

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.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 afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills? Seeing no bills, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bipole III—Farmland Acquisitions

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): This summer, as I travelled throughout southern Manitoba, I continued to be dismayed with this NDP government's callous, arrogant attitude towards our family farm operations. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his Cabinet, by stealth, ordered Manitoba Hydro to expropriate valuable food-producing land across Manitoba from hard-working Manitoba farm families without notice. Notice of expropriation is required under The Expropriation Act, but this did not deter the cowardice of this NDP government, who regularly breaks the rules.

These farm families have been subjected to the unwarranted stress of expropriation and continue to ask why they must bear the burden of this NDP's ill-fated plan to Americanize Manitoba Hydro. Why should Manitoba farm families and, indeed, all Manitobans have to subsidize hydroelectric sales into the American market?

The Premier and his Cabinet have now stripped Manitobans of their right to own private property, and on top of this the Premier and his Cabinet continue to order Manitoba Hydro not to sit down with the landowners group so they can express their concerns of the impact this west-side waste line will

have on their operations, their livelihoods and their personal lives.

But then, this is a premier and Cabinet that has stopped listening to Manitobans for many years now. This Premier and NDP government have now stooped to a new low by forcing Manitoba Hydro to expropriate farm families in order to rush a massive project destined to cost Manitoba Hydro customers and Manitobans billions of dollars for generations to come.

However, just like Monday's federal election, Manitobans will soon have a say on this callous and arrogant NDP government. It just can't come soon enough.

John Pritchard School Centennial

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, North Kildonan has an outstanding reputation of excellent schools, and today I would like to congratulate one of these schools on their centennial.

This year, John Pritchard School is celebrating 100 years of serving our students and community. The school's history provides a fascinating snapshot of what life was like in the early years of Manitoba.

The school was originally called Lord Kitchener School, which opened on Henderson Highway in September 1915. The ornate building is a symbol of the development boom that defined Winnipeg in the early 20th century. It had 40 students from farms scattered across—around the small rural community of North Kildonan, all under the tutelage of teacher and principal Daisy Jackson.

By the 1960s, the school was the cornerstone of a thriving urban community and its name was changed to John Pritchard after the man who founded North Kildonan's first schoolhouse in the early 1800s. Pritchard taught children of Hudson's Bay Company employees in a one-room schoolhouse on the same tract of land where later the school sits today.

I had the privilege of attending the celebrations, and I can say it was a wonderful reflection of the school's long history. The evening program began with a welcome from Principal Barbara Bowles. The 100-year anniversary band, followed by student

choirs and the school dance club, took the stage with their presentation named 100 Years of Music and Dance.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate John Pritchard's faculty, alumni and students on a successful celebration of 100 years of learning and community and community building, and wish them many more.

Small Business Week

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, this week we are celebrating small businesses in Manitoba as October 18th to 22nd marks the Business Development Bank of Canada's Small Business Week.

Since 1979, Small Business Week has given Canadian entrepreneurs the opportunity to talk to leading business experts and exchange innovative ideas. Small businesses are responsible for 25 per cent of Manitoba's GDP and they employ almost 250,000 Manitobans. They form the backbone of our economy and make immense contributions to our communities.

But small businesses are struggling under the NDP government. Excessive red tape is just one barrier facing small businesses in Manitoba. The more paperwork they are forced to fill out, the less time small businesses have to focus on growing. This NDP government is doing their best to stifle that growth.

Mr. Speaker, since hiking the PST to 8 per cent, Manitoba has lost over 4,500 private sector and self-employed jobs. Business confidence in Manitoba is at the second lowest level among all provinces and continues to decline. The payroll tax continues to punish businesses in the province, taxing them whenever they take in—on new employees.

In addition, the NDP promised to raise the small business income level to federal level, yet they have failed to do so. Manitobans are tired of the same NDP old, broken promises, Mr. Speaker, and policies that stifle small business growth in our province.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for us to recognize and congratulate all the small businesses here in Manitoba, and I want to assure them that a PC government will remove barriers for small businesses and allow them to prosper because that's what we need to do to create real economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, a time for the change—a times—a change for the better is coming. Thank you.

Canada Post Home Delivery

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Canadians depend on reliable and accessible mail delivery. Canada Post has roughly 68,000 well-paid employees who provide crucial services to Canadians. Our NDP government wants to protect home delivery, improve service, sustain jobs and attract new customers for Canada Post.

Mr. Speaker, the former federal Conservative government didn't share this sentiment. Under their plan to privatize Canada Post, 5 million Canadian households would lose door-to-door delivery. Close to 1 million households have already been impacted this year. The Conservative cut plan would also eliminate 6,000 to 8,000 jobs. The people who suffer most under this plan are seniors and people with limited mobility, who depend on home delivery.

This is particularly concerning for me as MLA for Concordia. There are over 3,000 seniors living in my area who would be severely impacted by this change. So many of these people use Canada Post as a means to stay involved in their wider world, and many of them aren't able to easily walk several boxes—blocks to community mailboxes or carry packages. They've shared their concerns with me and they expect something to be done about this.

*(13:40)

The Conservative cuts came without meaningful consultation. We reject this approach. We support the federal NDP's belief that Canada Post should find new revenue to maintain existing services such as expanding e-commerce or implementing financial services that have been successful around the world.

Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Trudeau and his party have promised they will stop home delivery cuts and review Canada Post's business plan. We urge them to honour this province and to make real efforts to protect and sustain Canada Post. We commit to standing alongside the federal government on this issue and to do our part to ensure that Manitoba families are protected from Conservative cuts.

Thank you.

Quagga Mussel Infestation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I talked about the glacially slow response

of this NDP government to the threat and ultimate infestation of zebra mussels. A better job must be done to prevent a quagga mussel invasion. Quagga mussels, like zebra mussels, arrived in Lake Erie about 1989 and have spread widely to all the Great Lakes in Ontario, to the Mississippi River and to a lake in South Dakota.

Similar to zebra mussels, they clog water intake structures like pipes and screens, reduce pumping capabilities for power and water treatment plants at huge costs to industry and to communities. Docks, breakwalls, buoys, boats and beaches have all been heavily colonized. Worse than zebra mussels, which only attach to hard surfaces, quagga mussels also live on soft lake bottoms. They produce a waste discharge, a pseudofeces, which accumulates to create a foul environment. Organic pollutants accumulate in their tissues to very high levels and can then be passed up the food chain leading to increased wildlife and human exposure to these toxins. Long-time Gimli fisherman Robert Kristjanson recently warned of the threat of quagga mussels, saying, we can't have another government here that's going to sit and wait until this lake is full of it, quaggas. This must be stepped on now.

The NDP were not vigilant on zebra mussels, and they've now spread to Cedar Lake. The provincial government needs to act with great vigour now to prevent a quagga mussel invasion, enhancing education, surveillance and enforcement in relation to boats coming into our province. We have enough problems with zebra mussels; we certainly do not need a quagga mussel as well.

Are the NDP actually going to protect our lakes or are they, as Robert Kristjanson says, just going to sit and wait until our lakes are full of quaggas too?

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I have some guests to introduce just prior to oral questions.

I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon from King Edward Community School, we have 53 grade 6 students under the direction of Anna Choy, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Mr. Chief). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome all of you here this afternoon.

And in our usual practice, I'd like to take a moment to introduce to members of the Assembly the—two of our new pages who are with us here today, joining us for this session. First we have Tiffany Fernando, who is a student at St. Mary's Academy, and we have Megha Kaushal, who is a student at Fort Richmond Collegiate. On behalf of honourable members, we welcome our new pages here with us today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Federal Election Provincial Relations

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yesterday we had a little bit of an opportunity, the Premier and I, to share some perspectives on the issues of team building, and, of course, team building requires many things. It requires trust most of all. The strongest teams are ones based on trust; common interests are not enough.

We all share very real concerns about bettering the lives of Aboriginal children in our province and country. We all share a desire for a strategic, well, a strategic infrastructure investment, Mr. Speaker, and for better access to health care. These are common interests, but they're not enough to build a team.

One year ago, members on that side of the House demonstrated in a rebellion against their leader that they did not share a trust in him. And because of that, we saw an unprecedented and dysfunctional situation arise here in Manitoba that Manitobans will not likely forget very soon.

Now the Premier claims that he can build a team with the new federal Liberal government.

And I have to ask him: If he can't build trust within his own team, how does he possibly expect Manitobans to believe that he can build a trusting relationship with our new federal government?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have worked with all federal governments since the time we've been in office to make progress in Manitoba, and the member opposite may have known that I acknowledge the contribution of the current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, with respect to the economic recession, where all the provinces came together with the federal government to address that issue.

There was a divergence after the last federal election where a program of austerity left many

people unemployed in Manitoba and many services reduced from the federal government. The Leader of the Opposition lauded all of those budgets, said they were the best budgets he'd ever seen, including major tax breaks for the wealthy and cuts for low-income Canadians in terms of services they delivered.

But the member opposite himself yesterday said, I'm really excited to work with the new Liberal government; I've worked with Liberals extensively when I was on the Hill.

But when you take a look at his record on the Hill, this is what he said of Liberals: a discredited hodgepodge of opportunism and gimmickry.

Is that working with other people, Mr. Speaker?

NDP Government Relationship with Manitobans

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Actually, I recall having the support—enlisting the support of a number of Liberal members on the Hill in terms of pushing for Aboriginal women's rights and having zero support from the members opposite.

You build a team based on trust. But if you ask Manitobans who own a cottage they'll tell you they were disrespected by this Premier, or if they were a flood victim they were forgotten, or if they were interested in promoting Assiniboia Downs they were intimidated, or if they volunteered at a women's shelter board they were insulted, or if they were rural municipal representatives they were ignored, or if they were in a non-profit they were clawed back.

If you ask any Manitoban what the No. 1 tax cut was that hurt them, especially low-income Manitobans, they'll tell you it was the broken-promise PST hike which this Premier introduced after promising not to. And to get his way, he took away all Manitobans' right to vote on it.

Why should any Manitoban trust this Premier when it is so clearly evident that he does not trust them?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We do actually have tremendous faith in Manitobans to recognize when we're addressing their priorities.

And when we went out and put a record infrastructure program in place in this province, which has exceeded \$1 billion of expenditure this year, Mr. Speaker, close to 10,000 jobs in this province, Manitobans told us that was their priority:

Build that infrastructure that will make our communities safer. Build that infrastructure that will protect us from flooding. Build that infrastructure in all the cities and towns and rural communities that will make our main streets and our neighbourhood streets more effective and a higher quality of life. And we have done that based on what we heard from Manitobans.

But I have to say to the member opposite, is he really suggesting he can give lessons on how he builds trust with his caucus when he was the one that implemented the wooden buffalo award once a week to his caucus, Mr. Speaker? Really, the double standard has returned again with full force as we redo—rejoin the session.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the Premier's just jealous, Mr. Speaker, because he knows he'd never get the bison award. It's for accomplishment. He hasn't—he wouldn't qualify.

Mr. Speaker, interestingly, you know, the Premier and some of his colleagues went into the federal election NDPers and they seem to have come out Liberals. And yesterday the Premier says that he has a ton in common with Justin Trudeau.

Well, one of the only things that they really have in common is they both ran on a promise, and that promise was to reduce the tax burden on the people of this country and this province. I hope Justin Trudeau keeps his promise; I know the Premier didn't keep his.

And that betrayal, that broken promise, is what caused his own team to question whether they could trust his word. And that betrayal and that broken promise is what has put an additional load, an additional burden, on Manitobans who are working hard to find success in their lives, Mr. Speaker.

So you can't build a team without trust, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier understand that nobody likes a jersey flipper?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the biggest broken promise which has impacted Manitobans was when the Leader of the Opposition was part of a government that privatized, without tendering, I might add, the telephone system in Manitoba. The rates went from among the lowest in Canada to among the highest.

* (13:50)

Every single time a young person or a person picks up their cellphone and pays those rates,

they can thank the Leader of the Opposition for having among the highest rates in Canada. That's a broken promise that keeps paying dividends to out-of-towned investors, to owners that no longer live in Manitoba.

We have kept Manitoba Hydro owned for the people of Manitoba. We have kept the auto insurance system owned for the people of Manitoba, and our rates for Manitoba Hydro, auto insurance and home heating as a bundle are lowest in the country.

They're at risk—they would be at risk with the Leader of the Opposition because he will say one thing and then do another and put the burden on all Manitobans. A burden—*[interjection]* Yes, Mr. Speaker, the—I know he's in denial on that. And the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time for this question has elapsed.

Small-Business Community Regulatory Barriers

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): The only person saying one thing and doing another is, in fact, this Premier (Mr. Selinger), who promised not to raise taxes, turned around and did so. Mr. Speaker, he should be ashamed of himself.

Small businesses in Manitoba are the backbone of our economy. They account for 40 per cent of the entire Manitoba workforce and 80 90–80 to 90 per cent of the private sector jobs here in our province. I have met with many of these small provinces across this great province of ours, and by far one of the most important barriers to doing business in Manitoba is that of red tape.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister for Jobs and the Economy start listening to small-business owners and employees and implement a strategy to reduce red tape?

Hon. James Allum (Acting Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Mr. Speaker, you know, the only person saying one thing and doing absolutely nothing is the member from Tuxedo.

The truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, among all provinces in Canada the only province where small business pays no small-business tax is right here in Manitoba. Now, not only that, but we've raised the threshold for small-business tax so that they can pay even less if—it used to be \$425,000; now it's \$450,000.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans and Manitoban small business, that they get a good deal on this side of the House.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I correct the record. In fact, it wasn't just the Premier who was saying one thing and doing another. In fact, it was every single member opposite in this Chamber who promised not to raise taxes in the last election and were part of a government that turned right around and did that.

Mr. Speaker, our leader has announced that we will implement a red tape reduction strategy to help small businesses in Manitoba. The NDP government has increased the red tape burden on small businesses, forcing, in many cases, them to move or to expand in other provinces. Their strategy has not worked.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister for Jobs and the Economy just admit that he has failed the small businesses in Manitoba by refusing to address this very important issue for them?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I really don't understand why the member opposite can't take the facts as they are.

Let's remember that Manitoba is creating jobs faster than any other province in Canada right now. Let's remember that Manitoba had the second lowest unemployment rate in the country. And just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, wholesale trade in Manitoba increased by 5.8 per cent from July to August, and increased 2.1 per cent when compared with August 2014. In other provinces—six other—all those sales are going down.

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, that we're creating jobs, we're growing the economy, and the biggest threat to job creation and economic development is the Opposition Leader and his Conservative critic.

Mrs. Stefanson: Biggest threat to our economy here in Manitoba is four more years of an NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, since the PST hike two and a half years ago, Manitoba has lost some 4,500 private sector and self-employed sector jobs. Excessive red tape and the PST hike have placed unnecessary burdens on small businesses here in our province. The small-business sector is not only the backbone of our economy, but it represents the largest potential growth area for our economy here in Manitoba.

If the NDP wants to grow our economy, then why have they implemented policies like excessive red tape and increase in taxes that have had a negative impact on small-business growth across this province, resulting in the loss of more than 4,500 private sector jobs in our province?

Mr. Allum: Well, it's pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, that we have a plan to grow the economy, create jobs, protect front-line services for Manitoba families.

Isn't it time the opposition Conservative leader actually came out and told us what his plan is?

But we know what his plan is, Mr. Speaker, because in questions from himself and from the Finance critic yesterday, they made it patently clear that they're going to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget and lay off people in this province.

Manitoba—on this side of the House, we stand with Manitobans. We stand with Manitoba families. We keep people employed. They only want to do one thing and one thing only, and that's kill 70,000 jobs in this province.

Manitoba's Credit Rating Government Spending Record

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, in July, Moody's downgraded Manitoba's credit rating. It was the first downgrade in 30 years, but according to the Finance Minister, it's just business as usual; it's another day at the office.

