

Fifth Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would seek leave that we move directly to second reading of Bill 206.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to go directly, for Private Members' Business, second reading, to go directly to Bill 206, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Disclosure of Government Directives)? Agreement? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 206—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Disclosure of Government Directives)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the member from Carman, that Bill 206, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Disclosure of Government Directives); Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Borotsik: I'm very pleased to rise on a bill that I presented to this House, a bill, Mr. Speaker, that I have absolutely no doubt that every member opposite in the government's side of this House will be more than happy to support because it speaks of transparency, it speaks of accountability, and those are things that this government pays lip service to, and now it's an opportunity for them to pay more than just simply lip service but to actually walk the walk, to support a bill with respect to openness, honesty, transparency and accountability. And if they

listen very carefully, I know that they probably will learn that, in fact, this bill is nothing more than just simply those four objectives.

Mr. Speaker, the bill's fairly simple and it has to do with what I consider to be the crown jewel of Crown corporations in the province of Manitoba, and that being Manitoba Hydro.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Manitoba Hydro is a very, very important function of not only the government but people who reside in Manitoba. When you flip on a switch and the lights go on, or, in the wintertime, if you have electric heat and the furnace goes on, that's because we have a corporation in this province that provides a very, very valuable service to us as Manitobans.

Now, Manitoba Hydro has some very efficient management—very efficient management—within their own ranks, Mr. Speaker, and it's that management that has to put forward the business plan for the corporation itself. That business plan should be well thought out—should be, in fact, predicated upon their ability to finance their debt-servicing requirements, predicated upon the amount of hydro that has to be generated over a period of time so that they can satisfy not only residents of Manitoba but also our export customers. That's very important because that generates a substantial amount of money over a period of time, and that management has to put forward its plans based on their knowledge.

Now, when a government, Mr. Speaker, jumps into the mix and sends directives to that corporation based on their own ideology, based on their own direction of policy, then it sometimes interferes with what that corporation would really like to see happen for its own business purposes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the bill does say that if, at any point in time, the government—any government, whether it be the NDP or whether it be the government that's going to come into office in the not-too-distant future—any government that's going to interfere with the business plans of that corporation—not that it's illegal; they can do it. Legally they can do it. Morally, I'm not so sure, but it's legal—legally capable of a government to interfere with the operations of that corporation. But all we

ask is that if the government does interfere, does send a directive to the corporation that is contrary to its own business direction, then that directive that's been made by either a minister or Cabinet has to simply be published in the *Gazette*. How onerous is that? Not terribly; not terribly. It's not onerous at all. When a directive is sent by a Cabinet minister or Cabinet, then all we're asking is that that directive be published in the *Manitoba Gazette*, within 30 days.

Now, we recognize not many people read the *Manitoba Gazette*, but there are some people that do that, and when we see that the government's going to interfere in a Crown corporation like Manitoba Hydro, then certainly people will be looking at the *Gazette* to see any kind of a directive published.

Now, Mr. Speaker, along with that directive being published in the *Gazette*—which is pretty simple, and to have anybody suggest that that shouldn't happen speaks to hiding of some type of interference with the corporation. But I'm sure that members opposite would be more than happy to support this bill which says, simply, publish a directive in the *Gazette*. Along with that directive we have to have a detailed description of the directive; we have to have the rationale for the directive. Now, even if the rationale is purely political ideology, so be it, but publish the rationale as to why you're forcing a Crown corporation to make a change of their own policy directive.

And the third thing, Mr. Speaker, that the bill speaks of is that, in the *Gazette*, the government of the day who has forced the Crown corporation to make a change or divergence in its own policy, has to explain the expected costs and benefits that will result from the implementation of the directive. That's pretty simple stuff. It's called the cost-benefit analysis.

So when you, as government, have done—and we'll explain an example as to what the government actually did. When the government directs Manitoba Hydro, which is a public corporation which, Mr. Speaker, consumers are very concerned about because they have to pay for any errors or mistakes or omissions that happen with the management of this company—if, when the government makes that directive, then put together a cost-benefit analysis so that we know, as ratepayers of that corporation, what it's going to cost us and why it's going to cost us more money, what it is that the government is really trying to achieve by forcing Manitoba Hydro, in this

case, to do something that it absolutely doesn't want to do.

* (10:10)

So, put together a cost-benefit analysis; tell us the rationale; tell us what you're doing. Pretty simple piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Now, you're going to ask yourself—I know you are—do you have any examples as to what might have happened in the not-too-distant past that would be—would make it necessary to have this piece of legislation? Well, I thought long and hard over the last little while, and I guess Bipole III would be a perfect example of what this government has done to Manitoba Hydro.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, a letter went from the then-Minister of Hydro—who is now, heaven forbid, the Premier of the province of Manitoba—a letter went on September the 20th, 2007, under the signature of the then-Minister of Hydro to Mr. Vic Schroeder, who is a, I understand, previous Cabinet minister of the NDP government, but I don't know if that matters or not because he was appointed chairman of Manitoba Hydro. But the then-Minister of Manitoba Hydro sent a letter to Vic Schroeder of Manitoba Hydro saying, we're going to cancel 20 years of work that has been done on Bipole III.

Manitoba Hydro knows, as do we, as do the members opposite, that Bipole III is very important. It's necessary for the operations of Manitoba Hydro. We recognize that. We recognize that there has to be an opportunity to reduce risk. We recognize there has to be an opportunity to now generate more power and ship that power to markets, whether they be domestic markets—which is the major share of what we have here in Manitoba—or extra-provincial markets, which we're not quite generating as much revenue from the extra-provincial as we would like to right now, but, who knows, Manitoba Hydro should know their business plan better than the government.

