being in opposition, you can just say whatever you feel like and, you know, there's no real accountability to it.

You know, they want to talk about, you know, how they're really against red tape, but what about the red tape that—well, we'll call it red tape—that we put in place that helps people who are purchasing vehicles? How about the hidden fees on auto repairs? They would call that red tape; I would call it protecting consumers, Mr. Speaker. They want to talk about how they would cut that stuff. The Leader of the Opposition, he voted against the rules for new home warranty, the biggest purchase a family can make. He would say that that's red tape; we shouldn't have red tape like that to protect consumers.

Well, once again, I'm gladly standing on the side of red tape, because that tape that they so-call that they would cut actually protects people, Mr. Speaker. If they want to cut something, I'd like them to show us what they would like to cut. Because that—the proof is in the pudding. You have to show the people what you're thinking about cutting.

And you know what? The members opposite have some great ideas. We debate great bills in this House, and we've passed a bunch of them this year. And I know that they can—they're capable of bringing forward the ideas that they want to see. And you know what, we'll have that debate and the minister will sit down with them and meet with them and discuss each regulation.

But to bring a bill forward that talks about just cutting red tape, and putting that word out there, it doesn't make sense. Because you can't just cut red tape, you need to know the regulation that you're thinking about cutting, because it has an impact on people's lives and their safety. You can't just say you're going to cut people's safety. You can't say that you're going to say, well, we're not going to give you consumer protection anymore because that's considered red tape.

You can't cut safety regulations for railway companies. We've seen what happens. The members opposite, their federal party is supporting shipping oil up a rail line to Churchill on a rail line that has averaged 10 derailments a year. Now, those derailments happen now with grain cars, so when the grain tips over, you know the caribou and all the wildlife and the birds, they can eat that grain, and they can flip the car back on the tracks and they can keep going. Oil is a totally other issue. But that would be an example of what they would consider cutting red tape: just allow a company to ship oil up a rail line that has had 63 derailments in 10 years. It's absolutely crazy to think of that as cutting red tape; we're talking about protections for the people.

There is a reason why there's the things that we have in legislation; there's a reason for them, Mr. Speaker, and it's really easy for the members opposite to just spout out that they want to cut red tape. And I challenged them. I—the minister challenged them. Let's see it. Let's—show us where you're going to cut this red tape. Because if you're talking about cutting things like red tape on, you know, health care, red tape on education, red tape on the environment, you know what, we're not going to do that. Because we believe in protecting people, we believe in protecting workers and we believe in protecting families.

\* (11:40)

We're not going to cut red tape willy-nilly and make those people suffer because the members opposite have a vision in mind that there's too much red tape. If the member opposite, the Leader of the

Opposition, cut 3,000 pages of red tape, let's see what those were because he sure hasn't tabled it in this House. I'd like to know how important those regulations were and what he cut. It would be very interesting to see that.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** It is my privilege to stand this morning and support the resolution as introduced by the member for River Heights—sorry, Tuxedo—Tuxedo and stand in support of this motion to reduce red tape.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is an important resolution for this Chamber this morning, and I'm happy for the time that is allotted to me to be able to enlighten the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) and others on the other side. Minutes ago, I believe, I correctly heard this member say that he is standing on the side of red tape. And I don't think there is a comment that could be made by a government member that could so successfully and so completely differentiate the opinions, the sides that we are taking on this matter. I would invite the member for St. Norbert and his colleagues to understand that by definition the idea of red tape is that amount and that degree and that type of regulation on business that is excessive, that duplicates, that is redundant, that makes it difficult, that overburdens those groups, those businesses and those entities from doing what they do with their expertise, with their know-how, with their understanding of their industry, from actually generating wealth in the province of Manitoba, hiring the workers that they say they want to hire, bringing revenues to a company that will be subject to taxation.

And I would invite the member for St. Norbert to understand that he should not ever be caught saying that he is on the side of red tape. He should be on the side of creating jobs. He should be on the side of generating wealth in the province of Manitoba. He should be on the side of Manitobans. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, that not even—not even—the civil servants who are working in departments would side with that member when he says that. They're probably in their offices right now saying, whoa, what did that member just say?

The member from Morris made clear this morning that everyone is doing more. Mr. Speaker, the federal government set a target to reduce red tape and they are working down towards that target. Saskatchewan has set targets, B.C. has set targets. In many jurisdictions their actions are actually even

surpassing the targets they set, unlike this NDP government that shoots the arrow and then paints the bull's eye wherever the arrow lands.

I would submit to you this is not some kind of debate that this government can actually say this morning is some kind of a we say and they say. In a very different way this is about everyone else standing on a side that this government is not in support of. Everyone else is moving to reduce, eliminate that kind of excessive regulatory burden for businesses. Everyone else is actually going a long way to achieve wins along this path, but this government sits there.