But he knows that's not the case, because a lack of commitment in staying on course with the budget is just the kind of thing that makes moneylenders nervous. And when Moody's announced their decision to downgrade, they also expressed that they were nervous about this government's willingness to meet its targets for expenditure growth.

Will the Finance Minister provide an update and say how did he do on reining in spending last year?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we dealt with this topic yesterday in this House. And as we said before, our ranking now is higher than it was when they were in office. The member should perhaps ask his leader why they were satisfied then with being at a lower ranking than we are now here in the province of Manitoba.

We have one of the best rankings in Canada, Mr. Speaker. We have one of the strongest economies. Manitoba is a great place to invest.

Mr. Speaker, I met recently with individuals in Toronto and New York. They expressed confidence in Manitoba. The only ones that don't have confidence in Manitoba are the members opposite.

Mr. Friesen: Well, the Finance Minister hasn't answered the question, so I will for him. The NDP did not rein in spending, and that proves Moody's skepticism to be well-founded.

The Public Accounts were released a few weeks ago, and it turns out that the NDP overspent their planned budget by more than \$200 million. It's no wonder that Moody's made the comment, a loss of fiscal discipline, with reference to NDP overspending. In fact, the NDP has overspent its planned budget every single year.

How does the Finance Minister believe that the bond rating agencies will continue to respond to his overspending now that the real extent of it is fully understood?

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, our ranking's better now than it was when they were in office.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is last year we had to deal with extra expenditures related to the flood. The member's telling us that we shouldn't have done that. That was in his own constituency.

Remind the member that every single day in this House each and every one of their colleagues stand up and demand more, Mr. Speaker. This very member wants a new personal-care home in his constituency.

I recently was out in Morden-Winkler. I met with the people there in Morden-Winkler, fine people, Mr. Speaker. They told this government to continue to invest in health care. They told us to continue invest in education. They told us to continue to invest in infrastructure.

They have an agenda which is different than ours, Mr. Speaker. They want to kill health—they want to kill—cut money to health care. They want to cut money to education. They want to kill our infrastructure plan. We're going to reject that. Manitobans reject that—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Friesen: Fear and excuses from a government that is clearly out of gas.

Mr. Speaker, this Finance Minister himself made promises to Manitobans that it would be different this time. On one of his first times in that role in this House, he stood and said, it is the goal of our government to return to surplus and we're going to do it by controlling expenditures. But three months after that pledge, the fiscal year ended, and the result was \$200 million in additional overspending, just as Moody's warned.

He made a promise. He broke a promise. Manitobans are tired of NDP broken promises. He can't control spending. He's out of options.

When is he planning to raise the PST again?

Mr. Dewar: You know, Mr. Speaker, the only one talking about raising taxes is that member.

You know, the member was on radio only a few weeks ago, and one of his quotes was: Budgets are tough to balance. That is the member opposite, Mr. Speaker. He says budgets are tough to balance.

That's why we're taking a responsible approach to it, Mr. Speaker. We are reducing the deficit every single year, while the economy's growing. It becomes a smaller share of our economy every single year.

* (14:00)

We came into office, we're spending 13 cents on the dollar to service the debt. Last year it was 5.7; this year it's 5.6. We are heading in the right direction here in the province of Manitoba.

I referenced yesterday six or seven institutions which have predicted that Manitoba will lead the nation in economic growth, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the only ones who aren't happy about the great success story that we're having in the province is that member opposite.

Bipole III Transmission Line Farmland Acquisition

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): On Saturday the First Minister participated in a rally on the front steps of the Legislature where he told Manitobans, and I quote: Say no to fear. End quote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the First Minister isn't telling the same message to Manitobans who own the land in the way of the NDP's buy-more-get-less hydro plans.

Will the Premier stop the fear mongering Manitobans who don't want their lands seized in the name of a failed hydro plan?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite because we do think the politics of division as practised by the members opposite and the federal Conservative government have left this country badly divided. And we think the federal election was a pleasant relief to that with a strategy of inclusion, which is why I was on the front steps of the Legislature to support indigenous people, to support people of colour, to support people on a message of inclusion.

And I did note the Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity to attend that rally to show he supports all Manitobans regardless of who they are, and he missed that opportunity, as did you.

Mr. Eichler: He should maybe show the same respect to the farmers of Manitoba as well, Mr. Speaker. Shame on this minister.

Mr. Speaker the First Minister's already seized more than 1,200 acres from Manitobans for a pay-more-get-less hydro plan, all while the Premier tells Manitobans, say no to fear.

We know this First Minister has a problem with the truth. We know how Manitobans are tired of the same NDP broken promises.

Will the First Minister apologize today to the more than 1,200 acres he seized by the NDP's pay-more-get-less hydro plan?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Speaker, let me put a few facts on the record.

First of all, the plan with respect to Manitoba Hydro is one not for necessarily our generation but our children and grandchildren and—as we're taught by Aboriginal elders is to look into the future. And maybe the members opposite could listen to a very sound teaching by the old people.

Our plan includes creating 10,000 jobs right here in the province of Manitoba, and it's tied to Keeyask and bipole.

And what the member is talking about is an issue that I raised before here. You'll recall in the spring sitting I was accused of stealing land. Me, of all people, stealing land, Mr. Speaker.

Let me further—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Eichler: Manitobans have said no to the NDP plan to double the hydro rates of all Manitobans, but the NDP has pushed ahead by expropriating their land anyway. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) says no to fear but bullies Manitoba landowners.

Will he apologize for seizing more than 1,200 acres of land from landowners, yes or no? The answer is very simple.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, in fact, what has happened is that over 500 landowners have consented for their land to be used for the project. This leaves about 20 per cent left to be negotiated with, and that negotiation process is under way currently. So Hydro is also offering a very fair and generous compensation package which includes, for easements, amounting to 150 per cent of market value for property, plus additional payments for structural impact, construction damage and ancillary damage.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Manitoba Hydro is doing the responsible thing, and I commend them for their work.

Student Financial Aid Program Timeline and Costs

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, back in 2007 this NDP government decided to replace the student financial aid program, and the tender went out in 2009. The student financial aid program was to be up and running by the end of June 2011 and was to be \$12 million.

We know now that over \$15 million has been spent and no program to be seen.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Education today: Where did the \$15 million go, and could it not have been used in a better way for Manitoba students?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, you know, the member has asked this question several times, and I remind him at each opportunity that were he to go online for student aid support today he would be well served by that system, and then when—if he qualified for a student loan, the first thing he would find out, that he doesn't have to pay interest on the Manitoba portion of a student loan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's clear we—I've made it clear before, phase 1 of that project was completed in

2011. Phase 2, as with many IT projects, has admittedly been complicated. We're working our best to make sure that we can get it out and working for the people of Manitoba, but in the interim, he's well served by the existing system.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, this minister's best is just not good enough for Manitoba students, another prime example of continued NDP waste and mismanagement that is hurting essential front-line services, especially our kids.

The new tender for the student financial aid software closed in July.

Will the minister confirm or deny that when this program is up and running, whenever it will be, Mr. Speaker, that it's going to cost Manitobans roughly \$30 million?

Mr. Allum: Well, I'm pleased to hear the member note that the RFP for phase 2 was issued this summer. We're continuing to work with our partners to make sure we have the best, most affordable, most flexible student aid system in the country.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, when we invest in our universities and colleges, when we invest in our students, when we provide grants and bursaries, when we ensure we have the second and third lowest tuition for colleges and universities in the country, every single time the member opposite votes against it.

The truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, is that the member opposite and the Opposition Leader fundamentally believe that investing in education is a waste of money. We would never think that way.

Mr. Ewasko: Under this NDP government, Manitobans continue to spend more and get less, and in this fact, Mr. Speaker, they're absolutely getting nothing for their hard-earned money.

Mr. Speaker, \$15 million: Does this minister realize what he could have done with that \$15 million that he's lost? He could have funded 750 level 3 special needs students with that \$15 million, and he's gone and wasted it. He's lost it. He doesn't know where it is. Answer the question, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Based on the comments that I just heard by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, I'm going to have to issue a caution to him that when we're placing our questions or we're providing answers to the questions that are asked, that you direct your comments through the Chair, please. By

the comments you made directing at the minister, that's contrary to our practices and rules of this House. So I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable member.

The honourable Minister of Education, to proceed with the answer.

Mr. Allum: Of course, let's remember what the record of the Opposition Leader was when he was in government when it came to college and university education. The truth of the matter is that tuition fees more than doubled during his era. Not only that, tuition actually skyrocketed by 132 per cent during his time in government while enrolment in universities and colleges declined by 8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we invest in public education. We're proud of the public education system on our side. If they want to believe it's a waste of money, then he should go tell the university and college presidents that and, most of all, he should go tell students that he doesn't believe in them and he thinks investing in education is a colossal waste of money. Shame on him.

Bethesda Regional Health Centre Accessibility Concerns

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it's been a year and a half since the NDP opened an entrance at Bethesda Regional Health Centre, an entrance that those who are sick and disabled struggle to get into because you can only get in by using a set of stairs or you can use a narrow and a steep ramp.

* (14:10)

Now, the Minister of Health in the last session said that this was one of the first priorities that came across her desk and she was going to fix it. So in the summer we saw that what her fix was is a button that was installed at the bottom of the stairs, a button that you can press and then somebody will come out of the hospital and help you get up the stairs. Of course, unfortunately, the button is only available Monday to Friday from 7 'til 3 p.m., and if you need help at any other time, I don't know what you do. I'll table a picture for the minister.

Why is it that her fix of this serious problem was a button that's open on banker's hours?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question, and I'd also ponder how often he actually spends time in the community. Because while I share the frustration

that patients felt at that entrance, I can tell you that the construction of the ramp has been completed and it has been open for use since October 8th.

While the installation—there are some bells and whistles that need to be added. We have some different light—*[interjection]*—we have some light fixtures. We have some glass panels and we have some railing caps that will occur later this month, but these components do not affect the use of the ramp.

And our government is there for the residents, because not only have we built and expanded the new ER, it's, again, also received one of our QuickCare clinics.

So the ramp is up and running and we have also got plans—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Goertzen: Actually, I was at the ramp this morning, and I noticed that they put up a sign. It's a warning sign; it says that the ramp is only wide enough for one wheelchair at a time to go up, but don't worry, because they've installed three rest stops along the ramp. And an individual, Mr. Speaker—and I'll table a picture for her of the sign—so that individuals can go up that ramp, the steep ramp, one at a time, and then they can stop at the rest stop when they're really, really tired—those who are disabled—and then, when it's -31° they can sit outside and enjoy the weather on that rest stop. But they have three rest stops as they navigate their way up to the hospital.

This is no way to treat people who are sick, people who are disabled. This is an arrogant answer from a minister who doesn't want to fix this serious problem.

Ms. Blady: I thank the member for the question. I would also reference that maybe he did not have the benefit that I had in my post-secondary education of having classes with a wonderful, wonderful professor in barrier-free design, Mr. Claude de Forest.

And in the nature of barrier-free design, the ability to navigate on your own up a wheelchair ramp means that you need to be able to reach both sides. Single passage is actually standard code. It's the ability of an individual that needs to be able to navigate on their own. If you have someone assisting you, that's wonderful. But single passage with rest areas is, in fact, the code and the standard and is, in fact, best practice.

Mr. Goertzen: You know, Mr. Speaker, I confess that in my nine years of university I never took a course where they said the way to deal with a situation at a hospital where you had to use stairs is to put a button so someone could beam you up or to put a ramp where you had to have three rest stops to get into the hospital. They never taught me that in any of my three faculties that I was in, Mr. Speaker. I confess.

Now, I emailed the Premier (Mr. Selinger) during the summer and I invited him to come to Bethesda so we could jointly help people get into the hospital. He didn't respond. I'm going to reissue that invitation. Maybe he can come with me other than on Monday to Friday between 7 and 3 so we can help people outside of those banker's hours and he can see how difficult it is, because his minister clearly is incapable, unwilling or both to get this fixed.

Ms. Blady: I thank the member for the question.

And I have continued to work with the hospital, with the region, to make sure that the new ramp was up to code, and not just up to code but exceeded code. Rest stops, rest areas, rise and—the rise of a ramp are all important.

There is going to be an addition. *[interjection]* If the members opposite are interested in listening, there is also going to be an elevator placed in, and we're working on that as well. It's about having choices, and so an enclosed elevator area is also part of the plan. But we didn't want to wait for that more complex part of the project to be ready to go before making sure the ramp was ready to go.

The ramp was a quicker fix, it has been fixed, it exceeds code, and it is done by best practices and building standards of which rest areas are a key component.

Children's Sports Equipment Provincial Sales Tax Exemption

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are taxed more than other Canadians, and it's making it difficult for Manitoba families to keep their children healthy and active. Both parents have to work in so many Manitoba families just to make ends meet. Providing even one child with the equipment to play ringette doesn't fit easily into their budget. The exemption of sports equipment from PST would help those parents to keep their children active.

Does this NDP government see the benefit from exempting children's sports equipment from the PST, the benefit it would provide to the health of Manitoba's children and to the finances of Manitoba's families?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

The member will know that we brought in a tax credit that provides support to families for their children to be involved in recreation activities. He voted against that in the budget. That was intended to support families.

We're a major partner in building the Manitoba Sport for Life Centre in downtown Winnipeg which will serve all the different teams in Manitoba: ringette teams, soccer teams, all the different forms of amateur sport in Manitoba. They will have a first-class facility there.

We have indoor facilities at the University of Manitoba for soccer and other sports like ringette. We have an indoor facility going up in the North End in the Garden City area to support year-round activity. We have the new fieldhouse at the University of Winnipeg, the recreation multiplex which supports indoor activity all year round.

We are investing in activities and facilities in Manitoba that allow young people and people of all ages to perform and be involved in recreational activities for healthy living: a tax credit, better facilities and big commitment to supporting amateur sport in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, families still have to buy their children equipment to play sports.

Immigrant families face many challenges when they come to a new country. In this province, like everyone else, they're stuck with a barrage of taxes applied to so many things, items like the equipment that their children need to join in healthy activities that help them socialize and make friends and be active. With the exemption of the PST on sports equipment that the Manitoba Liberals will put in place, this becomes more affordable.

Why is the NDP not helping to make sports more affordable for our children, like the Liberals?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, there is—we did put in a tax measure to provide a credit to families for their participation in sports in Manitoba. We have built facilities. Newcomers to Manitoba have access to organizations that we fund that

encourage them to be involved in sport. I've seen many of those organizations organizing young people to be involved in sport activities.

I was at the University of Winnipeg this summer, Mr. Speaker, at the new RecPlex there, and saw dozens and—literally—playing indoor sports at the rec centre using all the different opportunities. Whether it was soccer or ringette or ultimate sports, all of those activities were going on there, and we support those activities.

I do remind the member opposite, when we built all these indoor recreation facilities and when we put the tax credit in place for young people and families to support their activities in the community, the member opposite voted against it. That's the reality.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's children have dreams of following in the footsteps of our excellent athletes, many of whom are hockey players, but they're involved in many sports. But first they need to be given the chance to start.

For parents who want to give their child the opportunity to play hockey and to be a goalie, for example, they quickly discover that it will cost approximately \$2,000 to be fully equipped and they will have to pay \$160 in PST in addition.

Under the Manitoba Liberal plan, parents would receive an exemption on the PST cost, helping to play—make playing hockey a little easier in Manitoba.

Why in 16 years has the NDP government failed to take this simple step and make it easier for kids to play hockey, like the Liberals will?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we have always had an accessibility program for young people of various backgrounds to participate in sports, whether they're indigenous people, newcomers, people from low-income families. We have tax credit support. We've put in place many community club projects around the city. We've put in place multiplex projects.