But the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro sent a letter saying, you have to stop 20 years of work putting that transmission line down the east side, and you're going to now put it on the west side, purely political, purely political ideology, no business plan attached to it whatsoever—and, by the way, Manitoba Hydro, expend an additional \$1.75 billion of taxpayers' money, of ratepayers'

money. We don't care; we're forcing you, Manitoba Hydro, to do that.

Now, all I'm asking, in this legislation, is when they do those things—and they'll do it again and again and again because they can't keep their fingers out of the Crown corporation. They can't manage either, but they can't keep their fingers out of the Crown corporation, so they're going to continue to insist they do things that the Crown corporation management does not want to do.

So when you do that, all we're saying, simply, advertise the directive in the *Gazette*. Publish it in the *Gazette*. When you publish it in the *Gazette*, we want you to tell Manitobans—not us, but Manitobans—why you're interfering with a Crown corporation. We want to know the rationale as to why you want to do silly things like spend an extra \$1.75 billion going down the west side than the east side, why you want to risk the reliability of Manitoba Hydro in the future, why you want to, in fact, Mr. Speaker, why you want to mortgage the future of Manitobans based on pure political ideology. And we want a simple little thing: a cost-benefit analysis.

Now, non-business people on that government side might understand the fact that, hey, spending money is just what we're here to do; we don't care really how we spend it and what happens with it; cost-benefit analysis don't matter, as is seen with the stadium deal, as is seen with a lot of other deals.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. There are a lot of people, I know, that want to support this legislation and, in fact, will speak in favour of this legislation. Thank you.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act):

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about people in his caucus wanting to speak in favour of this bill. I can assure you that on this side of the House we see this bill as quite redundant, and we will not be speaking in favour of it.

But there is one point that I do agree with the member opposite, and that is when he said Manitoba Hydro was our—is our crown jewel, and it is, indeed, a crown jewel. And Manitoba Hydro's financial position is the strongest under this government in this time period than it has been in 75–57 years. The debt-to-equity ratio is now 73 to 77, surpassing the target that Manitoba—70—[interjection] I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, 73-27. That surpassed the target that Manitoba Hydro put—had set at 75-25. In 1998-99,

the debt-equity ratio was far worse under Conservative administration. It was 84 to 16.

And when Mr. Brennan spoke in June of 2009, he told the opposition that when he was appointed CEO of Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker, the debt-equity ratio was 90-10. He told us this at the standing committee. But in 1999, if you want to talk about what the Conservatives did when they were in power, in 1999 the Auditor General ordered the members of the opposition to stop hiding off-balance sheet debt due to backroom directives by the Conservative government, causing Hydro debt to increase by \$532.5 million. That's the record of the members opposite.

In 1999, the members opposite made a decision. They made a decision, Mr. Speaker, to purpose—purchase Centra Gas in a pre-election spending spree, and the Hydro debt increased by \$445 million. The premier at the time, Mr. Filmon, directed Manitoba Hydro to buy Centra Gas. The Public Utility Board publicly noted a key factor affecting Hydro's financial situation are the ongoing costs associated in acquiring Centra Gas.

So, Mr. Speaker, that I point out to you as some of the records of the members opposite when they were in power, when they considered themselves so clean and pure that they didn't make any interferences. But I can tell you things have changed an awful lot since that time.

Mr. Speaker, we have much more annual reporting. We have much more public accountability than we ever had in—by the members opposite, where we have Crown corporations coming forward and having the opportunity for members opposite to have their say. They can have their say. They can ask their questions. And I can tell you all the annual reports are considered by the Standing Committee of—on Crown Corporations where all parties are invited to participate. Committee meetings are advertised publicly and the media and the members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting, although they aren't allowed to speak, as the members opposite tried to maneuver at a meeting just recently. But the members of the public are aware of the meetings and they're invited to come.

You know, if we look at our record compared to the members opposite, we've actually called Manitoba Hydro to committee 11 times, 11 times since 2000, and this includes four times in the last year. What was their record when the members opposite were in power? In the 1990s, Mr. Speaker,

members opposite didn't call Hydro to the standing committee nearly as often because they didn't want to talk about Manitoba Hydro. Why would they? Why would they want to talk about Manitoba Hydro when they have no credibility on Hydro?

The members opposite are the mothball party when it comes to Hydro, Mr. Speaker. They never built the generation dam. They never did a thing. They knew since 1996 that they needed another hydro line for security of supply of our—for the people of Manitoba. What did the members opposite do? They completely ignored the recommendation that was made to build another line.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite now say we don't need converter stations, that the converter stations are a waste of money. That's what we're hearing from the members opposite. When it comes to building Bipole III they are saying that we don't need converter stations; we can just build a line. That's where their savings are. Their savings are in building—not building converter stations.

So, Mr. Speaker, if we're not building converter stations we're not building anything. And that's what the members opposite would do. They would not build Bipole III. They would not build the new Hydro dams. They would not have security of supply for Manitobans and they would not have those export sales that the member opposite just implied aren't very important to us because they don't really generate very much money.

*(10:20)

Well, I'll tell the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, they are very important to Manitobans because over 20 years they will generate over \$22 billion in revenues, for Manitobans, for Manitobans to keep our hydro rates at a reasonable price, to ensure that we have reliability of supply. All of those things are important.