And this morning the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) chirps from her seat and says, give us one example—give us one example. Now, the first thing I have to say about that is this: after 14 years, members of this government have no ideas. They have not one example of their own of a place they can go to eliminate the burden that is on the back of business. It is outrageous, but not unthinkable, because in many other instances they seem to be without ideas. Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that demonstrates either a lack of effort, a lack of intent, a lack of competence or a lack of energy, or maybe all of the above. Surely the members of this government cannot sit in their place today and say they have not one clue about how to make it easier for businesses to succeed. Indeed, this is not a resolution that this member went into her office and just thought up. We are bringing this forward because the business and industry community—business owners across this province are saying more and more.

As a matter of fact, I can tell the members of government I just got off the phone minutes before coming up to the Chamber this morning with yet another business leader who said, tell the members of this government this morning how difficult it is to do business. So when the member of Fort Rouge says, give us one example, I will give her more than one example in the time that is allotted to me.

But let me say just before that the following: That when the minister says, give us some examples, what I interpret is that she is saying this is an olive branch she is saying they will receive from the opposition because they don't have this expertise, this will, this competence, this energy, this enthusiasm on their side; they're looking for us to work with them, to partner with them to bring forward the very ideas that will make a difference.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will commit in this House today to do exactly that. That is why in the days following this same member who introduced this resolution today will bring back a piece of legislation that is designed to do exactly what this resolution gets at, and that is to decrease this burden.

As a matter of fact, that same bill will contain a provision for a regulatory review, which is what is so desperately needed in this jurisdiction, a review that would basically measure what's in place right now, a review that would assess the need for future legislation. It would consider the cost, it would insist on consultation that is meaningful with stakeholder groups. And these things—and then it would go on to basically say the intent would be to reduce that manner and substance of regulation that is excessive and that makes it difficult to do business.

I would also give this caution to members of the government: They seem to have a very binary approach to this issue where they think somehow, well, all regulation is inherently good. Mr. Speaker, it is not. Now the businesses in our communities, in the communities that these members of government represent and in the jurisdictions that we represent, these businesses are not trying to skirt the law, they are not trying to go around regulation. I talk to businesses every day that say, tell us how to comply, tell us how but don't change the rules and don't keep switching the rules.

So here's an example for the members opposite. Pembina Valley Containers willingly in their business put in an eye wash station where no eye wash station was required, none required. They put it in—\$1,200 out of pocket—and then government comes back and says, now we want you to hook up so you can have tepid water or hot water in that same eye wash station even though it's not required. This is above and beyond. And they say that will cost you another thousand dollars. That is a piece of regulation we could address immediately.

Talk about the RTAC regulations for highways whereby right now in the province of Manitoba what we do is different than what any other province does. We measure weight but we do not actually talk about how many axles on a vehicle. Talk to any trucking company, it will tell you: get with the '90s, get to the same standard that all other provinces are on. Mr. Speaker, there is example after example of this.

I could tell you that at Meridian Manufacturing in Winkler there is a standard in place in this province that says one pilot vehicle for every truck

transporting a bin, even between successive trucks. It gets to a point where it's actually a danger on the highway. No other western jurisdiction has this regulation. As a matter of fact, they comply at great cost. And at the Saskatchewan border they can turn those pilot vehicles around, which are redundant, and send them home.

If this minister and this government wants examples of places where we can work effectively to reduce regulation we take up that challenge, we are leading the way, we are speaking to stakeholders and we will do the hard work that they are either unwilling or too lazy or too tired to do. We will take that up for the benefit of our economy, of jobs and of the businesses that are contributing so successfully to the Manitoba economy.

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** I'm happy to have the opportunity to talk about the incredible things that are going on in Manitoba and this bill gives me that. And, so, I am grateful for that coming up so that we have the opportunity to get on the record some of the truth about what's actually going on in our province.

\* (11:50)

I know that back in the dark days of the '90s, it was a very different picture economically. So I'm very grateful where we are now. We are one of the most competitive—we are—no, no, not one of the most—we are the most competitive city in the midwest for the fifth year in a row—for the fifth year in a row, Mr. Speaker. That is the KPMG competitiveness alternatives report, which is known internationally. It's certainly a third-party validator.

And we have improved our overall cost advantage by 2.8 per cent since 2012, and we remain below the Canadian average. We beat out, well, every other city in the midwest. Every other city in the midwest is more—less competitive than we are. So I don't know how we're kind of pulling that off when we have all these things that the members opposite apparently suggest that we have.

I do know that during those dark days of the '90s, it was a very different world that we were looking at. It was craneless. Well, okay, it wasn't craneless, because we did have the whooping crane and we still had the sandhill crane, which I believe is kind of a wading bird of some forth—some type.

But back then, the children who grew up in those years didn't know what a crane in the sky was because they'd never seen any. There was so little

going on in our province. Nothing was growing. It was a sad, sad place to be.

So when—I've talked to some business people recently, and I've asked them which is best for you: if we invest \$5.5 billion into the economy, into infrastructure, creating 58,900 jobs—what is best for you—if we do that or if they pull out \$550 million a year from the economy over those same five years? *[interjection]* Well, so far, interestingly enough—I'm glad you asked. Thank you. Not one of them—not one of them—has suggested that that plan of pulling \$550 million out of the economy is going to improve business—not one of them. So I find that very, very interesting.