*(14:20)

We have a relationship with Canadian Tire where we support them making equipment available very low cost, if not free in some cases, to young people participating in sports. The sponsor on that is Jonathan Toews, probably one of the best hockey players in the world right now, who grew up in the St. Vital area, a young, bilingual, outstanding world athlete that we work with through Canadian Tire to

make sports equipment available at a very affordable cost, and we have many, many programs.

We have programs where we make available free soccer balls to teams in Manitoba and they can play on the new soccer fields that we put outside, all-weather soccer fields, Mr. Speaker, whether it's in Central Park or over off Waverley Street or at the University of Manitoba or in the North End.

We're very interested in ensuring that young people have access to affordable, high-quality sporting opportunities at a price they can afford here in Manitoba. And every time we put those facilities and programs in place, the leader of the Liberal Party has voted against it, Mr. Speaker.

Science Lab Renewal Program Miles Macdonell Collegiate

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, today I was at Miles Mac Collegiate with the Minister of Education and James Currie, the dean of science at the University of Winnipeg, to cut the ribbon on two new chemistry labs where students can learn science in a state-of-the-art environment. The funding of more than \$338,000 was provided to renovate these two chemistry labs.

Will the minister inform the House about the importance of the Province's \$25-million science lab renewal program?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): You know, it's funny about the Opposition Leader because every day with him is Back to the Future day. You know, never mind 1995, you know, when he gets into his DeLorean each morning he sets the clock back to 1955.

He thinks we should send our kids back to the day—bygone days of teacher layoffs and crumbling classrooms. His antiscience, antiresearch agenda means he doesn't think students should be trained for the jobs of the future.

The Opposition Leader and his Conservatives don't believe in climate change. They have no interest in what scientists have to say. They would kill clean-energy hydro projects that provide—that replace them all with carbon-producing gas plants.

Mr. Speaker, we invest in science labs for the well-being of our students so they know what's going on in the world but also that they have the skills and the knowledge to get good jobs—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Farmland School Tax Rebate Cap

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, another broken promise by this government, this time from the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture broke his promise to farm families by changing the rules and placing a cap on the farmland education tax rebate.

Manitobans are tired of this same NDP broken promises, so question is: Why does this minister continue to penalize farm families with his clawback on the farmland education tax rebate?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely thrilled to speak today about our government's support of families in Manitoba, in particular farm families.

As the members know, that rebate now is at 80 per cent. When we came into office it was at zero. That is the Conservative legacy. That is the legacy of the Leader of the Opposition when he was in government, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize the importance of the agriculture sector to our province. That is why, as I said, zero versus 80, Mr. Speaker. I think our record—we'll put our record up against their record any time.

Women's Eligibility

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, the minister broke his promise on the education tax rebate by arbitrarily changing the rules, and amongst these rule changes, now many farm women landowners are not eligible for the program.

So why is this minister selectively excluding women from agricultural programs?

Mr. Dewar: I am prepared to take that question on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and I'll look into what the member has to say, Mr. Speaker, because we want to make sure that when we bring forward these policies that they're fair.

But again I'll remind the House and remind the member, we came into office, the exemption was zero. It's now 80 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Our record is much better than their record.

And we'll continue to work to make taxes—Manitoba a more affordable place, Mr. Speaker. That is our commitment I'll make to the member.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for petitions.

Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by L. Dubé, A. Shchudle, K. Bekeris and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Government Record—Apology Request

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Government members have been quoted as stating that Manitobans no longer trust the current government.

(2) Sadly, these same members have reportedly stated that since 2014 the government has been forced on its own narrow political interests ahead of what was once a government plan and what would be indeed the priorities of Manitobans, and that the

Premier is driven by his desire to hold on to his leadership rather than by the best interests of Manitobans.

(3) According to the comments from government members, their caucus is divided by, quote, fundamental differences and animosity, and the deep divisions—and quote, the deep divisions are not just amongst the MLAs and caucus, but they exist at the staff level as well.

(4) Regretfully, the dysfunction and infighting within the provincial government has nothing to do with addressing the fact that Manitobans are paying more and getting less. A Winnipeg family pays \$3,200 more in sales and income tax than they would in Regina but receive some of the worst results in health care and education in the country.

(5) Government members have said in the media that caucus dysfunction is entirely related to internal polls that indicate that they are, quote, in annihilation territory, saying that, quote, our numbers are down and the status quo is not good enough anymore. Our own party pollsters have told us we're facing oblivion, end quote.

(6) Little has been done by the government members to end the infighting with the Premier, claiming retaliation is justified because of public comments such as, quote, people have civil rights, but we also have an organization to run, end quote. Government Manitobans—government members acting on behalf of the Premier have said publicly, quote, we are not on a witch hunt, and have also said, quote, we have to look at who caused this and who are the ones that have damaged us the most, end quote.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier of Manitoba to take responsibility and apologize to the people of Manitoba for the social and economic damage created by his failed leadership and the disgraceful conduct of government members that has destabilized the provincial government and hurt Manitoba business, families.

And this petition has been signed by B. Langlay, L. Hiebert and C. Bowman and thousands of other Manitobans.

Rights of Manitoba Children

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government should uphold the rights of children set forth by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by Canada over 20 years ago, to better protect and promote children and their rights and to ensure the voices of children are heard.

Instead, many children in Manitoba, especially those in the child-welfare system, reveal that they sometimes feel they have no say in what happens to them.

Under this provincial government, Manitoba's children and youth are falling behind on several indicators of well-being and in areas that would prepare them better for outcomes in life.

This year the provincial government's education system was ranked last of all Canadian provinces in science, reading and math.

Under this provincial government, Manitoba also has the second highest percentage of children using food banks of all Canadian provinces and the highest child poverty rate.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (14:30)

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities to ensure that the rights of all Manitoba children are respected and that the opinions of children are taken into consideration when decisions that affect them are made.

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities to correct the tragic systemic flaws that have failed Manitoba children in the recent past.

This petition is signed by J. Quinn, E. Cerelzors, N. Sheldon and many more Manitobans.

**Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina—
Request for Research into Benefits and Costs**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Lac du Bonnet is a recreational area with great natural beauty.

(2) The Winnipeg River is one of the greatest distinguishing cultural and recreational resources in that area.

(3) Manitoba marinas increase recreational access and increase the desirability of properties in their host communities.

(4) The people of Lac du Bonnet overwhelmingly support a public harbourfront marina in Lac du Bonnet.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider collaborating with other levels of government to research the economic benefits and construction costs of a marina in Lac du Bonnet.

This petition is signed by T. Hannigan, C. Cournoyer, G. Shorthouse and many other fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

**Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route—
Information Request**

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is a 500-kilovolt alternating-current transmission line set to be located in southeastern Manitoba that will cross the US border south of Piney, Manitoba.

(2) The line has an in-service date of 2020 and will run approximately 150 kilometres with tower heights expected to reach between 40 and 60 metres and be located every four to five hundred metres.

The preferred route designated for the line will see hydro towers come in close proximity to the community of La Broquerie and many other communities in Manitoba's southeast rather than an alternate route that was also considered.

(4) The alternate route would have seen the line run further east, avoid densely populated areas and eventually terminate at the same spot at the US border.

(5) The Progressive Conservative caucus has repeatedly asked for information about the routing of this—of the line and its proximity to densely populated areas and has yet to receive any response.

(6) Landowners all across Manitoba are concerned about the impact hydro line routing could have on land values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to immediately provide a written explanation to all Manitobans of the Legislative Assembly regarding what criteria were used and the reasons for selecting the preferred routing for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, including whether or not this routing represented the least intrusive option to residents of Taché, Springfield, Ste. Anne, Stuartburn, Piney and La Broquerie.

This petition is signed by J. McKay, J. James, B. String and many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes petitions.

We'll now call grievances.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business.

Hon. James Allum (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, we would like to call debate on concurrence and third readings for Bill 20, concurrence and third readings for bills 21, 31 and 24, then report stage amendments and third readings for bills 18 and 70.

Mr. Speaker: For the information of the House, we'll be calling bills in the following order: starting with debate on concurrence and third readings, starting with Bill 20, and then we'll be calling for concurrence and third readings three bills, Bill 21, Bill 31 and Bill 24, followed report stage amendments of Bill 18 and Bill 70.

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 20—The Architects Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Starting first with Bill 20, The Architects Amendment Act, we'll now call that bill, and it's standing in the name of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, who has 28 minutes remaining.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I want to continue putting a few words on this bill, The Architects Amendment Act, how important it is to the province of Manitoba.

While the architects have—are now regulating their own profession, and like I said, I feel I've been honoured to work with many architects over the years on different projects, including some of my own personal projects and some volunteer projects in the town of Virden.

And what I was sort of finishing up on my one story about the construction of a seniors complex that I was doing this past year in Virden, Manitoba, and the regulations that this—the red tape that this government has created. We built the complex; we had people living in the complex before we even got the finance. It was just because of the red tape, the tenancy act that this government has put into place where all the financial institutions have to follow and abide by those.

Again, this is why I believe that the province, we're in jeopardy right now when it comes to construction, building construction. I've had a number of—one of—I've been honoured to have a business partner who is a contractor who has been—made many buildings, built many buildings in the area of the Westman. And the frustrations they've always had is to make sure that the red—when the red tape is delayed, it costs money for both the architect, it costs money for the construction company and also for any other tradespeople that work on that project.

We want to see continue that the Manitoba province continues growing when—economically, and that's why it's so important for this industry to be less regulated by the government and more regulations on themselves.

I really do believe that if you have high professional standards, like the architects, it's important that they are self-regulated. They want to keep that reputation. They want to make sure that their industry is clean and it has the reputation that

people can trust. And they will penalize anybody else who doesn't follow the rules and regulations that they've set out in their own standards.

I was a financial planner for over 20 years. And again, our—even though that we were regulated by the securities commission of Manitoba and the Canadian securities commission, we were also regulated by our own governing bodies. I was a certified financial planner for the same amount of time, and again, we had our standards. We had our regulation standards. We had to continue education for so many hours in a year. I believe in the certified financial planning it was 30 hours. In the insurance business and estate planning, it was another 30 hours. Again, those are self-regulatory bodies that actually enhance in the professionalism of professionals in any kind of field, any industry, including the architects.

And listening at the committee meetings to hear more of what the architects had to talk about, and every person who came on this bill supported it and they believed that less government interference and more regulatory—self-regulatory was more important to them. They know the industry. The government doesn't know the industry, unless they do have a professional who is an architect on that side. It is so important that they are consulted. They're the ones that will actually come to, if there's—they feel that the bill—there's additional bills that have to be or amendments that have to be included, they will come together themselves and create and lobby for opportunities for amendment to a bill or to create a bill.

And, like I said, I just feel so honoured to be to working with architects. They're very important to our provincial economy. They have done a lot of great work in our province.

Again, in the past, they've created a lot of buildings, including this fantastic building here at the Leg. It's so important. It's still impressive every day that I can walk into this building, how the architecture in this building is fascinating. Even we had, this past summer, a lot of tourists who came from the United States who actually had tours of this building and they were amazed about the style and the architecture of this building.

I enjoy going to different cities throughout Canada, going to Quebec City, again, great architecture there and a lot of history. Now—and then going to Vancouver, there's such a diversity of the past and present. Some of the architecture of some of

the buildings of residential to commercial buildings in Vancouver, they have that Pacific theme that you can still see and Asian theme that you see in Pacific areas of South Asia, of Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan. And you go to Europe and, again, every single country has their own style of architecture.

And again, this industry is so important to me. And like I said, if I had a second career, this one would be one of them. I—my second hobby is, second passion, is landscape architect. I've designed different landscapes in different places. I had created patios and, you know, fireplaces. And I just love the architecture of landscape architecture, you know, because, again, it's not just the building, it's also the things that are around that building that also makes the project look so wonderful.

And so I will pass it on to the next person who wants to put a few words on here.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on this matter?

* (14:40)

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today for the third reading of Bill 20, The Architects Amendment Act, and just put a few words on record.

This bill makes a number of amendments that will benefit Manitoba's architects and their association. It re-establishes the architects' scope of practice in The Architects Act and the scope of practice provisions set out the parameters on who is authorized to perform architectural work in Manitoba. And we're pleased to be bringing these provisions back into the act where they belong.

I'd also like to thank the stakeholders that came out to committee to speak in favour of the bill, and particularly the Manitoba Association of Architects for its co-operation and support throughout the process in developing this legislation.

We look forward to continuing to work with the association on matters affecting the architectural profession in the future.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 20, The Architects Amendment Act.

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

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 21—The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move on to concurrence and third readings, calling Bill 21, The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour, that Bill 21, The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ingénieurs et les géoscientifiques, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any debate on this matter?

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak for a third time on Bill 21, The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act.

It's very important for this bill—this is a very important bill for those currently working and for those seeking working in the engineering and geoscientific professions in Manitoba. Amendments to the act's specified scope of practice provisions will better allow for acceptance of limited engineering and geosciences licences from other jurisdictions and will broaden pathways to careers in engineering and geosciences for foreign-trained workers and workers in—with specialized expertise.

This bill also makes changes that will help the association of engineers and geoscientists of Manitoba promote the engineering and geoscientific professions in Manitoba and maintain their high standards of integrity.

I would like to again thank the association for their support in development of this bill and for coming out to speak in favour of the—at committee. I'm very much looking forward to hearing the association's implementation of these important amendments in the near future.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, Bill 21, The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act, I am pleased to put some words on record in regards to Bill 21.

In this province, we have a—many, many great engineers working in Manitoba, and they are

essential to the creation of infrastructure and public spaces that are important to all of us. The work that engineers do is integral to the safety and prosperity of our province.

This bill, Bill 21, is very similar to Bill 20 that just went through third reading. It is a bill that is meant to modernize an existing act. The association of professional engineers and geoscientists, APEGM for short, is a self-regulated profession which is governed by the Province of Manitoba.

We agree with this legislation in that it does reduce barriers to employment in our province. This legislation will help ensure that there are fewer barriers to highly educated people entering our province and seeking work in their specialized field.

Some of the key amendments to this act are (1) specified scope of practice licence. This allows for the registration of individuals, particularly immigrants to Manitoba who do not meet the educational requirements to be registered as a professional engineer or a professional geoscientist, but have sufficient academic qualifications and experienced to practice within a specified scope.

In a plain language what that means is there may be a company out there who is looking for somebody who—they have a certain item that they are building and they don't really need an engineer for it, but somebody who has enough experience in the field can actually look after their needs. So it gives opportunity for people from other areas to come in—to Manitoba to do things.

Another part of the bill deals with professional development. We all know how important it is to keep up with what is happening in our workplace whether you be a teacher or an engineer, especially the way technology is changing. There's always something new out there, something new every day.

What Bill 21 does is provide a summary remedy for non-compliance with the mandatory continuing professional development requirements of the association. This will ensure that we have engineers that are up to date with all the newest practices. There are a number of other changes to the act that will ensure continued success of self-regulation for the association.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that was very interesting is when this bill came to committee there were people for and against it, or certain parts of it, and people had an opportunity to express what they had to say, which is very important to passing a bill

because we always learn something from whoever is speaking on behalf of this bill. And I'm glad to see that this function is part of our law-making system here.

Just lately we had Bill 30 at committee, the non-smokers health protection act. This bill brought out a lot of presentations, presenters both for and opposed to it. And what I can say, Mr. Speaker, is I think everybody learned a lot from this bill because there was a lot of misconception as to what was happening out there. I believe even the minister of—that was in charge of it was able to make changes to the bill because of the committee. That's important that public has input towards these bills and creates amendments.

And that's one of the areas that I'm kind of disappointed in our government, because just yesterday a colleague of mine brought forward a bill in regards to bullying and that bill was not given the chance. The member from St. Norbert and then the member from Flin Flon spoke the bill out and was not willing to let that bill go to committee. So that's one of the problems we have with our government. There are areas where the government in this past bill, Bill 21, was willing to listen to the geoscientists and—but here it is we have another opportunity to send the bill that will help all Manitobans, and they're not willing to listen to it.