Now I know the members opposite don't like to talk about the fact that we have an opportunity to sell power west of us, Mr. Speaker, but we do have that opportunity and we are working on it and it is very important that we look at those opportunities. But I have to say to the member opposite, his bill is, as I said, quite redundant. All of this is happening now. We have more openness. We have more accountability. We have more standing committee meetings.

Mr. Speaker, we have more standing committees than we have ever had before, and I often have the

discussion with the member from Russell, who chairs the—who works on these committees and Public Accounts Committee, and I say, why is it that it's so important now that we have all these Public Accounts committees which we participate in and he's so interested, but when they were in government, they didn't want Public Accounts and they seldom called the standing committees or Public Accounts.

Mr. Speaker, this is—these standing committees are very important, and as a result of these standing committees, there is more transparency and more information than has ever been available before. We have a CEO, Mr. Bob Brennan. We have the chair of the committee who—of Manitoba Hydro who is available. Staff from Manitoba Hydro are there. The members opposite have the opportunity to ask questions on all of these issues. I think we have more accountability, and I think the members opposite should clearly look back at the record that they have.

The record that they have that they were very secretive. The directives they gave to Manitoba Hydro to purchase the public—to purchase Centra Gas. The members opposite should think about the directive they gave to privatize the Manitoba Telephone System, Mr. Speaker, as well, which has hurt Manitobans dramatically. When I look at the service that we have—you know in Saskatchewan—my friends opposite love Saskatchewan, and I do too, they're good neighbours to me, but under SaskPower, Sask telephone, they have much better service. They've been able to deliver cell service and internet service across the province. We have privatized another one of our crown jewels, one of our crown jewels, and now we are not able to deliver that kind of service to remote and rural areas that Saskatchewan is able to do.

So I would remind the members of their record of what they did. Never once did they consider that it was important to hold committee meetings for accountability. This government has changed that dramatically. There are many opportunities for people to come to committee. There is more accountability than we have ever had, and I'm saddened when I hear the members opposite talk about some of the things that they would talk about where—despite the fact that Manitoba Hydro is in a better financial situation than it has ever been.

Manitoba Hydro has the ability to make these investments, but the members opposite would instead try to put roadblocks in the way, Mr. Speaker,

and say that we shouldn't build a power line. That is their agenda right now. They don't want to build converters. They don't want to build a power line. I don't know what they do want to build, but behind the scenes, I really think that they would much rather privatize Manitoba Hydro just as they did Manitoba Telephone and then have someone else do the work.

That is not on our agenda, Mr. Speaker, but I say to the member opposite, we will not support this bill—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): It's certainly a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 206, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act, and certainly speaking in favour. The government, if they are truly into accountability and transparency, they would support this bill as it—this is really what it's doing, as if there is a directive coming from the minister as what we saw with bipole—with the bipole issue.

It would have—it could have been presented in the *Manitoba Gazette*, and we certainly would have had a lot more transparency as to the real reasons for this decision that they are forcing on Manitoba Hydro and also could have explained themselves. And certainly, from the controversy that has come forward from this decision, they would have at least been—perhaps it would have been able to somewhat explain themselves as to the reason for doing this. However, they have chosen to hide behind their reasons for doing this and for forcing Manitoba Hydro.

And it's interesting, when you talk to past presidents or vice-presidents of Manitoba Hydro, they're telling us that the active work that they were doing in the late '80s and early '90s on an east-side route—and now that's been totally ignored by this government.

And for—there's no business case for it. There's—well, we've got a project that we don't really know what the cost of it is yet, because they're still using 2007 numbers. *[interjection]* You haven't updated the numbers. I've seen it. And I certainly look forward to—*[interjection]* The minister seems to be rather agitated about this, but, you know, if you really want to put the numbers out there, by all means publish the latest capital update. You're using 2007 numbers for a capital cost of this.

We know that even if you look at the Wuskwatim project, it started out at \$800 million; it's now \$1.6 billion. So where is bipole west—the

Bipole III, the west—cost projections on this? You're still using 2007 numbers. Give us an update. It would be certainly interesting to see what the real numbers are in this.

And if—let's just assume that it is \$4.1 billion, just for argument's sake. So you've got \$8 billion in debt in Manitoba Hydro now. You're going to add \$4.1 billion. You're going to increase the debt of Manitoba Hydro by 50 per cent. Now, let's just presume that if this all happens, what will happen to that debt-equity ratio that they just love to talk about these days? It will blow that debt-equity ratio out of the water in Manitoba Hydro.

And you've got—if you were—if you had any business experience, you would know that that debt can become very crushing to a company. And you're talking about cash flow, then, how do you service the debt? And if this is such a great decision to make this, then justify it, put it out there to the public as to how you will pay for this and how it will transpire in the long run for the corporation.

Now, there was—if this government really is interested in transparency and accountability, then why did they shut down the former president—former CEO of Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Len Bateman, from presenting to a committee? He wanted to come and give his views and his thoughts on the Bipole III west transmission line. But this government wouldn't allow him to do that. In fact, they spent a great deal of time in committee wasting everyone's time as to the reasons why they shouldn't listen to the—to Mr. Bateman.

I also have a—come across a letter from a number of former Manitoba Hydro employees, Mr. Len Bateman, Mr. Art Derry, Mr. Don Miller, Mr. Al Snyder, Mr. Will Tishinski, all very vocal in their opposition to the bipole west line.

We all know we need a Bipole III transmission line. We know we need it for reliability, first—reliability, first. The reason for building a bipole line is to be able to assure that the power is delivered to southern Manitoba and to southern markets. Building this line on the west side does not address the reliability issue, and yet, this government chooses not to.