And I am very excited about the number of things that have been going on here. And I'd like to—I have so many of them that I'd like to get in.

One is with regard to our business tax cuts. We are, of course, as everyone probably knows in here, except perhaps the members opposite—Manitoba's the only province in the country to have completely eliminated its small business tax. Our balanced tax reductions absolutely help us to compete. Over the past 13 years, corporate tax cuts have resulted in a total of \$2.9 billion remaining in the hands of entrepreneurs in Manitoba—*[interjection]* Yes, \$2.9 billion. Wow.

In 1999 Manitoba had the highest general corporation income tax rate, but you know what? We've reduced it from 17 per cent down to 12 per cent in 2012. We have eliminated the tax on capital investments that businesses make in their operations. We provide a 20 per cent refundable R & D tax credit to Manitoba companies who work with Manitoba institutions.

But I don't have, I guess, a lot of time, so I did want to just mention another project that I really think speaks to some of the exciting things that are going on in our province, and that is The Boldness Project. The Boldness Project is something that we're doing in Point Douglas, Mr. Speaker, where everyone's working together to create a system without a lot of red tape that really works to get our children and babies ready for school in that area by the time they're ready for school, when they're the right age. And it's everyone working together to get rid of the red tape in that system and ensure that those children get the things that they need in that area so that they are ready.



And it's been called a big, bold plan—a big, bold plan—that aims to transform the Winnipeg neighbourhood. And that's what it's going to take in that area is bold, new approaches and brave, new collaborations that they talk of. For every dollar invested in that project, we will see \$2 back in value. It's ambitious, it's exciting, it's innovative, and we are the only government known to be doing it in our—certainly in Canada, and we have everyone on board for that.

And I just think it's so exciting to see what we're doing in so many areas. I did want to mention, as well, just some of the safety issues around having, of course, regulations. I think that's just tremendously important not to forget, Mr. Speaker. We have done all kinds of cuts with Winnipeg Regional Health Authority—we brought that down from 13 to five. We did the whole number of cuts in the area with Manitoba liquor and lotteries and gambling that was just tremendous—tremendous for business as well.

They were all very, very pleased. I watched an interviewer actually try to get to them to say some bad things about that, and they couldn't succeed in spite of how much they wanted to get them to say something. They dragged and dragged out bad things from them and they—and the person that they were speaking to in business just was not prepared to go there. They were only prepared to say how incredibly good it was.

So we're certainly always interested in doing that whenever it is possible to do it and keep people safe at the same time, because keeping people safe has to be the No. 1 priority. And so I really hope that the members opposite remember how important those things are in that area.

Thank you so much.

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Housing and Community Development):** Well, I'm pleased to stand in the House today to speak about the initiatives that we've undertaken as a government for many, many years with respect to addressing the issues around red tape and making Manitoba more competitive and making Manitoba an easier place to do business.

And I will have to say to the new member from Morris, I appreciate him raising the issue of BizPaL, which was something that we were very pleased

to work with the federal partners and local municipalities and community organizations and businesses to launch the one-stop shop on the Internet for business, where you could find out however many permits were required, whether they were federal, provincial or part of the municipal government.

And the member from Morris, in his previous role as the member for the—or, pardon me, executive director, I believe, for the Canadian federation for independent business, was at many of those announcements singing the praises of our government for working with these partners to bring forward BizPaL, which does a lot to make it easier to do business here in Manitoba.

And Manitoba punches above its weight, because, of all the jurisdictions across Canada, we had more municipalities signed up on BizPaL. And I believe the figure was over 80 per cent or 85 per cent of the municipalities in Manitoba were actually connected to BizPaL, which facilitates doing business. If you're in Nova Scotia and you want to set up a business in Manitoba, you can go online, research all the permits that would be required, do most of the work that you need, downloading the files on PDF form to do all the paperwork that you needed, do it right online, know how much your fees would be and come and set up shop here in Manitoba.

So it's an incredible success story for us here in Manitoba and one that demonstrates that we are punching above our weight again with respect to bringing this initiative forward.

Now, it's really fascinating that the members opposite would be bringing forward this resolution yet again on red tape. And I know the Leader of the Opposition has suggested that he was responsible for cutting 3,000 pages of regulation. Now, I'm not sure what regulations he cut, quite frankly, but I have a theory maybe that was the act that was responsible for the Manitoba Telephone System being tossed out the window. When they sold Manitoba Telephone System, perhaps that was the red tape per se that the members opposite had sold.

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm really quite curious about the achievements of the members opposite or what they claim to be. And perhaps if they want to show us or tell us that they cut

3,000 pages of red tape, I would challenge them to show us what 3,000 pages of red tape that they alleged to have cut from this Province.

But what we'll continue to do is work with our partners, work with the business community, consult and make our community a more competitive community for businesses, create more opportunities for Manitoba businesses and—

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

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable Minister of Housing and Community Development (Mr. Bjornson) will have seven minutes remaining.

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, April 10, 2014**

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