So I would be willing to say that they need to work harder at what they're doing. They've seen that the people of Manitoba, we're tired of listening to broken promises. This government is not willing to listen to everybody out there. They're only willing to listen to a few, which is wrong because everybody deserves the right to be heard. Whether it be what they've done in the last election with the tax increases, what they've done in a lot of different areas, this government is not listening to Manitobans. Manitobans are paying more and getting less.

I would at this time like to thank the association of APEGM for their hard work in being part of this bill, because it was them who brought forward a lot of this. It was the government who facilitated it, but it was the work of the geoscientists and the professional engineers that brought the bill forward. So I'd like to thank them, and I'd also like to allow anybody else who has some words on this bill to come forward and speak to it. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on—the honourable member for River Heights, sorry.

* (14:50)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, a few comments on this bill dealing with professional engineers and geoscientists.

First, I want to acknowledge and speak to the importance of engineering and of engineers and geoscientists in Manitoba. Engineers and geoscientists make an extraordinarily important contribution to our province and will be very important to the future of our province, our development and our prosperity.

Second, I want to recognize that the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba has a significant and important role regulating the practice of engineering and geosciences in Manitoba, ensuring high standards are maintained within the professions, serving and protecting the public interest, and promoting and increasing the knowledge and the skills of its members. I'm very supportive of the association of the professional engineers and geoscientists of Manitoba's role as a regulator and a standard-setter for the profession, and in their efforts to move forward in the area of continuing education. Continuing education in today's world is very important in any profession, and it needs to be stressed, not only its importance, but the importance of doing it very well to achieve the highest standards and the highest potential that we have not just for the profession, but for people in Manitoba.

There was some concern raised at the committee meeting about the association of professional engineers and geoscientists of the province of Manitoba becoming involved in making grants and donations and giving financial assistance. The concern, which I think is a valid question, should an agency which regulates the profession be involved in charitable giving. We've been told that this issue was taken to the APEGM Council, and that it's passed the council and has their support. As MLAs and lawmakers, it's our responsibility to oversee this law and in case—this case, we are supporting the decision made by the APEGM Council. I believe that power for a regulator to get involved in charitable giving is one that needs to be watched with care, and I suggest that time will tell whether this is a good idea or not.

In the interim, I think it's important that the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba use this power wisely and carefully to ensure there are no conflicts with its role as a regulator of the profession, which, of course, is

its paramount role. That being said, Mr. Speaker, I am supportive of this legislation. We're supportive of this legislation, and looking forward to it passing and getting royal assent, and encourage the engineers and geoscientists of Manitoba to continue to do the fine work that they are involved in.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and put some comments on Bill 21, the engineering and geoscientific professional amendment act, which, according to my esteemed colleague here, has nothing to do with geocaching. So I'm glad he was able to clarify me so I didn't get up and embarrass myself any further than—or any more than I do.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the groundwork of this act, and a lot of the congratulations and appreciation goes to the APEGM who, from behind the scenes, approached the government and made it clear that their legislation required amendment. And, to the government's credit, they listened to APEGM and they made some of those necessary amendments to ensure that the engineering and geoscientific professionals that call Manitoba home are able to practice their profession, and practice it in a way their association deems responsible and fit.

Obviously, we can't underestimate the value of the role of these individuals within our communities. Obviously, I mean, we stand in a building that's literally made of stone, and structurally couldn't get much of a—much sounder of a building than this. But, obviously, engineers and geoscientists go beyond and they make sure that all the constructs within our province that we take for granted are built to code and to spec so that they are structurally sound. We obviously don't live in an area where earthquakes are an issue, though when I grew up in Shilo and the artillery was out in the fields and firing, I remember my mother's china shaking. So that was the closest thing we'd ever come to earthquakes.

But the work of engineers is obviously paramount to the safety and—of the construction of these buildings and for that reason we're prepared to support legislation that facilitates the work and the administration of engineers in the province of Manitoba, as well as anything that will reduce barriers to employment here in Manitoba.

Because we need to make sure we're dealing with a very highly specialized field, one that requires years of training, Mr. Speaker, and it's a very narrow field. So everything that we can do to enhance the field and make it a more obviously desirable

occupation for young people to enter into and obviously for individuals outside the province of Manitoba and outside the country of Canada to come to Manitoba and to practise their engineering or geoscientific profession here in Manitoba, that's something that we need to pursue.

But, like a great many things in Manitoba, any province or whatever, governments do not have all the answers. We see that in spades across the way, despite their regular proclamations that they do, their regular failings confirm that they simply don't. But in this case we need to look to those associations, Mr. Speaker, whether, you know, we need to deal with—whether, you know, dealing with teachers and dealing with nurses and dealing with, you know, whole, you know, and farmers and that. You need to deal with those individuals, and if those individuals are represented by associations, you deal with those associations to ensure that the legislation you're bringing forward meets those needs, and as part of that the ability of APEGM to create and implement its own bylaws is an important assurance that they will be in control of their field of work here in the province of Manitoba, because obviously those professionals know their field far better than I ever will. I've—I don't believe I have any intentions to go back for additional post-secondary education in the field of engineering or geoscience, but then again we never know.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, we need to ensure that the—that this bill receives the passage from everyone and all legislative—or all elected officials in this House so that APEGM can do the regulations, whether it's on the geoscientists or on the engineering side. We believe that boards and associations should have that power, and in case it's advisable to give controlling power to any single—it's not advisable to give power to any single individual within an organization, but this—the basic tenets of this act is obviously to empower these professionals within our community.

Mr. Speaker, obviously any piece of legislation that's presented in this House and is presented by members opposite and even presented by members on this side that encourages and facilitates should be something that we all are supportive of.

All too often, we see examples, Mr. Speaker, of red tape. In fact, this morning I had a meeting with some professionals who had some issues with the Minister of Conservation's department and some red tape that they were encountering within the minister's

department and, for whatever reason, the department was unwilling or unable to take action on that file.

Again in one of my previous roles, Mr. Speaker, when I was the—had the good fortune of being the director of provincial affairs for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, one of their members' top priorities obviously on a regular basis was red tape and overregulation by government, and on a regular basis the CFIB would do an analysis with their economist and they would take a look at the actual financial impact of overregulation and red tape on the basis—or on the economy of a province and not just the province of Manitoba but all provinces in the country as a whole.

*(15:00)

I'm going from memory here, Mr. Speaker, but I believe the economic impact of overregulation and red tape on the province of Manitoba was in excess of \$800 million. On a nationwide basis, it was well in excess of \$30 billion because we often forget that in many instances, as my colleague the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) had earlier commented when she was talking about small business and how in small business accounts something—approximately 40 per cent of all employment in the province of Manitoba.

And in excess of almost 90 per cent of all employers, Mr. Speaker, most small business are under five persons—five employees in the province of Manitoba, so it's often left to the owner for her to make sure that those paper—that the reports are filled in that government demands of them, that not only is obviously payroll met, but they wear every hat that needs to be worn in order to make sure that their business is successful. And if it's as simple as picking up a broom and sweeping a floor to, you know, dealing with the CRA, they put in and they do all those tasks that are required to make sure that they are successful and they do it, obviously, without any benefit.

I mean, the best example, Mr. Speaker, is once upon a time the actually—the Province recognized, in our government, the previous government, recognized that we were calling upon businesses in the—here in the province of Manitoba, to be tax collectors on behalf of the Province of Manitoba in relation to the PST. Now granted, the PST back then was 7 per cent, and for some odd reason we now find ourselves with an 8 per cent PST, even though the Premier (Mr. Selinger) did say that the idea of him raising the PST was ridiculous.

But, that being said, businesses actually received a commission on a quarterly basis from the Province of Manitoba as a recognition, Mr. Speaker, of the work that they did on behalf of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) in collecting the provincial sales tax because without their involvement and their willingness to act as a tax collector in the Province of Manitoba and to get that money to the minister, we wouldn't have, obviously, the public services that we had.

Now, the commission was not a large commission, Mr. Speaker. No business owner was going to retire as a result of that commission. It was more of an acknowledgement of the effort that these individuals undertook to make sure, again, that the paperwork was filled out accurately, that it was filled out on a timely basis, and, more importantly, from the government's perspective, that they received those funds on a regular basis. So again, to deliver it—those important public services.

But the government, the NDP government decided that, you know what, we're going to cut that commission, Mr. Speaker. And then again, in another budget, they decided well, we'll just cut that commission again because we think that's your job. Your job is to actually act as tax collectors for us as government, and we think—we don't think that there should be any acknowledgement that it's really any kind of work.

But, Mr. Speaker, this bill is a long time in coming. I know APEGM has been lobbying the government for quite a number of years in order to get where we are today, rising in the House and speaking on Bill 21. And it's just another example of how this government's own internal caucus battle is negatively impacting its ability to bring forward legislation that's in the interest of Manitobans. I remember during the height of the rebellion when the slinging of mud was at its most fervent across the way, and there was lots of name-calling and various camps had erupted and there was an exodus of political staff working for those various camps. And I remember more than one political observer and observers from outside, what we affectionately call the puzzle palace, commented that government business had literally ground to a halt, that you simply couldn't have that number of MLAs who were spending the majority of their time playing topple the leader, and that number of senior staff especially within the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) own inner circle abandoned and decide to leave their

posts so they could actively campaign again to topple their Premier.

But, again, not to digress too much, but it is worth noting that the Premier of the day did comment that to any of those individuals who do—did decide—and there were many. Apparently, they didn't rally around the Premier as he often—at—that he had said or thought they may. But he did make the public amendment that there would be no repercussions, that all those individuals would be welcomed back to the NDP fold to return to their old positions.

Now, we know since then that the termination notices upon the re-affirmation of the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) as the leader of that party across the way that the termination notice quickly went out. Of course, with those termination notices, the Premier decided on—to use his ability to access the taxpayer's account to provide a very large and very generous severance package. And, you know, even though the Premier assured that there would be no severance and there would be no consequences for supporting a different candidate, we know now that at a bare minimum almost a million dollars, three quarters of a million dollars was spent on severance packages, Mr. Speaker. We won't know the full amount, because for all the assurance of openness and accountability that we hear across the way on behalf of the Premier that there'll be a Public Accounts, when you open up the most recent Public Accounts you find out that, no, those numbers aren't present.

And what the NDP did and what they often do is they manipulate. And in this case they ensured through the manipulation of the provision of those severance packages that they weren't delivered until after April 1st so they wouldn't have to go into this year's Public Accounts, they could go into the next Public Accounts.

But we do know, Mr. Speaker, on a global basis anyway, that you're talking about, like I said, three quarters of a million dollars. And, again, coming from my appointment just previous to my election, working for a non-profit organization that helped people with disabilities, there is a great number of non-profit organizations that could have used that, those financial resources. But I guess the image that sticks in my mind is the Premier literally dashing down the hallway as a Global reporter chased after him trying to get the answers. So, I guess, open and accountability to the NDP is a translation for the 100-yard dash.

But, Mr. Speaker, we, as all MLAs in this House, need to critically look at legislation that comes before us. We need to do the due diligence on the legislation. We need to make—meet with stakeholders. And I know while we are aware that APEGM has been asking for that legislation, I know my colleague the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) and the critic made sure that he reached out to speak to APEGM and to ensure that while the government may say this is what you're asking for, we want to ensure that it is and that it's actually meeting those needs and those requirements that you have been requesting to put your profession on the same level that we find in other jurisdictions, and was there anything that we could do, obviously, to facilitate that whether it was an amendment to the legislation, whether it was a clarification to the legislation, or was it just simply that you wanted us to—that from your perspective the legislation and that Bill 21 met your requirements that you had laid out and that you just simply were seeking our support of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that we and—on this side of the House, we support the engineering and geoscientific professions. We support their ability to govern their own profession, an ability that many, many other professions have. The legal profession is an example or a profession that comes to mind almost immediately. And that self-regulation, obviously, is something that's going to be very important to the engineers and geoscientific professions, the APEGM here in Manitoba on a go-forward basis. And I am encouraged that in this one instance, anyway, that the government seemed to be listening. Again, it's unfortunate this legislation, which could have been brought in and dealt with on a much more timely basis so that we weren't playing catch-up, as this government is in a constant cycle of doing, that we would actually lead on a file.

* (15:10)

But, again, this government is more interested, obviously, in leading on all the negative files. I mean, kids in care, they lead—this government leads in that file; child poverty, this government leads on that file; dismal educational results, again, the province leads on that file; long wait times at our hospitals here in the city of Winnipeg, again, this government leads on that file.

But, in this instance, Mr. Speaker, while we may not be leading on this file when it comes to engineers

and geoscientific professions, we actually—we are, at least, joining the mainstream, we are bringing and treating our engineers and geoscientists on a level akin to what they're finding in other jurisdictions.

And so, in that instance, Mr. Speaker, it makes our job as MLAs somewhat easier, because, again, this isn't—we're not—we are not re-inventing the wheel with this legislation. This is a legislation and an act that you could find in almost any other jurisdiction in this country. We can look, and I know APEGM has looked at those other jurisdictions to see what has worked and, you know, what maybe—what was introduced that could use some tweaking here in Manitoba so, hopefully, with that information, with the history of similar legislation already in place in other jurisdictions, we find ourselves with a piece of legislation that won't require amendments down the road.

I mean, I know there's a—even in my short tenure here, you know, 20-odd months, Mr. Speaker, there's been instances of the government having to get up and amend their own legislation because of an oversight or error on their part. Now, hopefully, in this case, with obviously the involvement, the active involvement of APEGM in the development of Bill 21, we won't be having to make those amendments down the road to fix things that should not have been dealt with at the front end.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to go on too much longer. I know, and I have no doubt that there's other individuals and the individuals across the way, my learned colleagues across the way, who'd like to as well put some comments on the record about their own interaction with the board and members of the APEGM and their involvement with those professionals and their involvement with the association and how they've ensured their due diligence, ensured that this is meeting those needs in both in the here and now, but in the long term.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to continued debate on Bill 21. I look forward to hearing comments from members opposite because this is how we, as members of the opposition and as all legislators, this is how we learn. We learn because, obviously, the access to information that the members opposite have is greatly—is far more accessible than we, on this side of the House do. And sometimes we have to take the government's information at face value, and often I'm willing to give the government the benefit of the doubt with the information that they share, in particular, at least

when it comes to legislation, not so much when it comes to their overheated rhetoric during question period. But, when it comes to legislation and the minister is making direct comment on legislation and indicates, you know, his or her involvement and negotiations in ensuring that that final draft meets those requirements, we're willing to take that at face value.

So, with those very brief comments, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that I'm going to allow another individual to rise and put a few words on the record, and I look forward to those words.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure today to stand up and put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 21, The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we're going to put a few words on the record. I commend my colleagues from La Verendrye and Morris for putting a few words—their two cents on the record in regards to this great amendment act. Here, in this great province of ours, we have many great engineers working in Manitoba, and they're essential to the creation of infrastructure and public spaces that are vital to all of our communities.

I commend APEGM for all their hard work in regards to pushing this matter forward and asking the government to make amendments and to bring the desired professionalism and the changes that are brought forward in this bill to the engineering profession and the geoscientific profession. Both ensure that our structures are safe and sturdy, something that we should never take for granted as it is not a reality for all peoples in all places.

Because the work of engineers is so integral to the safety and prosperity of our province, we support this legislation that facilitates the work and administration of engineers in this province. We agree with this legislation and that it reduces barriers to employment in Manitoba. This legislation will help ensure that there are fewer barriers to highly educated people entering our province and seeking work in their specialized field. By facilitating the ability of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba to create and implement its own bylaws, this bill ensures that engineers and their professional body are in control of their field of work in this province. We believe that it is the professionals themselves who best know

how their sector should operate, and encourage the government to increasingly let professionals govern their own work, Mr. Speaker.