* (10:30)

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities just had their convention and they passed, by a very wide margin, a resolution opposing building the Bipole III line on the west side of Manitoba. And yet, the

Premier (Mr. Selinger) turns around, scolds them in the media and at the AMM ministerial forum scolds the delegates for even considering passing such a resolution. Somehow, transparency and accountability doesn't seem to come to mind when you take that type of attitude.

Mr. Speaker, this bill—under Bill 206, it would require that public notices be required to include a detailed summary of the directive, the rationale for the directive, and the expected costs and benefits that will result from the directive.

If you really, truly are interested in accountability and transparency, you should have no problem with doing this. It should be second nature to do this. But if—obviously, if the government is going to not support this bill and oppose this bill, then that means that they're not interested in being transparent to Manitobans, not to us here in the Chamber but to all Manitobans, because if you publish it in the *Gazette* it's available for all of Manitobans. And they have a right because they are shareholders; all Manitobans are shareholders of Manitoba Hydro. They have a right to know what is being proposed by government—by a directive from the minister responsible, not from—this is not a directive coming from within management; this is being forced upon management and there is no accountability within this directive at all.

It's—Mr. Speaker, this is not a complicated bill. We've had many bills come through here which are long and extensive. This is very simple—and not all legislation has to be complicated—very simple legislation saying that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro—in fact, this bill only speaks to Manitoba Hydro. We're not talking about the other Crown corporations. It's just for Manitoba Hydro—and saying that what needs to be done if they are indeed wanting to interfere with the Crown corporation, with the management—with the management of Manitoba Hydro—and they should—there is—and Bipole III west is just the classic example of interference with Manitoba Hydro.

Here you have a political decision. This government is more concerned about American lobbyists than they are about the landowners of Manitoba. I continue to get many calls from landowners that are—that could be affected, will be affected, be—assume they'll be affected, because we don't even know. Manitoba Hydro still won't even come out and tell us what the final route is here on this. We have—I have people calling me talking about

whether they should—they're interested in purchasing a piece of land; they don't know whether this line is coming. It affects equity and value on their land. We have people uncertain as to what will happen to the value of their yard site if this line should come there. And yet we see no accountability, no transparency out of this government.

Mr. Speaker, this is political meddling in a very sound corporation. This corporation has the ability to put out a financial estimate. We don't believe that they should not—that they don't know what the capital cost of it is. Put out the updated capital cost of this project, talk to the landowners about what the real effects will be on their land and how they will be affected by this line.

This bill addresses a horrible decision made by this government and a political decision made by this government with no financial backing—means test behind this decision at all. Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, this was introduced as Bill 206, but what I think it should be called is the that was then, this is now bill or the PC Party flip-flop bill. In fact, I hear the member from Brandon West walking and wearing flip-flops, and I hear the sound of flip-flop, flip-flop on this bill.

Now let me explain why. Under the Filmon government, it was okay to increase Manitoba debt by buying Centra Gas, \$454 million. But that was then and this is now. So now Manitoba Hydro is investing in a transmission line, in a converter station and hydro dams. Despite the fact that equity is actually increasing and debt is decreasing, the PC party says that's bad. But, of course, the reason is that that was then and this is now, or flip-flop, flip-flop. The member from Brandon West, I can hear him going flip-flop, flip-flop.

So then it was okay for the Filmon government to tell Manitoba Hydro to buy Centra Gas. Of course, that was then and this is now. So now—then it was okay for the Filmon government to give direction to Manitoba Hydro, but now it's not okay for our government to give Manitoba Hydro any direction on anything, but that was then, and this is now. So we can hear flip-flop, flip-flop from the members opposite.

In the 1990s, the Filmon government didn't invest in Bipole III, didn't invest in a converter station, didn't build any dams. Well, that was then;

this is now. Now, Manitoba Hydro is investing in dams, investing in a transmission line, investing in a converter station, and what does the opposition say? The opposition says well, it's bad to increase the debt, in spite of the fact that the debt-to-equity ratio is now 20—sorry, 73-27. The goal was 75-25 and we've exceeded the goal. The debt-to-equity ratio is coming down. It's been coming down consistently and we've exceeded the goal, but still they say investing and increasing debt is bad. But the reason is that that was then; this is now. It was okay in the 1990s under the Filmon regime, but now it's not okay under our government. And it's Manitoba Hydro that's making those decisions and those investments, and that's a good thing.

But, as I said, that was then and this is now—

An Honourable Member: And they would fire the board.

Mr. Martindale: And they would fire the board, yes, and some very good people. In fact, I was looking at the list of board members and I've met a number of them. For example, David Friesen, the president and CEO of Friesen printing; I was on a tour with the Premier and others in the early years of this decade and we had a wonderful tour of Friesen printing in Steinbach. It's an amazing world-class facility and I'm sure at that time we met David Friesen and also William Fraser, the former CEO of Crown corporation MTS. I happened to be sitting beside him at an NDP banquet, the Premier's banquet, a couple of years ago and we had a very good conversation. He—I kind of expressed surprise about why he was there and he explained that he was an admirer of Gary Doer and always had been, ever since he was his minister, and I enjoyed my time chatting with Bill Fraser, who's on the board.

Mr. Garry Leach, I don't know. I do know one of the northern and First Nations representatives: Michael Spence, mayor of Churchill. I've met him a couple of times—another good representative on the Hydro board.

All these people are good members of Hydro board. They were all appointed for good reasons but the Tories, of course, would fire them all and who knows what the consequences of that might be.

So when it comes to Manitoba Hydro, members opposite are reckless. They've repeatedly said that they would interfere with Hydro. The Leader of the Opposition has long said hydro rates should rise to reflect market rates, which amounts to political

interference and Hydro and the Public Utilities Board.

As we know, the rates are set by the PUB, which is a good thing. It's non-political. It's—has staff. They do analysis and they decide whether Autopac rates would rise or not, and I think they do political parties and the public a favour. I ran in the 1988 election. At that time, one of the big issues was that Cabinet was increasing Autopac rates substantially. That's why I lost in 1988. It certainly affected low-income people in places like Burrows. And then the Filmon government, in their wisdom, said that Autopac rates were going to be set by the Public Utilities Board. I think that was a good decision. It took it out of the political arena and made it a non-political Public Utilities Board decision. Same with hydro rates, I think there is—there are good things to say about having the Public Utilities Board set hydro rates.

* (10:40)

And if, as the Leader of the Opposition wants, hydro rates went to market rates, it would hurt Manitobans. Typical homes in Saskatchewan pay almost \$600 more a year and Toronto homes pay \$700 more a year. Now, I have—my wife has relatives in Saskatoon and in Regina. I have family in Toronto. I'm going to ask them about their power bills, and I'd really like to see them and compare with my power bill. I suppose I'd have to look at the number of square feet in our house and in their house and make a comparable comparison. However, I think it would be pretty shocking if people's hydro rates went up by \$600 or \$700 more a year. There'd certainly be a hue and cry.

Now, that's not going to happen under the Public Utilities Board, but it would happen if the PC government—if a PC Party forms government. They would end Power Smart, and I have a quote here from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 16th, 2007: The member for Fort Whyte also said he'd like to see Hydro focus on producing and selling power, not necessarily trying to get Manitobans to go green and reduce their consumption.

It's pretty amazing that members opposite wouldn't want to have a Power Smart program and reduce consumption, which actually helps us increase export sales. It's good for the environment. It means having to build fewer dams. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) even said he'd fire the entire board, including David Friesen and Bill Fraser, which I mentioned. The opposition leader tries to hide his involvement in the sell-off of MTS,

the ultimate act of political interference in a Crown corporation, and he can't be trusted to keep Hydro public.

Of course, that was then and this is now. Then, the Leader of the Opposition was working for the government. They sold MTS; that was okay. Now that he's the leader—*[interjection]* Yeah, in fact, I think he was probably the architect of it. I think that's probably why he got a job in Toronto advising Ontario Hydro on how to privatize. And we know how that's gone.

What if the opposition had their way? Well, we already know that members opposite privatized MTS after saying they had no plans to. Members opposite have said they would raise hydro rates to market levels, forcing Manitoba families to pay more to heat their homes and businesses, to pay more for the power they need to grow our economy. They would put an end to Power Smart. They would fire the board. They would grind Manitoba Hydro to a halt by trying to force Bipole III down the east side of the province.

I've got so much material here, Mr. Speaker, that I can't possibly get it all in in the next two minutes or so, but I will try.

So why would members opposite fire the board? Well, that's often what corporations do just before they privatize. Isn't that interesting? And then, of course, there would be a fire-sale price if they ever privatized it like they did with MTS. The opposition wants to cut out urgently needed converters from the Bipole III project. He doesn't care that we could lose power for months or even years, shaking Manitoba's economic stability to the core. Their reckless plan to run the bipole through the unspoiled boreal forest would tie up Manitoba Hydro in years of legal challenges by lobbyists and environmental groups. If this project is delayed or cancelled, hydro development will grind to a halt and rates will skyrocket.

And I think there's a parallel there. For example, the Mackenzie Valley pipeline was very controversial when it was first proposed. The federal government appointed a commission of inquiry under Mr. Berger, and a report was issued recommending that it not be built at that time. And it still hasn't been built, in spite of the fact that many things have changed; I understand that First Nations are in support of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline now. I could be wrong, but I think I read that somewhere. And yet it still hasn't been built. And I think that

could happen to Bipole III if it were forced through the boreal forest on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It would be tied up in legal challenges for years, if not decades, and would probably never get built.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think I've put enough information on the record. I think members opposite know where we stand. We know where they stand. It's the that was then, this is now bill, the flip-flop bill, and I think that should be the new name and we should all refer to it by the that was then, this is now PC Party bill. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 206, a bill which will improve the transparency and accountability in Manitoba Hydro. In the Liberal Party we're certainly in favour of improved performance and improved accountability and improved transparency for Manitoba Hydro, our crown jewel, our most important Crown corporation, a Crown corporation which has been so important in providing all Manitobans with electricity, a Crown corporation which has been very important in generating revenues, which has enabled Manitobans to make progress over the years, a Crown corporation, which, I should add, when there was a Liberal government in the '40s and '50s, that that Crown corporation played a major role in rural electrification and that it has been one that Liberals have consistently supported, and we are supporting improved efforts to have better accountability.

As an example, we have, on more than one occasion, brought in a bill so that the board of directors of the—when they are appointed to Manitoba Hydro and other major Crown corporations, would be interviewed by a committee of the Legislature, so that the new board member would provide a vision and something about their own qualifications. And we would know that we have highly qualified people on the board and we would have some public understanding of their role and position.

And complementing our effort in the bill that we brought forward is this bill which has been brought forward by the member from Brandon West. And I want to compliment the member and to acknowledge that, you know, this is a worthwhile objective, improving the accountability and transparency and making sure that when there is a major directive given by the government to Manitoba Hydro, as happened in December 2007, that that major

directive is accompanied and made public by a description of the objective, the rationale, and the costs and benefits.