Engineers in Manitoba make essential contributions to our communities. Whether it's in infrastructure, public spaces, or the spaces that we call our homes, engineers ensure that our spaces are safe for our use. And we have some remarkable infrastructure in this province, from buildings to bridges, that is as attractive as it is functional. I know that out my way, in the Lac du Bonnet constituency, up just east of the town of Lac du Bonnet, I know that we're waiting for a bridge to be revamped, redesigned and moving forward, because right now we've got one more of the NDP fantastic plans of a one-way bridge and, especially during cottage country, Mr. Speaker, I know that many members on both sides of the House use that one-lane bridge, and they've been frustrated with the traffic lights, moving across. And, as you know, the constituency of Lac du Bonnet grows probably tenfold in the summer months—or, maybe not quite tenfold, but pretty darn close in regards to the cottage country. A lot of people travel out there and spend their summers there, as well.

We're pleased to know that the government took the time out of their family feud to listen to the—to APEGM and develop this bill so that engineers can better regulate their own profession. We believe that boards and associations should always have power, and in no case is it advisable to give controlling powers to a single person within the organization. We look forward to offering amendments on these matters and discussing them further in committee stage.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, that government reduces barriers of this kind—this kind of great work being done. We believe that government should facilitate the creation of great things by Manitobans, not inhibit it. For that reason, with—we agree with the basic tenets of this act, further empower engineers in Manitoba.

I had the pleasure, a few weeks ago, of attending the University of Manitoba homecoming dinner and at that event, you know, I know that some of my colleagues on the both sides of the House had wished to attend, but, as they had gone through the lineup of attendees, I saw myself enjoying the evening at the U of M by myself, as well as a thousand other alumnus—alumni of the University of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. And, a particular—in particular, the

engineers had probably about five or six tables at the event and they continued to celebrate the way they celebrated at the U of M throughout the evening. And there was some entertainment, one of the past senior sticks of the engineers, I believe, it was in the early '70s is when he was senior stick. He actually stood up and played a tune on the trumpet that he brought to the occasion. It was quite entertaining.

*(15:20)

With that, Mr. Speaker, we've seen many things that have come and gone with this NDP government over the last 16 years and we're happy to see a bill that's encouraging and facilitating working from this government. It certainly seems a little out of place coming from a government that has devoted much time to setting up more red tape and regulations for Manitoba professionals in many of the sectors.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, ours is a simple approach of openness, of working with employers and ensuring a reasonable balance between taking steps to ensure workers are protected and maintaining businesses' competitiveness.

Although I'm glad that we are modernizing this act and updating it to make it easier for engineers to make the great contribution to our province that they do, I hesitate to provide any praise for a government that is consistently slow to empower workers and professional bodies. It is a shame that this legislation has taken so long to come to Manitoba. It is just another example of how behind this NDP has become compared to the leadership of our neighbours constantly following and never leading.

I'll reference the University of Manitoba homecoming dinner again. I know that many of the people that were there were actually coming for the week, for homecoming week, and many of them were visiting the province again. So they—many of our engineers, many of our other professionals that were there that evening actually had acquired their post-secondary training here at the U of M in Manitoba but had then left the province for greener pastures I guess to the west whether it was Saskatchewan, Alberta or BC.

The PC caucus, our side of the House, Mr. Speaker, believes in promoting training, investment and innovation for Manitoba businesses while also supporting and promoting the rights of Manitoba workers.

Red tape cost Manitoba millions of dollars per year. We should be looking at working with

neighbouring provinces to standardize regulations. For years on this side of the House, we have been advocating for this provincial government to consider entering into a trade partnership with the other western provinces. Each time we have brought it forward the NDP government has voted against it.

The New West Partnership is an agreement that creates a barrier-free trade and investment market for British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan to benefit businesses, investors and workers in cultivating prosperity, innovation and economic strength in western Canada.

Manitoba's isolation from such ties and partnerships under the NDP government hurts our economy and business sector. Failing to participate in what will essentially be a single market that will make our western neighbours highly competitive will not allow us to prosper and grow as a province.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of Manitoba's pressing economic and labour market needs and skill shortage, we need to commit to attracting and retaining skilled workers who immigrate to Manitoba. We can do this by making Manitoba a business-friendly province. So much of the NDP's legislation encourages businesses to move out of the province.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, a PC government will bring balance and democracy back to labour legislation. We know that Manitoba deserves a change, is looking for a change, and we can assure them that a change for the better is coming.

And I thank you for allowing me a few moments to put a few words on the record, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter?

Is the House is ready for the question?

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 21, The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act.

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

We'll now proceed to call into concurrence and third reading Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act.

Bill 31—The Registered Professional Planners Act

Mr. Speaker: Pardon me, Bill 31, the registration professional planners act.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Government, that Bill 31, The Registered Professional Planners Act; Loi sur les urbanistes professionnels, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Municipal Government): Mr. Speaker, the proposed legislation will protect the public interest by ensuring that qualified professionals practising planning are identifiable by the designation RRP, registered professional planner.

This means that when citizens or organizations engage the services of a planner bearing the registered professional planner designation they can be assured that the planner is subject to a code of ethics and professional conduct, maintains professional accreditation and is subject to investigation and disciplinary proceedings if he or she fails to adhere to professional standards and qualifications.

Manitoba is one of the last three provinces in Canada without such legislation to protect the RPP designation. When passed, the legislation will also support labour mobility, enabling Manitoba planners and firms to practise and participate in competitions and projects in other provinces throughout Canada that recognize the registered professional planner designation.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to commend those in the profession that were so outstanding in assisting the government in preparing this legislation. The Manitoba Professional Planners Institute, which is the local affiliate of the national Canadian Institute of Planners, would serve as the self-governing body responsible for administering and managing RPPs.

A commitment to the public interest is enshrined in the Manitoba Professional Planners Institute code of conduct and professional ethics which all members are required to follow. The proposed legislation will also conclude provisions to ensure that the Manitoba Professional Planners Institute, as a self-governing body for the registered professional planners in the province, is transparent and accountable to the public such as provisions for how the MPPI must handle complaints from the public and so forth. The proposed legislation

is consistent with similar provincial legislation regulating the title of other professions such as The Land Surveyors Act.

Mr. Speaker, the planners throughout the province have long advocated for this particular piece of legislation. It was a real pleasure to work with planners in developing this legislation over the last year. I know that members opposite were also engaged by planners in moving this legislation forward. This does provide a very solid foundation for planners in the province of Manitoba, for the public who engage planners in the province of Manitoba and allows for planners in the province of Manitoba to compete nationally on projects throughout this country.

So I do want to end my remarks by once again thanking planners throughout the province of Manitoba who worked so hard to ensure that this piece of legislation was brought to the attention of the government. And I'd like to thank members opposite for their collegiality in bringing this bill forward on behalf of the public interest and on behalf of planners throughout the province.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I do want to speak on Bill 31, The Registered Professional Planners Act.

And I want to start off by thanking Valdene Lawson and, of course, the registered professional planners that have put so much effort into seeing that this legislation pass.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 31 provides title protection and self-governing authority for the planning profession in Manitoba similar to what's in place in most all other jurisdictions in Canada, as the minister had pointed out. This legislation includes provisions that establish a Manitoba Professional Planners Institute. As the professionals regulatory body, it establishes a governing council including public representation.

The regulatory body requires the registration of members and reserves the use of the title of registered professional planners to registered members. I know in part of our consultation process the planners made it very clear that they were allowed to move around from one area to the other and thought this was get them—give them a lot more credibility, and I'm sure that they've done their homework in doing just that.

Finally, the regulatory body includes a process also with dealing with the disciplinary measures and complaints, which we know that there seems to be a

bad apple in all groups and sometimes they need to be dealt with. And this will give them the authority and also to set standards of which they can measure and ensure that it is, in fact, a professional institute of which they can be proud of.

* (15:30)

Also, in the—our consultations this request came from them, as well as various other planners in the province of Manitoba. The Manitoba Professional Planners Institute aims to promote pride and excellence in professional training and planning as applies to the stewardship of the natural and build environment to the building of healthy communities.

The organization was founded in 1988 and is an affiliate of the Canadian Institute of Planners, as well, Mr. Speaker. There are currently more than 150 planning professionals and student members across Manitoba working in the public service and private sector. Planners not only work in a variety of sectors, but a multitude of areas such as land-use planning, development, public engagement, environmental resource management, heritage conservation, social and community planning, transportation planning and economic development.

The goals of the association are to promote national standards for planning, influence legislation policies and decisions impacting planning and planners, create a positive image and develop a strong profile for planning, expand and ensure knowledge of the field of planning and advanced planning education and liaison with planning facility, and, of course, the students as they come forward.

The benefits for the RPP designation—this legislation, as I said earlier, will bring Manitoba in line with the rest of the country with respect to the planning destination—designation. This will eliminate Manitoba planners operating in other provinces from having to explain the regulatory structure in place in Manitoba, thus giving them a level playing field. The professional planning—planners in Manitoba have been asking for this legislation for many decades and it's unfortunate the government took so long to answer that call. In our discussions with them, which we had several in their lobbying efforts to ensure that this legislation moved forward, they made it very clear that they would ask our support. And, of course, we were happy to do that.

What's important is that it—this provides their members with a clarity on exactly what planning is. We know that planners work in a variety of sectors

and areas, but the actual work of planning requires a little more definition. The Canadian Institute of Planners provides that entire studies that have been done and try to define planning, that after much consideration the profession can broadly be defined this way: planning is a future of orientated, cinematic and creative profession that helps communities manage change in the build and natural environments in a manner that meets the social, economic, environmental and cultural needs of present and future generations. Planners facilitate the processes that create better choices for where and how people live.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank the professional planners in this province for the work that they do. We know full well that Manitobans work hard. They want to make sure that their investments are investments going in the right direction. We know that they want to invest in those initiatives that's going to make this province better for all Manitobans to live, work and play.

So this is a small step, we know that when we met with this organization. They made it very clear that they wanted the same level playing field as the rest of Canada, which would bring me to the next portion that we could see happening, and should happen, and that's becoming partners in the New West Partnership. We know the number of professionals that are part of the New West Partnership between Saskatchewan, Manitoba and—Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC have had similar liaisons where they can help one another from each of those provinces. And we've spoke many times about this in the House, and I would encourage the government to pay attention to the New West Partnership and try to get at the table. I know it's something that we've advocated for and we'll continue to advocate for, and we encourage all members in this House to study it, to get aware with it. We have nurses that's come to Manitoba. We've had doctors that come to Manitoba. We have engineers that's come to Manitoba and, of course, we want them all to be able to do their jobs at the best ability that they can and, of course, we need those standards. This is one of the reasons that this legislation was brought forward.

So we look forward to seeing this legislation pass, and we'll allow others to put something on record at this time as well.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 31, The Registered Professional Planners Act.

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

Bill 24—The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move to call under concurrence and third readings Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship, that Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la conservation de la faune et la Loi sur la pêche, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Hon. Thomas Nevaikshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, Bill 24 will make a number of amendments to the wildlife and fisheries legislation. It enhances enforcement provisions by clarifying particular enforcement sections. It extends the statute of limitations to two years and doubles the maximum amount of fines. A new offence for obstructing conservation officers is created. Amendments also include creating the ability to prevent a person from obtaining a hunting licence if they have outstanding fines.

Bill 24 allows the department to authorize a third party to issue particular types of licences and oversee certain functions of the licence administration. This will allow us to enter into an agreement with representatives from hunting organizations to carry out routine functions on behalf of the department.

Bill 24 also enables the Province to enter into reciprocal enforcement agreements with other jurisdictions to share information on persons who have been convicted of wildlife violations and had their hunting licence suspended. This will prohibit anyone from purchasing a licence in Manitoba when suspended from hunting in another jurisdiction and vice versa.

The bill also includes amendments to remove the requirement to pay royalties on fur-bearing animals. Trappers will be advised of the timing and details through a public release.

Bill 24 lists snapping and painted turtles as protected wild animals in our province, joining other Canadian jurisdictions in protecting our most vulnerable species.

Ring-necked pheasants will no longer be listed as game birds in Manitoba through this bill. These birds have not established successful breeding populations in this province and cannot be considered a viable game species.

Finally, amendments to both The Wildlife Act and The Fisheries Act will enable the issuance of licences and permits over the Internet through an electronic licensing system.

I look forward to the support of this House for the passage of Bill 24.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House and make some comments on legislation that deals with conservation. Obviously, it's an area of great interest to many Manitobans and to many, many organizations, and those Manitobans obviously range to the conservation officers that the minister referenced who, through this legislation, will receive those enhanced protections that they have been seeking for some time.

* (15:40)

Because I think it's paramount upon us as legislators to ensure that those individuals that carry out the duties that we assign to fulfill the legislative requirements that we pass in this House, and have to enforce the laws, that they have our full measure of confidence behind them, not just—and with that confidence, Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about their full legal confidence.

And, to that end, Mr. Speaker, obviously we want to ensure that individuals who—and fortunately it is a rare occurrence. There is a reason why our licence plate does display Friendly Manitoba, but there are situations unfortunately where a conservation officer interacts with an individual, and I'm sure they're mostly out-of-province individuals who are standing in the way in terms of their ability to perform their duties and to enforce the measures that we as a Legislature put forward to protect our

conservation heritage and the wildlife that we are responsible for, not only currently, but for the next generation and so on and so forth.

And, with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about—when I talk about wildlife, obviously we need to include our fisheries which also plays a very important role in that. So, when those instances—and as I noted, they are fortunately not common, but when those instances do occur, and a conservation officer is prevented by an individual from fulfilling their duties that they have that full legal authority behind them to take action, that there's consequences to that individual so that they know that the government stands behind conservation officers and their ability to do—to fulfill their duties.

Now, I think a key point of this bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act, a key component of this bill is that of communication. You—I mean, society is built on the concept of communication, and we don't need to go back through the history books to start talking about the utterance of the first words in the introduction of language in ourselves as a species; it's not the point.

But, obviously on a government-to-government level, Mr. Speaker, communication is vitally important. I mean, whether we're talking about sharing of information on issues of flooding that we do through the Red River Basin Commission or the newly minted Assiniboine River basin commission as well, we need to look at opportunities to work with other jurisdictions that have similar interests in protecting their wildlife. And so that, if there are situations where a individual is poaching in another jurisdiction, that that information is shared with our staff here in Manitoba so that, should they come to our province, they will be flagged, and we can at least deny that individual a hunting permit and at least the legal licence to continue doing what they've been doing.

Because, again, this is about sending a message, Mr. Speaker, to individuals that have decided that the law doesn't apply to them when it comes to the responsible management of our wildlife. And, to that end, I know that the legislation obviously substantially increases some of the fines being put forward and in many instances a doubling of fines, for example from \$50,000 to \$100,000. Again, not small change. And in another instance, actually, an increase of two and a half times when section 36(1) is amended from \$10,000 to \$25,000, so I think that's

far more than CPI is applicable in a current fiscal year. But, again, it emphasizes to an individual the importance that we as legislatures put on the value of wildlife in our province.

And so it is only by working with other jurisdictions in that co-ordinated effort, Mr. Speaker, that we can ensure that we are all on that same page. That's so that we don't have individuals who may legitimately be banned in one jurisdiction, let's just say, out west in British Columbia and they simply just cross the border into, say, Alberta, or keep on going into Manitoba. And this is, again, this is about consequences, and it's important that we share that information.

The other—the omission, though, in the minister's legislation, in Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act, is that though the word fisheries is actually in the title of the bill, the members opposite, the NDP, have decided that information sharing between jurisdictions actually doesn't apply to fisheries offences, which, again, I think is an oversight on behalf of the minister. I'm not sure why the NDP are not putting an equal value on our fishery as they are on our wildlife because, again, not only as I said earlier on, it's not only about our heritage, the heritage of our—obviously, in our 'indigenous'—indigenous and Metis and Inuit population, Mr. Speaker, but generations of hunters that have grown up and fishers who have grown up with this as part of their life, and it's an important part of many individuals' life. And not only is it an important part of these individuals' lives, it's also an incredibly important component of the provincial economy as a whole.

In a recent meeting that I had with the Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association, the executive director really took great effort into emphasizing that component of the—of outdoor—of the value of that sector to our economy. And the value to our sector is well in excess of some three, four hundred million dollars. Nowhere was that more evident than on a recent trip I made out to Swan River, Mr. Speaker, and I had an opportunity to meet with a taxidermist. And so I won't diverge too much and talk about the regulatory or red tape that this taxidermist pointed out, that it's completely out of line with any other western province, which, you know, is almost sadly amusing that we have a bill here that talks about enhancing communication between neighbouring jurisdictions to prevent problems. And yet here's an instance when it comes to this taxidermist and individuals that—with our—within that 'pression'—

profession have identified glaring examples of red tape that limit their ability to effectively do business here in Manitoba. And not only that, obviously, not only jeopardize their ability to do business, but affect the province of Manitoba's ability to attract a very important group of tourists.

This taxidermist in question, Mr. Speaker, he shared with me his books that outline exactly what animal is harvested, you know, it's for the who, what, when, where, why that the—obviously, the department requires of all individuals so that they can have a better awareness of the harvest going on, and it's part, obviously, a component of keeping—making sure that the populations remain healthy.

* (15:50)

But what really struck me as I was looking through these papers was the fact that the majority of these individuals of whom he had contracted work, contracted to deal with their harvest in terms of doing the mount, whether it was a bird, fish or, in some instances, a bear or a deer, that they were particularly satisfied with in terms of their harvest and they wanted to retain that hide and have it mounted so that they could either display it within their own home, as many, many hunters do, or in some instances they go on and they'll actually donate it to educational institutions.

But the one thing that struck me, Mr. Speaker, as I was going through his documentation, was the number of out-of-towners, and I wasn't—I'm not just referring to individuals who simply don't live in the Swan Valley area. I'm talking about individuals from outside of the province of Manitoba and even outside the country. They—not surprising, you had individuals from Saskatchewan and Alberta and Ontario who are coming to that area. It is a—the Duck Mountain area is a beautiful, beautiful area of our province with a great deal to offer. But there was individuals from Minnesota and from Texas and Florida and California and all across the United States. And these are the dollars that we really want to generate within our economy. These are the new dollars that didn't—that we're simply not recycling funds internally, but we're drawing in new dollars to our economy.

And so this taxidermist went on to tell me that some 92 per cent of all of his clientele, Mr. Speaker, are from out of province, and I think that's a phenomenal number, and it's a number that reinforces to me this government's failure on the tourism side of things. And while I've had the

opportunity to, as a family, to take in the journey to Churchill, and it is a lovely display, and I have to say my children were most impressed, and I think most visitors are impressed.

I've also—I have an annual pass to the Human Rights Museum and I've gone on several occasions to immerse myself obviously in the very profound and, oftentimes, disturbing history that has resulted in the rights that we do enjoy today, and it's a museum that you simply can't take in in a simple afternoon. It takes multiple trips to get through the levels and really take the time to digest and appreciate the transgressions that have occurred over the years and how that knowledge, hopefully, will prevent future transgressions.

But my point in identifying those two, for lack of a better word, Mr. Speaker, those two tourism icons, is that they're located here in the city of Winnipeg, and the province of Manitoba has much more to offer than those two brick and mortar attractions. And I go back to my recent excursion out in the Duck Mountain area. I mean, there you have literally almost untouched wilderness with not much more than a dirt road carved through lakes of such clarity that it's simply something that needs to be seen to be believed, and that's one reason why you have individuals from across this continent who travel to that area to enjoy the wildlife and taking in the wildlife, whether it's harvesting the wildlife, whether it's photographing the wildlife.

But this government does very, very little in terms of actually promoting the array of tourist options here in the province of Manitoba. In fact I do believe I've heard my colleague from Arthur-Virden comment that this current administration spends the least amount of money on tourism advertising than any other jurisdiction in all of Canada, which is a real shame because not only, as I noted, do we have a great, great deal to offer, but again, it speaks to those new dollars that we want, and that's how we actually grow an economy as opposed to simply just recycling the dollars internally.

It's also interesting, Mr. Speaker, listening to the minister's brief words on Bill 24, is we're still waiting on—and as important as this piece of legislation is, I think myself and my colleagues on this side of the House and a great deal of many Manitobans are curious and waiting patiently for the government's new greenhouse gas emission laws.

Now, this government, with great fanfare several years ago under their former leader, Mr. Gary Doer,

had brought in legislation that was going to mandate Kyoto greenhouse gas emission targets. I remember distinctly the premier standing in the hallway and reporters were asking, well, you know, you've set targets here; you've set time frames, but you haven't—and which is quite typical of members opposite—but they didn't set any consequences. So, if those targets had been failed, were not met, Mr. Speaker, what was the consequence to government, because any government can put dates and targets in especially when they're the ones setting the—making the legislation setting those dates and targets. But, not surprisingly, there were no consequences for their failure, and that's what we saw.

At the time the premier quipped that should they feel to meet their—those targets that they themselves established, Mr. Speaker, that they themselves—that the NDP themselves established that the NDP themselves should be held accountable to, that they should be thrown from office. And I—you know, the winds of change, we talked about those and members opposite talked about those, and I think there's a chill in the air when it comes to members opposite and I have no doubt that there's a few of them that have their moving boxes ready for what may occur later this spring.

But when, you know—so as we listen to the minister speak, his failure to introduce a similar legislation deal with new climate-change targets, Mr. Speaker, we hope that it doesn't follow the earlier failures that they brought forward in their old legislation. In particular, if you look at the three pillars that framed their Kyoto legislation targets, two of them, one had to do with vehicle emissions—and I think Volkswagen kind of showed the government that that was not the best pillar to stand on, not the target Volkswagen—and the second point was the introduction of a cap-and-trade system.

So two of the three pillars had nothing to do with the current government in terms of their ability to take action in any way, shape or form, and they were simply relying on other jurisdictions and other levels of governments including, you know, obviously, on international governments, including the American government, to make those necessary changes and that they would simply, by benign indifference, benefit from, Mr. Speaker. So it's quite unfortunate that they—that members opposite broke the law of Manitoba when it comes—came to those targets and, again, it's always passing strange that they break their own laws and they simply just shrug their shoulders.

Mr. Speaker, I don't recall when the minister was introducing his legislation that there was any hint that there was additional legislation coming to protect our lakes and water systems. There was no reference to the fact that only a few short years ago Lake Winnipeg was declared the threatened lake of the year by the Global Nature Fund, and it's important to remember it wasn't declared, the threatened lake of the year, you know, in 1999 nor in 2000. It was declared the threatened lake of the year in 2013, I believe. So some 14 years after the NDP assumed office, after 14 years of inaction there was a recognition from the Global Nature Fund that this government has simply failed on the file of protecting one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world, a lake that a number of commercial ventures rely on, whether it's fishers and tourists, residents. And, again, talking about hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars related to obviously a healthy, healthy Lake Winnipeg.

But, again, there is no hint by the minister that there was this legislation to deal with that threatened lake of the year status, Mr. Speaker. And I don't recall the minister actually making any kind of ministerial statement when this was made, any kind of proclamation when this was made. I don't recall when members opposite like to do their softball-lob question of the day to the various government ministers. I don't recall them asking the minister what was this minister prepared to do on—when it came to fisheries and the fact that Lake Winnipeg had been declared the threatened lake of the year by the Global Nature Fund.

* (16:00)

Now, we obviously can't talk about Lake Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, we can't talk about fisheries and wildlife and, obviously, the protection that needs to be done without reference to the zebra mussel infestation. It's been brought to the attention of members of this Chamber that despite all the words and more wind from members opposite, their proclamations of victory, and this is the bill of goods that they sold Manitobans, the minister got up and he stood on the bow of the SS Minnow and, like George Bush before him, he unfurled that banner and mission accomplished. And he said, we are declaring victory when it comes to the zebra mussel infestation.

And I think from the NDP's perspective they got what they wanted. They got the big headlines, they—it was in the Globe and the Post about their high

school science experiment. But, of course, we know that within days the veligers were discovered again. And, in fact, just recently, Dr. Eva Pip from the University of Winnipeg, a very esteemed water quality biologist, noted that the government had so failed on this file. I believe Dr. Pip referred to Lake Winnipeg and the zebra mussel infestation, which has occurred under members opposite watch, as a catastrophe.

So this—and, you know, it's funny, the minister, or one of the ministers earlier this day, would talk about science and how they believe in the science. And yet, here you have a scientist, Dr. Pip, putting squarely on the shoulders of the NDP their policy failures when it comes to protecting Lake Winnipeg from zebra mussels that has led to the catastrophe that we have before us. And, to add insult to injury, the government, again, they make—stand up and they beat their chests and say, you know, well, we brought in the most robust legislation in the entire country—in the entire world to deal with these invasive species, only to find out that Bill 12 hasn't even been proclaimed.

So, on the one hand, here we are, Mr. Speaker, Lake Winnipeg has been declared a lost cause. Now we have Cedar Lake, which is the fourth largest lake—freshwater lake here in the province of Manitoba, has also been found to have been infested by veligers. And this government hasn't—couldn't even be bothered to proclaim their own legislation that, again, that they indicate is a critical lynchpin in the battle against zebra mussels. And, again, while I may sound like I'm beating a dead zebra on this file, it is always worth remembering that zebra mussels were first discovered in the Red River basin in 2009. And here we are at the waning days of 2015, and we still do not have legislation to adequately—to deal with these invasive species in any way, shape or form proclaimed by the government of day. And I think that speaks volumes of how little value this government has placed in our lakes, in our water systems, and in the belief that—of what needs to be done.

And, unfortunately, it is Manitobans, and it is Manitobans for generations to come, that will have to deal with the economic consequences as a result of this government's failures. And it will cost this government, and future governments, hundreds of millions of dollars on an annualized basis. And when—because the question is not if, it is when—when zebra mussels start infesting municipal infrastructure—I know that's a serious, serious

concern from municipalities in this province that surround infested water systems—when zebra mussels start clogging up that infrastructure, who is going to be responsible for the very, very expensive, not only cleanup but obviously that regular maintenance that's going to be required?

Mr. Speaker, again, you know, while we talk about, you know, wildlife and protecting and ensuring that our conservation officers have the tools to fulfill the legislative requirements and that we're communicating with other jurisdictions to target those individuals that may cross boundaries and are known poachers or violators of that, that there was no mention, again, by this minister, whatsoever, about the moose crisis that we have here in the province of Manitoba.

Not even—I mean, the minister just recently announced, the Department of Conservation just recently announced additional moose closures, but I don't recall the minister ever making a statement to a situation earlier this year where we saw very graphic images of a slain moose including a cow with twin fetuses literally slaughtered by the side of the road in the northwest region.

And I remember the manager of Compliance and Field Services with Manitoba Conservation and Stewardship, noting that that winter we've had more than 15 illegal kills, Mr. Speaker, and it's not only just the destruction of that wildlife in that current moose population, but when you saw the pictures of these animals literally carved up on the side of the road and left to rot. When you saw the twin fetuses, realize that you are denying that future generation—future wildlife generation because as moose age and as cow ages during the first several years of its reproductive cycle, they only bear a single young. But at a certain point, I believe it's at about age four or five, the occurrence of twins increases substantially, and that is, if we are ever going to have an opportunity to rebuild our devastated moose population here in the province of Manitoba, it is only through protecting those older cows that have the preponderance and the greater likelihood to have twins.

Because at the rate it's going under the members opposite under their watch, Mr. Speaker, a moose may be something you only see with cartoon reruns of Rocky and Bullwinkle.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about—when the minister rose and spoke on his bill, he made no reference to the literally hundreds of kilometres of

trees that they are cutting down as they bring in their new Bipole III line, a route that we all know that was not the first choice by Manitoba Hydro. A route we know that is several hundred kilometres longer than Manitoba Hydro originally required or requested. A route that we know that has escalated in cost literally by the billions, billions of dollars and a cost that the former president of Manitoba Hydro publicly noted on the record at the legislative committee would be borne in its entirety by Manitoban ratepayers, which again, lies in stark contradiction to words by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) in the 2011 election where he said that ratepayers would not bear a single dime of the cost of bipole.

And yet the president of Manitoba Hydro says well, no, in fact, that's not true. The Premier simply doesn't—isn't accurate. His information and Manitoba ratepayers will pay full freight when it comes to the extension—the unnecessary extension of that line, Mr. Speaker.

But not only is the Province obviously cutting down, Mr. Speaker, hundreds and hundreds of kilometres of excess trees in the political decision to move the bipole line. When you look at the government's own numbers when it comes to the planting of new trees, it has decreased each and every year, and other than a spike during the time frame where again, their former leader, Gary Doer, announced a plan to plant additional one million trees and I'll give Mr. Doer credit, he did achieve his target, but outside of that, the department actually, in its own budgetary numbers in terms of dollars and actually trees planted, plants fewer and fewer each and every year, and yet the minister stands up the last week or the other week about CentrePort and pats himself on the back about the planting of about 150 trees.

So there's a lot of concerns that bill—

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): All right, just a few comments and then there will be plenty of time for my colleague from Portage, so I look forward to his comments too.

* (16:10)

This Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act is an important improvement to the existing legislation. It will address a number of items making sure that there's better information sharing

between provinces to ensure that banned hunters can't get a licence in another province.

We have increased penalties for offences. We've got potential for seizures of sent cellphones or GPS equipment as part of investigations, and moving toward electronic licensing system. I make a comment on that because when we move toward the electronic licensing system, which I think is a good idea, that we need to be a little bit careful to make sure that they don't make some of the mistakes they made in Saskatchewan. They moved toward an electronic licensing system that made it very, very difficult to have any paper licensing. And, of course, then you had people going to fly-in camps where there was no Internet access, and they were rather upset at not being able to fish or to hunt because they couldn't get an electronic licence because there was no Internet access where they were out in the bush.

And—[interjection]—yes, I mean a little bit of forethought and a little bit of, you know, making sure that the education and knowledge is there, but you know, when you've got people, you know, following the tradition that they've always done, go out to an isolated fishing lodge, you're going to get your fishing licence there. Right? But you may not be able to now if you're not careful.

You just need to manage it so that you can still get a regular fishing licence at a fishing camp which is isolated instead of just figuring that everybody all of a sudden is going to have access to an electronic Internet access, not recognizing that sometimes people are hunting in fairly isolated areas and they need to get—

An Honourable Member: Why wouldn't they have Internet?

Mr. Gerrard: Well, you know, there's some places in Manitoba where you can't get Internet access unless you've got, for example, a—

An Honourable Member: Where is that?

Mr. Gerrard: Well it's a province which is not, you know, invested in kind of the resources of making sure there's broadband Internet access all over the province. But, I mean, there are some areas where you could get it from a satellite perspective if you had the right technology. But, you know, fishing camps don't always have that kind of technology.

Anyway, there is—

An Honourable Member: So they wouldn't have cell service either?

Mr. Gerrard: There is uh—yes, there's places in this province where you can't get cellphone access. Maybe you've never been there, living in southeastern Manitoba, but—*[interjection]*—be that as it may, those were comments from the MLA for Emerson. He doesn't know anything about not being able to get cellphone access.

I think, speaking of Saskatchewan—excuse me—it's worthwhile commenting for a moment about the situation in Saskatchewan this summer with their forest fires. There were, I think I've got it right, something like four million—more than four million acres of forest that went up in smoke.