It would've been very helpful if the government had done this in December of 2007 and laid out the basis for their proposal to have a line down the west side, including the costs to farmers. We have had, in the last little while, many farmers appearing before a legislative committee. We have, at the same time, had a government which has refused to listen to farmers and to people like Len Bateman, and, certainly, we should've—we would've done better to have this laid out by the government in December 2007 and it would have provided a much clearer perspective on the government's objectives.

It also would have shown, if this was gazetted, that there has been a lack of directives by this government to look seriously at the underwater line, the line under the centre of Lake Winnipeg, that this government has delayed and delayed while all around the world people are moving on building lines under water because they are more environmentally friendly. They're often more direct and shorter, and at the same time they have turned out to be a very good way of taking power a safe way, of taking large amounts of power from one place to another.

We can look at, for example, the underwater line from Norway to the Netherlands, I think about 580 kilometres under the North Sea, a very deep sea. But there's also lines closer to home in Canada, a line which is in the planning stages, in the hearing stages, from Québec to New York going under Lake Champlain and down the centre of the Hudson River.

There's a line, more recently announced, from Labrador to Newfoundland and into Nova Scotia. All over the world and in Canada we're using underwater lines, but, unfortunately, Manitoba Hydro and this government has let our province fall behind, fall behind in terms of what's happening with the technology, falling behind in terms of what's happening with the opportunity, falling behind in having the benefit of not only using the most advanced technology but being at the forefront in developing it, and, thereby, because we're at the forefront in developing it, being in the forefront of delivering products and services—new innovative types—to people, not just in Manitoba but potentially around the world, developing new businesses and export industries here.

* (10:50)

But, sadly, this government has neglected to look at, adequately, at the underwater line and so we are behind. There was a time in the past when a decision was made to use high voltage direct current. And Manitoba Hydro, at that point, was near the forefront of the innovation, and that has turned out to be very good and substantial benefit for Manitoba Hydro over the years. And we should not now be in a position where we are falling behind in the way that we are falling behind.

Now, the fact of the matter is the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) was saying that, you know, there—back in the Conservatives' days, there weren't as many committees on Manitoba Hydro. Well, you know, the reason that there's so many committee meetings on Manitoba Hydro in the last few years is that there's so many problems that have come up, that we had this huge problem of—brought forward by the whistle-blower, and we had to have special hearings on that. And we've got huge problems in the way that Manitoba Hydro decisions are being made, which is why we should have increased transparency, and so that the demand and the push and the requirement for additional hearings on Manitoba Hydro has certainly been here. And that's typical of what happens in Manitoba; when there are more problems there have to be more hearings into what's going on and more probing because that's the way that this Legislature tends to work.

Certainly, when we have had, on more than one occasion, this government trying to cover things up, trying to not let farmers and others present, that it makes it, quite frankly, you know, more difficult when the information is not available, what—more difficult when this government is not ready to listen to people, and that's the sort of reason why we should have more accountability and more transparency.

This approach that's being suggested today, I suggest, should apply to not only when Manitoba Hydro is—and we have a NDP government, but when we have a Conservative government or a Liberal government, that it would be important to have this kind of openness and transparency, and, just so that we can have a better knowledge, a better public participation in decisions, better decisions being made because of the understanding and the openness with which things are being operated.

There are, certainly, from the point of view of not only people on the west side, but people on the east side, that the concerns with both these lines is why I have spent a lot of time promoting and

pushing for a better understanding and better movement toward a line under Lake Winnipeg. And this government has brought up—in fact, the Minister of Finance started talking about, oh, there are problems because Lake Winnipeg is too shallow. But it turns out that they're now putting the line under Lake Champlain, which is similar to Lake Winnipeg. And time and time again, when the Minister of Finance has brought in objections to a line under Lake Winnipeg and they've been looked at carefully, they've turned out to be not real strong, valid objections, but objections that, once they're looked at, there are ways to address those objections and to make sure that this is a good opportunity to proceed.

And, so, Mr. Speaker, with those few words about this bill, which we support in the Manitoba Liberal Party, thank you.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand and speak today to this bill, and I think we've heard very sound arguments from our Minister responsible for Hydro about how this bill is, in fact, redundant.

But what I want to speak about a little bit is this mythology that we hear from the members opposite that somehow they should be trusted with the stewardship of Crown corporations. And I want to talk for a few minutes about the last time that they were trusted with the stewardship of Crown corporations and what they did with the Manitoba Telephone System. And that, for many, many people—me included—that experience of watching the telephone system be sold without any transparency, without any discussion of it in the election that had just come before, watching as members of the opposition at that time weren't even able to speak to that sale, watching as people came to committee over and over again, people came from far and wide from rural Manitoba to speak about how important it was to them that the telephone system stay in public hands and how those people were completely ignored. I think even at the time, the AMM passed a unanimous resolution that they not sell the Manitoba Telephone System, and they ignored that organization as well.

And so when we think about what was done with the Manitoba Telephone System, how it was sold—really, right from under Manitobans—how they took a company that belonged to all of us.

We have to remember, I think, about Crown corporations, that government is the steward for those Crown corporations, in the name of the people

of Manitoba. It's the people of Manitoba that own those corporations, and it's the people of Manitoba for whom we do the best that we can, and the boards of those organizations and the management do the best that they can to protect it. And there are very good reasons that corporations that have to deal with the necessities—things like telephone service, things like hydro-electricity—but also those parts of our community that benefit from government regulation, like the sale of liquor and lotteries—why those things are Crown corporations.