And, you know, they basically completely exhausted the provincial firefighting capabilities. They had people from other provinces, they had federal armed forces coming in, and they completely exhausted that. And there were fires where there were lakes and cottages that there was no possibility of providing any provincial or federal resources whatsoever. People were on their own, and fires just out of control.

There were major towns, major cities—La Ronge completely evacuated, big community of Pinehouse, completely evacuated. There were more than 50 communities evacuated. It was somewhere between 10 and 15 thousand people who were evacuated, and I think it was something over 10 thousand to temporarily house temporarily and there were probably quite a number of people who were evacuated who were never even counted because they just left on their own.

So I think that the—we need to make sure that, you know, we're on top of this. This is a result, I think, of a combination of climate change and the impact of having, basically, fire suppression policies so that you build up increased amount of brush, which, when it's dry, is tinder dry and starts a fire very, very quickly so that—you know, most of the fires in Saskatchewan this year were started by lightning. There were some that were started by—for other reasons. But you're in conditions where fires could go out of control for—in areas where there was no firefighting equipment for more than 30 kilometres. You had one fire around Pinehouse, which was about 70 kilometres north and south, pretty big, sizable fires and large areas that were affected. And we need to make sure that we're ready, you know, if we have a comparable situation ever here in Manitoba. Hopefully, we don't. But, you know, this is part of what we have to be looking out

for with climate and with other things that are happening.

And that, of course, will have impacts on wildlife and fisheries, potentially. So, you know, it's important that we are good stewards of our wildlife and fisheries, and that will also be dependent on being good stewards of our forests and in terms of looking at boreal and other forests in a way that is sustainable and in a way that is good for people and for wildlife.

So those are the basic comments that I wanted to make. I welcome this legislation and look forward to it being passed, third reading shortly and then moving on to being proclaimed. Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act. The bill makes it an offence to obstruct the conservation officer from fulfilling their duties and enhances enforcement measures, including increases in fines for infractions under The Wildlife Act and Fisheries Act.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the officers do need help when it comes to doing their job. But the biggest problem is, fishing and hunting has always been a great part of my life, but when I was younger there used to be all kinds of conservations officers around, and nobody dared take a chance on, whether it be nightlighting or doing things that were illegal. But today, it's almost impossible to find a conservation officer around. So I don't know what this government has done in the last 15 years, where they've put them, but there seems to be a great shortage of conservation officers out in the field. And having—and talking with conservation officers who are retired, they said that the numbers in the last 10 years have gone down dramatically, of conservation officers out in the field, which, to me is wrong. Like, if we're going to set laws in place, we need people to enforce these laws. So I would suggest that some of the things that they should look at is putting more money into some of the areas that they need to make a—*it's fine to make a pass a law, but if there's nobody out there to enforce it, to me, that's not right.*

The bill also permits the sharing of information between jurisdictions for wildlife offences. Yet the NDP has decided that this information sharing should not apply to fishery offences. Well, this is something that I have a problem with because what is the difference between, say, a deer, a bear and a 200-year-old sturgeon? If people are doing things

that are illegal, why should they not be punished properly for it and other jurisdictions should know that these people are not abiding by the laws. So it's not fair if somebody gets nailed in Manitoba for a fishing infraction, you can go to Saskatchewan and probably do the same thing there because if they go all the way to Saskatchewan to fish, then they obviously have a reason that they probably will break the law there.

* (16:20)

There's another number of issues in here where the NDP, I noticed a couple of years ago, along Trans-Canada, that they bulldozed down the right-of-way for the work that they were doing on the shoulders and the ditches, and they bulldozed the bush just into the bush. Then, about a month later, they had backhoes digging the bush back out of the bush. So I went to MIT and I asked the question: Why are you doing this? The answer I got back was: Well, we could not do a proper job of cutting the bush after a certain date because there would probably be birds nesting in this 20 feet of bush.

Well, it's okay to push it down here in southern Manitoba or, you know, be concerned about the birds but yet every day in northern Manitoba along the Bipole III, it doesn't matter what time of the year it is, they're bulldozing the bush. So I think the government needs to get their act together to do things and have priorities to what they're doing, because if it's not okay to do it here but yet it's okay to do it over there, that's something that I cannot understand with why this government is doing it.

We talked about numbers of wildlife. The numbers of the moose population in Manitoba has dropped severely in the last number of years and, yes, there are some reasons for brainworm. I know in southeastern Manitoba it's not that many years ago that I used to go hunting moose there and moose were actually fairly plentiful. Like, in the community pasture in Gardenton, there used to be a lot. I hunted moose for years. There are no moose there, and now when there is a moose it seems that it doesn't last long and somebody's shot the thing, which we don't understand because we need to protect the species. But yet there's nobody out there to protect them. There are no game wardens or, you know, officers to look after our wildlife because they've been cut back. Why have they been cut back? That's something that this government needs to answer.

They want to bring forward bills, but yet there have nothing there to substantiate or to enforce those

bills, and I believe that wildlife is a very important part of Manitoba. It's a heritage to Manitoba for hunting and fishing, and if we don't look after it, how long is it going to be before the lakes run out of fish to fish?

You know, even our elk population, how long is it going to be before we have no more elk for our future generations, whether to—even to see in the wild? We're lucky in southeastern Manitoba; we have a number of elk there. But the trouble with that is that they're being shot out. Even though there's no season for it, they're being poached and that's not right. But we have nobody there to enforce it. There's not enough game wardens around to enforce these laws.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to have the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Nevakshonoff) take a good look at what they're actually doing out there to make sure that what they do makes sense. It's easy enough to pass a bill but if the bill is not going to have any substance to it, why even do it? Let's take a look at passing some proper legislation in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act. The bill makes it an offence to obstruct a conservation officer from fulfilling their duties and enhances enforcement measures, including increasing fines for infractions under The Wildlife Act and Fisheries Act.

Well, all of these are good things, Mr. Speaker. In particular, we all know that there are less and less conservation officers out there, as has been referenced by a number of other speakers. In fact, we have a group of them that used to work out of Portage, and back when it was still an active place to work out of, there was actually 16 of them working out of there at one point; now there's two, certainly a dramatic reduction. Of course, in those days we had a very active fishery on Lake Manitoba and that was part of their jurisdiction, to monitor that. That has certainly dwindled because the condition of the lake has dwindled, and the fishery's in very poor condition and probably will discontinue altogether sometime in the next few years the way things are going.

So far we have not had the blessing of having zebra mussels detected in that lake, but at the rate

they're moving across the province I expect that would probably be next year's accomplishment, Mr. Speaker, so.

And certainly we were onside in terms of additional offences. As has been referenced there are really much smaller numbers of big game out there. The moose populations are in crisis in many regions of the province. I believe this year there were two more zones that were added to the no-hunting list, simply because the populations are so low that they're really not sustainable at the level that they're at now, and as has been pointed out by my colleague from Morris, there continues to be a number of illegal hunts and kills that are done in various places across the province. And very little in terms of enforcement is able—you've simply got to be on-site quickly to do—to have any hope whatsoever of dealing with these things and finding the perpetrators, and we're just—we're spread too thin. There's simply no—not enough people out there, even with the local communities' help, and in some areas there aren't a lot of people, often where the moose population is. But even with their help, it is very, very difficult to track any of this and keep track of what's going on.

The issue of nightlighting continues to be a problem as well. Nightlighting and spotlighting are a problem in many areas in the province, not only for big game, elk and moose, but even when it relates to the deer populations, which took quite a blow two years ago from that long, hard winter, and have done very little in terms of recovering, and certainly we all, those of us that enjoy the pastimes of hunting and fishing, want to see some significant recovery in these areas, and if we can't keep illegal hunting from occurring, the chances for a reasonable recovery get extended further and further. And it isn't a question of lost habitat, as we so often hear as a reason for declining populations. It's actually overhunting, and certainly the weather conditions in some years.

You've got to wonder how much of this pressure is transferring from moose populations to the caribou population in some parts of the province, which is very close to endangered, if not already there, depending on the region and the population. So, certainly, that's a factor in that as well, Mr. Speaker, and we're very concerned that all our wildlife populations are being put at risk here.

And predator pressure is transferred. If there's no deer for them to feed on, to hunt, they move on into

other areas, and we've seen some issues around Lake Winnipeg and Winnipeg Beach area where, of course, the victims were domestic animals, and people were very upset. But imagine how much pressure is on the dwindling wildlife population from the increased number of predators. I suspect that we're going to be hearing some fairly sad stories over the coming winter about over-predator hunting in some areas because there's simply nothing else for them. They have to go after—and they'll get increasingly desperate coming into communities and taking the domestic wildlife or domestic animals, and we may start hearing, of course, from the farmers as well, and we've had issues in the past with wolf populations being problems for cattlemen, and steps had to be taken to do something to reduce that.

So we're really just transferring the problem on from one thing to the next thing to the next thing. We certainly need strong enforcement, and you can't do that when the population of conservation officers is too thin.

The issue of not keeping in touch with surrounding jurisdictions is just a sad oversight. I think that they should move certainly very quickly to do that. Boundaries really are not very significant on the west side of the province. Moving from Manitoba to Saskatchewan, you just drive across a line, and for those, if we have people that are violating the regulations in Manitoba they will simply move to Saskatchewan, or vice versa.

So we certainly need to be in touch because the populations that we're trying to protect in terms of big game are very mobile, certainly move back and forth across the border. All the time we're hearing issues around Riding Mountain about the elk population and where it's moving to. Sometimes it's out of the park and sometimes it's out of the province. They move out into farmland on the Saskatchewan side or in parts of Manitoba. And, of course, that's something that we need to track very carefully because there is still a substantial TB risk related to that, and of course that's transferrable across to the cattle herds. We've had an ongoing monitoring program there for many years, and Dr. Allan Preston has been heading that up and has been reasonably successful in getting co-operation from the farm community and managed to keep the—fairly in control, so we actually haven't had a positive now in, I believe, it's three years, which is really good news.

* (16:30)

But there are other complications related to this. When the elk move into Saskatchewan, Manitoba is chronic wasting disease free at this point in time, but Saskatchewan's not. So, when the elk move across to Saskatchewan, there is potential for the wild elk herds to come into contact with the tame elk herds and bring back another disease that might be a problem here in Manitoba and would certainly have an impact on elk ranching here in Manitoba, which has gone through some pretty tough years with the market, some of it driven by the issue of chronic wasting disease in other jurisdictions, and that potentially contaminated results, but is now, finally, starting to make a recovery and encouraging more people to get back into it. So we certainly don't want to put that kind of recovery at risk, Mr. Speaker.

So we need to pay attention, and we certainly need to have a strong presence in the countryside. Conservation officers, as one of the member—one of my fellow members said, used to be very common, used to see them all the time, you used to meet them, you'd have a type of relationship with them. They knew you, you knew them, and if anything out of the ordinary was happening in the rural community it was very common for—have the landowner often give the conservation officer a call to talk about, you know, we're seeing a lot of potential night light activity in this particular region, maybe you need to be out there and see what's going on. There's simply no way you can do that any longer because there are so few of them around.

There was, actually, a time, too, when they supplied some services to the farm community, as well. In particular, in terms of wildlife scare equipment. That's all in storage, no one even looks at it; it's simply not available any longer because it isn't being maintained.

They're spread too thick—too thin on the ground and, though we don't have the level of depredation in crops that we used to have, there's—it's still a presence out there, and that ends up being a cost, actually, to the province because it's claimable under Manitoba agricultural insurance corporation. And every year the cost is usually 2 to 3 million dollars. And that's a cost that would go a long way, frankly, towards paying for additional conservation officers to help with some prevention out there.

I cannot get up and talk to this bill without mentioning a little bit more about zebra mussels. And we frankly should be embarrassed on how we handled this. And the minister made reference the

other day that you need to get people in the habit of doing what is necessary to prevent spread. So, to drain, to dry the equipment, and to make sure it's properly treated. Habits take time to form, and all of a sudden we had a population at risk in Lake Winnipeg that put the rest of the province at risk, and we started then to deal with the issue, even though we knew about it way back in 2009.

We did not give people any time whatsoever to develop the habit. We virtually guaranteed that people would not actually start to think about it. The information level started to gear up a little bit this summer; some more and more people became a little bit aware. But if you went looking for a decontamination unit, they were pretty hard to find. They certainly were not in the right place, and I know I was there one evening, they took off at 4 o'clock on the Red River and packed up and went in. And most of the boats come back in after that. So they were not even on-site to do what was necessary.

And I mentioned the other day the issue of float planes. There's really no strategy to deal with the decontamination of float planes, and they often fly out of the Red River basin, either in Lake Winnipeg or on the Red River, and they often go to some of the most pristine lakes, the most remote lakes in the province. And how long is it going to take before we have these all in a contaminated structure situation? I mean, already had it move from Lake Winnipeg to Cedar Lake basically in one season. That's moving from one waterway to another. That's basically from the Red River system and Lake Winnipeg into the Saskatchewan River system. And, of course, that means that it'll be transferred up the Saskatchewan River system probably very, very quickly and into a number of other lakes and we will pay the price for that, as well.

We'll be seeing it—of course, it will move up the Assiniboine from the Red—it's probably already done that. We just haven't been monitoring on that site. No one's even looked. And we will start seeing vast numbers already moving up the Assiniboine, and sooner or later, probably as soon as next spring, they will use the Portage floodway, as they always do, to get rid of the ice from the upper Assiniboine, and with that they will be running zebra mussels into Lake Manitoba. So I expect we will be seeing zebra mussels in that lake probably within the year.

And, simply, we failed miserably on that. As I mentioned the other day when the minister was talking about this, if you look at how the invasion

across North America has taken place with zebra mussels, it was relatively slow until it got to the Red River system in Manitoba. And, basically, it leaped the province in a single year. That's not a sign of a well-run system and we certainly did not do a good job in terms of preventing the spread. I think, frankly, we should all be very embarrassed about what has happened and, yes, we take—now we're going to take some—maybe some extreme measures. And, certainly, the treatment of the lake was an extreme measure, but maybe we're going to have a few more decontamination units out there. But it's really one of these examples of closing the door after the horse has already run away. It's not going to yield very well.

And I know that you, Mr. Speaker, actually enjoy a lot of wildlife and like to get out in the countryside. I hope that the lake that you're on remains free of zebra mussels for some time, but I wouldn't bank on it. And I do hope that you take the additional precautions, and I hope that everyone does, because all it takes is one person to cause a problem, and we have seen far too much damage already from this because there are significant commercial fisheries, particularly on Lake Winnipeg. As I mentioned, we have a small one on Lake Manitoba, usually the winter—is one, and I suspect that because it's already struggling, if there's anything that goes wrong in terms of the fish populations, you know, pushing down the number of feeder species because most of the fish that we catch are predator fish, we will see a significant drop either in the condition of the fish, or in the number of fish, and it will be done. It's already on a very serious situation. That'll leave us only with more invasive species.

We'll have more carp fill the space and we're at—certainly at risk for additional—carp is an invasive species. The amount of damage that they do, and we've had a little pilot project in the Delta Marsh area where we actually did carp exclusion, trying to get the habitat to restore because muddy water in the marsh, which the carp generate from as a bottom feeder, does not let sunlight penetrate, so the amount of nesting habitat for waterfowl was actually seriously impacted. They did one year of it before the 2011 flood, which, by the way, tore out all of the infrastructure when it got into the marsh—when the flood got into the marsh, just damaged it all beyond belief. But in one year you could see the difference.

So, clearly, there's something that can be done there to improve the habitat, so there is actually a

spillover into the waterfowl species in that regard too. It's hard to imagine, or hard to explain, the number of invasive species, in that case, the common carp, that are being excluded, and they do that with sets of bars that let the small fish in but they keep the carp out, which is quite a large fish in particular.