So it's interesting to me that the members opposite would stand up and decry some perceived kind of government interference in the running of Crown corporations, when the ultimate example of interference happened under their watch, when the telephone system was sold.

And what do we see today as the results of that sale of the telephone system? Recently, I was contacted by a constituent who is very concerned by the fact that MTS's server was going to be transferred outside of the country; it was going to be transferred to the United States. This is an organization that deals with very sensitive information, deals with clients, many of whom that had a lot of trouble in their lives, may have had involvement with the criminal justice system, and they're very concerned that now those files that they hold for those clients were going to be on a server outside of their control and outside of the country and what ramifications that was going to have for their clients.

And so they let me know about that, and they wanted to know what we could do to help. And I had to say, you know, the CRTC is the regulator. We can try to raise your concerns, but we don't have any ability to talk to the telephone system about serving Manitobans anymore.

It also occurred to me, when we were meeting with the deaf community recently about their desire to see technology and telecommunications technology used more effectively to help people communicate with each other. There is a system now that builds on the teletype systems, is the TTY systems that have been used in the past, where you need somebody between you and the person that you're talking to, to interpret your words, where people can communicate directly over the Internet using sign language.

Now, imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you've never had the opportunity to have a conversation on the telephone with your mom or with your spouse or

with your loved ones without having someone in between you, and that person interpreting your words being the go-between. This kind of technology would allow for that, and they wanted to know why—how we could help them get the telephone system here to use that technology.

So we wrote to them. We drew their attention to it, but they did not, at this time, have the desire to have a pilot project to deal with that technology. And we, of course, had no opportunity to talk to the telephone system about also making sure that their technology is as accessible as possible.

So, I also wanted to speak for a moment about what the record of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) is when it comes to Crown corporations. It's interesting to me, you know, that, at one point in time, his biography, before his elected life, bragged about the role that he played as a senior policy advisor to the former premier, and he said in his biography that he had played a central strategic role in contentious initiatives ranging from the sale of Crown corporations—perhaps like the telephone system—to health reform.

Now, let's remember what they considered health reform—was, of course, the firing of a thousand nurses. So that was—and now, you'd be hard-pressed to find that on the Internet today, that biography. It's magically disappeared; it's tried to be expunged from the public record. But we remember the role that he played when it comes to the sale of MTS, and he also went on to brag about the role that he played working with the Harris government and their privatization of Hydro.

Now, it's interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, at their last annual meeting, which was meant to be their visionary time—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have four minutes remaining, and the time now being 11 a.m., we will move on to resolutions.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 3—Youth Opportunities

Mr. Speaker: We'll deal with Resolution No. 3 pertaining to Youth Opportunities.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I move, seconded by the member for Southdale, Youth Opportunities, private member's resolution? *[interjection]* Okay.

I move, seconded by the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby),

WHEREAS the transition between receiving an education and finding a rewarding career can be difficult for many Manitobans; and

WHEREAS a positive adult influence and strong job skills can make the difference in helping young people take the right path in life and avoid crime and other destructive activities; and

WHEREAS the Province has followed the recommendations of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and launched the new Manitoba Youth Corps, including two initiatives, Manitoba Mentors and Manitoba Youth Employment; and

WHEREAS these new initiatives will connect 2,500 high school students to mentorship and job opportunities and create an additional 345 new job openings over the next three years and is a fresh way of building supports and job opportunities for Manitoba's young people; and

WHEREAS these initiatives complement the existing youth programs such as the urban-rural hometown Green Teams.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that all members of this Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the provincial government for the action that it has taken in investing in the province's youth which will serve to benefit all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will move the resolution as printed.

WHEREAS the transition between receiving an education and finding a rewarding career can be difficult for many young Manitobans; and

WHEREAS a positive adult influence and strong job skills can make the difference in helping young people take the right path in life and avoid crime and other destructive activities; and

WHEREAS the province has followed the recommendations of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and launched the new Manitoba Youth Corps, including two initiatives, Manitoba Mentors and Manitoba Youth Employment; and

WHEREAS these new initiatives will connect 2,500 high-school students to mentorship and job opportunities and create an additional 345 new job openings over the next three years and is a fresh new way of building supports and job opportunities for Manitoba's young people; and

WHEREAS these initiatives complement existing youth programs such as the Urban and Rural Hometown Green Teams.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that all Members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the Provincial Government for the action that it has taken in investing in the province's youth which will serve to benefit all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Concordia, seconded by the honourable member for Southdale (Ms. Selby),

WHEREAS the—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm very excited to bring forward this private member's resolution here this morning, and I think it's an exciting opportunity for me. The last time I rose in this House was to talk a little bit about immigration and the impact that bringing new people and new Canadians to Manitoba can have on our economy, and I think that this is the other piece to that puzzle and this is the other element that will help to make Manitoba a great place to live and a strong—have a strong economy and moving forward.

I think a better education for our youth is something that is a very basic building block for our economy, and so I'd like to commend our Premier (Mr. Selinger) for making this a priority and for addressing it in our Throne Speech and for making it a priority going forward.

I think it's also telling that—and I'd like to commend the Premier that, you know, he has reached out and not just looked from within but also sought advice from others, including stakeholders when it comes to education, experts in the field, professional organizations and even the private sector when looking at just how we can connect youth to work once they've become educated and how we can better educate them for the future.

And it's particularly telling that the Premier's Economic Advisory Council has seen education as such a priority and has made it such a focus going forward.