The numbers are so vast that most of the gates that they put in place which are about one kilometre in from the lakeshore, the waterways are solid carp top to bottom, all the way between there and the lakeshore, and you could literally walk on the water, there are so many there. And, of course, we have yet to develop much of a market for that. There's a little bit of interest in them now, but it just destroys that section of channel in, as you can well imagine, because it's teeming there, not for days, but for months. It just goes on and on and on. You'd think there would actually be an end to it, but there just doesn't seem to be.

So it's a very bad sign that we are moving all our lakes down the food chain to poor quality fish, more invasive species, which will have an impact on the northern fisheries that we were famous for. Manitoba, through the freshwater fish marketing board, used to be a great source of—really, the only source in many parts of the world, for freshwater species, and I fear for their future, because we keep upsetting the ecology and the balance that we're putting in place here.

I mentioned briefly the impact in 2011 on this particular project. It destroyed most of the structures. A couple of them have been rebuilt, but the rest are actually still yet to be rebuilt because it's only the summer that the lake actually got down enough that anybody could actually go back in to see what was left and whether you could actually get heavy equipment in to do that.

At the same time we did untold damage to the lakeshore, and it'll make it, as many of you probably know, the Delta Marsh, which is on the south end of Lake Manitoba, is about a 50,000-acre marsh and has really just four entry points between it and the lake, and we were managing between that. The lake was so high for so long that it made so many holes in the beach ridge that we now have at least 16 entry points. So now we either have to fill them in and try and rebuild the damage that was done from 2011, or we have to put control structures in all these other points. I don't think that's actually cost-effective, and some of them, frankly, you would have to fly in equipment. It's just—there's no accessibility at all

except over the ice in the wintertime, and no one seems prepared to go in and do that for fear that their equipment will be stranded there before the project was done.

* (16:40)

So I think we've taken a giant step backward following 2011. Invasive species of all types are at risk, and we've dealt with them in agriculture for many years, and they continue to be brought in. But we're not done with invasive species and the aquatic situation, and so I hope we learn how to do a much better job in terms of prevention, and habit is what helps in prevention. You have to get people in the habit of doing what they need to to prevent spread, and we failed to do that in the case of zebra mussels.

I think now we certainly owe it to Manitoba and our future generation of Manitobans who want to enjoy the wildlife and the fishery that we have had, that they would do more to prevent invasion—invasive species in the aquatic situation. I cannot help but wonder, when we start seeing zebra mussels entering some of these wetland situations, what they're going to do in the wetlands, whether they're going to be an aid or a harm.

Certainly, there's little indication, and I actually made a call to a friend of mine down in the Lake Ontario area: So what happened to your wetlands when zebra mussels invaded? And he said they dried up in most cases. They seemed to cause—they break down the ecological cycle; they certainly compete without the fisheries that the—the fish that live in these wetlands. And he said that they were a negative impact on that, so I hope that's not the case here. It remains to be seen whether we'll see anything like that at all, Mr. Speaker, but we're a long ways from knowing the answer.

Dr. Eva Pip, who I have a lot of respect for and have had a few debates with on nutrient management over the years, certainly has a good indication—a good feel for what would happen, and if you look around the world, you'll see some examples where zebra mussels have done a lot of damage. They're also going to be a problem, of course, for water intakes, water treatment plants, waste-water treatment plants. They're going to work their way through the whole chain, and they will add to cost without a doubt.

Now, I know that that's not the intent of the bill, but we didn't get asked to debate by the minister when he put his sanitation uses facilities in place. He

waited until it was too late. Certainly, people had brought the issue forward a number of times. I can remember since I came to the House, that the issue had come up a number of times, and really that we saw no action until after the fact, until it was too late to do that.

And, as my colleague from Morris mentioned, they took and did a little chemistry project and in—in three bays, I believe it was on Lake Winnipeg, and thought they had gotten ahead of them. Mother Nature is far tougher than that. You can't—you simply can't get out there and get—and do that kind of after-the-market treatment.

The one study they were referencing, and I looked it up on the Internet, was in a very controlled environment and not an active ecology in the true sense of the word. So how they expected that to work, I guess it was wishful thinking on their part that they would be able to say, oh, well, we managed to stop them. The chance to stop them was when that boat went in the water the first time—the first contaminated boat went in the water. We missed that one by quite a while, I suspect, Mr. Speaker.

And, in fact, it's kind of a shame that you see people not paying attention to that and bringing boats in—and I actually was helping on the weekend—we have a local community club who makes pretty good money out of putting boats into storage for the winter. They have a building that used to be an arena but now is not active, so we use that to generate money to support the other arena and it works very well for that—that we bring in boats and some RVs too, but mostly boats and cars is what this particular one is developed the market for. Most of the boats were not cleaned. What do you do? We have no rules around that, so we couldn't very well turn them down. But they hadn't taken the time to clean them.

So the habit is clearly not established and I'm certainly—I'm certain that I made a point of saying that you know, when they go out here in the springtime, these people have got to—we've got to do something about this. We've got to have them cleaned. We can't take the risk.

Now they'll sit all winter and chances are any contaminants will be destroyed, though no guarantee because this is actually heated storage. So, you know, if there's enough water in the bilge area, might well be some survivors. And certainly we hope that doesn't happen, but we'll make a point of making sure that—but it just goes to show how really—how far

we are away from getting the attitude out there that we need to have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I guess I'd like to go back a little bit to talk a bit more about the fact that we haven't communicated with other provinces. I think it's very important that we do that and do whatever we can to help the few conservation officers that are left on the landscape out there. We need them worse than ever, and I think we should be paying particular attention to anything that is done to help them.

You know, we can talk about some of the water management issues. I know that there's an agreement coming up with Saskatchewan on how to manage water better between the two provinces. I do hope we get to that very quickly—hope Saskatchewan co-operates because certainly they have been generating some issues for Manitoba. We have been generating some issues for ourselves, and we need to learn how to manage water better than we have because we're paying—and I know the Finance Minister actually referenced it today—we're paying—still paying for the flood of 2011. We'll pay for a lot of floods if we don't learn how to manage water better. And that's a cost that every Manitoban has to pay. Every Canadian has a piece of that because, of course, there's disaster financial assistance, and there is money that comes from the federal government to help with that, and they've changed that deal, so more of it will be Manitoba's load and less of it will be federal load. And we need to learn very quickly how to manage water better.

We've always been a province that's subject to flood. If you look back in history, going back as far as we have, we have notes; Winnipeg has had repeated floods. Portage has had its share of floods. And, really, as we drain the province and dike the water system, that's how settlement came west across Manitoba. Had we not done that, probably wouldn't be here. Probably none of us would be here. It would simply be a really nice marshland from probably Winnipeg to, well, to the escarpment—would all be subject to that, which would include my friend from Morden-Winkler, who's below the escarpment. So, you know, that was part of the development, part of settlement of the west. I understand that that's what you got to do. But, with that, you have to learn how to manage those water resources better and better, and we have simply failed to do that. We have a lot of lessons that we need to learn.

While I'm talking about the water management, we talk about greenhouse gas management. Can't

help but think of—way back there was a plan to do an offset system and the Province was going to lead the way, they said, in how to do carbon offsets, and I was involved in the agriculture industry at the time, and agriculture was capable of generating quite significant offsets to help deal with carbon emissions. We went through a whole lot of work to establish protocols so that we'd get a measure of how much carbon we would sequester if—with forage crops and with zero till and tree plantings and things like that. We did quite a bit of work on that to establish numbers around that. It was frankly a waste of time, Mr. Speaker, because no one—we never pursued it. We got to a point where we had the data and the information in place, and there was no market because no one had followed through to make the contacts in the US with agencies and jurisdictions that might actually want those offsets. And it turned out to be really chasing up the wrong tree altogether, not that some of those practices didn't have other benefits besides carbon offsets, because carbon offsets are really only a piece of the puzzle in terms of landscape management.

I mentioned earlier the nutrient management, and we went through a long, hard process here in Manitoba, learning how to manage, in particular phosphorus, which is often the nutrient—certainly the nutrient that causes issues in Lake Winnipeg, and we had a lot of work to do to learn how to manage it, because Manitoba's jurisdiction—a lot of experience in southern US on nutrient management related to phosphorus, and even in eastern Canada. But those are all on acid soils, and Manitoba soils are at the other end of the scale. They're high pH; they're alkaline soils. And so the nutrients behave quite differently in those jurisdictions. And we thought, well, we know the lessons from down there; this is all we have to do is worry about the surface runoff, you know, reduce the surface runoff; leave more trash in the soil. We'll have this problem licked in no time—not in our jurisdiction. In our jurisdiction, the water—the process of freeze and thaw in the springtime actually extracts phosphorus from the trash on top of the soil, which we thought was the right thing to do. We now actually generated more phosphorus runoff by trying to leave more trash there. So we did absolutely the wrong thing, and it took us a little while to figure that out. We now know that type of information. But, actually, because we're doing zero till across most of western Canada, which leaves substantially more trash in place, we've made the problem of phosphorus extraction from the crop residue one of the worst problems in terms of

managing nutrients across western Canada. And I'm not going to backwards on zero till; it has lots of other great benefits, not only cost, but it also environmentally very positive, it reduces soil erosion. But it is not the right thing to do for phosphorus loading.

* (16:50)

If we're going to deal with Lake Winnipeg, we have to come up with some other solutions, which include things like manage wetlands, but we don't do anything like that. And, in fact, the resolution that came up the other day forgot to mention wetlands. Gee, one of the most important factors in an ecosystem is the wetland. One of the critical factors, one of, I think, the most active areas, and it was forgotten. It's really sad that that had to be pointed out to them. I think it shows a lack of awareness and a lack of understanding how the aquatic ecosystem works in conjunction with the landscape.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is almost done. Certainly, I encourage that we move on this. We certainly encourage this government to move on this bill as quickly as possible. If they want more on what they're doing wrong, I would be really happy to give them any personal time that they need because, obviously, they need some help.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, it's always interesting listening to the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) because obviously he's—I think, through his studies and through his practice, he knows a lot about conservation issues, and so it's always interesting to listen to that.

Bill 24, this wildlife amendment and fisheries act, first of all, let's thank our conservation officers that we do have out there. They're doing a fine job, and they need all our support in order to do the job that they're tasked with. And there are some real significant issues that they face out there that they're ill equipped for and continue to face challenges are—and one of those—certainly one of those issues, just one of those issues is the issue of nightlighting, spotlighting. This continues to be a problem throughout Manitoba.

It's affecting our wildlife populations, particularly the deer and the elk population, moose populations. And it is not only depleting our wildlife resource; it is also putting in danger many local residents, properties, livestock because when this

happens with these powerful spotlights at night, they're—quite often they're trespassing on private land or at least hunting on land without permission, and they don't know what's out there. You don't know what's out there when you're doing this, and very difficult for our conservation officers to go in there. It's a very dangerous situation for them to go to.

So this government has really failed the conservation officers in giving them some support to address this issue.

I also notice when I was reading through the explanatory note of the bill talking about ring-necked pheasants and—no longer considered to be game birds. It's been many, many years since we've seen a ring-necked pheasant in south-central Manitoba, and there was a few at one time, not plentiful ever, and they had a hard time surviving our winters. I know that talking from—talking to legislators down in South Dakota, it's a huge industry for them. The hunting of ring-necked pheasants, they bring—brings in a lot of tourism dollars in. So it's an opportunity that we're missing out on here with that.

And, of course, this—while this bill addresses some issues of fines and enforcement, unless you have the conservation officers, it's very difficult to do enforcement, and we know that there is conservation offices that have been closed. We know that there is openings, open positions for conservation officers throughout the province, and this does not help them in the total when it's—when you don't have an overall program to help enforce these new fines and new authorities being given within this act.

So, of course, we know that the environmental record of this government, the NDP government, has been absolutely terrible in that they have failed to address water qualities in Lake Winnipeg. They're good at passing legislation, very poor at implementation, very poor at having seen results. If there was a result for every press release that's been out there, we would have stellar results. But we know that that doesn't happen with this government. So it's unfortunate, that.

And I know we mentioned the other day in debate talking about the destruction of hundreds of kilometres of trees in the—through the boreal forest with the west-side waste line, the Bipole III west-side waste line. And all you have to do is drive up Highway 50, not that far from Winnipeg, and you will see the slash that they've done through that forest. They didn't even make use of any of the trees that were slashed. They just ground them up and

have left them. It's unfortunate that such a resource was lost. We know that those trees will grow back eventually and—but, in the meantime, it's another resource that this government has mismanaged.

And, of course, building a line 500 kilometres longer than it needs to is going to take out even more boreal forest and not to mention the valuable farmland that this government has now expropriated and is running roughshod over the landowners in their non-negotiations with landowners. It's not negotiations; it's ultimatums that they've done with landowners in terms of Bipole III, and that's—it's really a callous way to deal with private property owners throughout Manitoba.

And we know that there is all—so many examples of this environmental degradation that this government has done. One only needs to look at the flooding that happened in Lake Manitoba on—from the 2011 flood and the degradation of the real good pasture land and hay land that surrounds—sort of that flatland that surrounds Lake Manitoba. A lot of that land was productive of—production of that land has been destroyed. Cattails are growing. The garbage that was floating around in the lake from the flood has washed up on shores, and it's unfortunate what's happened there and what continues to happen there because it takes a long time for nature to rebuild itself after an event such as that flooding around Lake Manitoba and the uncertainty that continues there because they haven't even begun to build a diversion, a second channel out of Lake Manitoba. They're—they like to study things.

They like to have—this government likes to study things. They like to have storyboards out and make it look like they're doing something, but, in the meantime, those that live around the lake, whether it's farmers or fishermen or cottage owners or First Nations, are still faced with the reality that they're could be a flood any time on that lake when water levels rise because they have used Lake Manitoba as the dumping ground for excess water and without building another outlet to control the water levels.

And, certainly, we know the zebra mussel issue. It's unfortunate this government sort of made the grand press release that they have them under control, but we know that that was not actually in the case where they did not have them controlled, and so we'll continue to see the spread of the mussels.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter?

Seeing no further debate, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act.

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

So the hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Petitions	
Members' Statements		Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety Schuler	2388
Bipole III—Farmland Acquisitions Pedersen	2377	Government Record—Apology Request Graydon	2388
John Pritchard School Centennial Braun	2377	Rights of Manitoba Children Rowat	2389
Small Business Week Stefanson	2378	Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina—Request for Research into Benefits and Costs Ewasko	2390
Canada Post Home Delivery Wiebe	2378	Minnesota-Manitoba Transmission Line Route—Information Request Smook	2390
Quagga Mussel Infestation Gerrard	2378		
Oral Questions		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Debate on Concurrence and Third Readings	
Federal Election Pallister; Selinger	2379	Bill 20—The Architects Amendment Act Piwniuk	2391
NDP Government Pallister; Selinger	2380	Braun	2392
		Concurrence and Third Readings	
Small-Business Community Stefanson; Allum	2381	Bill 21—The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Amendment Act Braun	2392
Manitoba's Credit Rating Friesen; Dewar	2382	Smook	2392
Bipole III Transmission Line Eichler; Selinger	2383	Gerrard	2394
Eichler; Robinson	2383	Martin	2394
Student Financial Aid Program Ewasko; Allum	2384	Ewasko	2398
Bethesda Regional Health Centre Goertzen; Blady	2385	Bill 31—The Registered Professional Planners Act Caldwell	2400
Children's Sports Equipment Gerrard; Selinger	2386	Eichler	2400
Science Lab Renewal Program Maloway; Allum	2387	Bill 24—The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act Nevakshonoff	2402
Farmland School Tax Pedersen; Dewar	2388	Martin	2402
		Gerrard	2407
		Smook	2408
		Wishart	2409
		Pedersen	2415

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>