And so this initiative draws on expertise and resources from many different government departments, and, as I said, Mr. Speaker, from professional organizations, from the private sector, and all of these different stakeholders are all working

towards finding the best programs for youth. And this government's focus is youth. The Premier's focus is youth, and when you look at youth and not just specific programs but what—all programs that can benefit youth when it comes to education, I think that this is a holistic way of looking at education and a flexible one, and I think that that's going to be the most successful path going forward.

So how do we accomplish this? You know, we want to bring together a number of elements, different initiatives, as I said, Mr. Speaker, all of these things that work. So we want to identify the things that work best and then allow our program, our overall strategy, to be flexible, to be adaptive and not just be rigid and not just adhere to a certain strategy that may work with one group of youth or one individual youth person, but just all programs and all opportunities that are available, and then we want to tailor that to whichever individual is in need of the programs.

And, so, Mr. Speaker, the Youth Corps is the final result, and, so, how does this program work? Well, there's two new initiatives that this government is looking at, and that is the Manitoba Mentors which is a youth mentorship program and the Manitoba Youth Employment which is a new program to match the potential youth employees and employers. And what this will do is we'll connect 2,500 high school students to mentorship and job opportunities and create an additional 345 new job spots over the next three years. And we're really excited to help the young people to seek fulfilling careers right here in Manitoba—as I said, the building blocks of our economy, Mr. Speaker.

And the first step in this program, of course, is just keeping kids in school as long as possible. We recognize that keeping kids in school is not just good for their future but it's good for our communities as a whole. Targeted programs to help kids stay in school help kids stay out of gangs. So busy kids are good kids, and we want to see those children who are most at risk see that school and education and all of these opportunities are a way forward for them that's different from the life that they experience out on the streets. To accomplish this goal, a portion of the new Youth Corps resources will help at-risk youth find employment as an alternative to gang life and successful and innovative programs that work with families, we believe, Mr. Speaker, to steer young people towards education and not crime. And this is the key, is that if we give—we believe that if we give youth an opportunity to see a better life and a better

way forward, that they're going to take that and they're going to take the initiative and work with—for themselves going forward.

And we recognize, as I said, Mr. Speaker, that every student is different, so having those flexible programs and programs that directly lead to work is a very important aspect of this. And what we want to do is we want to make that connection, the direct connection between, you know, the things that are being learned and the education that they're getting, and if they complete this or they continue through the program, that they see that there is employment on the other end. Because we need to remember that, you know, for a lot of these students that are at risk, you know, the education doesn't seem as relevant to their lives as maybe getting their first paycheque and getting out on their own and making their way in the world.

So that's why we've established the Technical Vocational Initiative as one aspect of this, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to speak a little bit about this program because it is—it's directly impacted in my constituency, the Kildonan East Collegiate, which is a vocational school, and they have vocational programs that are helping students right now connect with those career paths that they've already identified at their young age that are a good fit for them, are something that they want to continue to pursue.

And the Technical Vocational Initiative is a fantastic program that—it draws from a variety of government departments including Advanced Education, Literacy, Education and Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, so, once again, not just living within that box, Mr. Speaker, but really reaching out across boundaries, whether it be within government or even into the private sector to make sure that those programs are the most effective that they can be.

And so what this program does is to create a cohesive and seamless province-wide technical vocational system across high school and post-secondary programming to provide Manitoba youth with enhanced programming options and career pathways. And this is a great initiative that brings together all the technical vocational programs in Manitoba and gives them a bit of a framework, which I think is helpful for standardizing the program, as well as standardizing the way that kids can get work.

And the program has identified six pillars of action and I'd just like to go through those very quickly, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:10)

The six pillars of action are to improve the image of technical vocational careers, so, once again, to get this in kids' minds, to get it in their heads that this is a good program and a good way forward for them, to enhance student awareness of technical vocational programming and, once again, engage the kids when they're there. Let them know what's available to them and how they can pursue that successfully and ensure program currency and relevance to labour market needs, so, once again, engaging the private sector, bringing them on board right from the beginning to make sure that they understand what the education is providing and what they can inform and keep the students current on what is needed.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Facilitate programming articulation between high schools, colleges and apprenticeship, again this is one universe for these students, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is—it's seamless for the students. They don't need to know the ins and outs of what's behind it, but these are all a pantheon of different programs that are available to them and are all building towards this one strategy. And develop strategies to address technical vocational teachers' currency and shortage issues, so, once again, more teachers and increase funding for—to support technical vocational equipment and upgrades.

And this is something that, again, has been very successful in my constituency, has been successful. I've spoken to many teachers that are in the program at Kildonan East, as well as students, and I can tell you that this is just one of many initiatives that make up a very strong strategy going forward, and I'm very proud to be a part of this government that has made this such a focus going forward. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I am pleased to rise and comment on the resolution put forward by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

Unfortunately, this resolution comes at a time when Manitoba children and youth are struggling under this NDP government. Whether it's the education system, the health-care system, even more tragically, the family services system, this government has failed to make Manitoba's children

and youth a priority, and the results, Madam Deputy Speaker, are devastating. We see rates of youth suicide that are tragically high, especially in the Aboriginal communities. We see long wait times for pediatric health-care services. We see continued youth involvement in gangs, often paired with addictions to alcohol, illegal drugs and prescription narcotics. Once again, Manitoba is the child poverty capital of Canada. Manitoba's high school graduation rate is perpetually one of the worst in the country. We now find out our schools are terribly overcrowded, and that we place amongst the lowest when we have our students tested on an international level.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, this House must also know that never before in the history of the world have we had a generation of youth coming at us with the kind of health issues, as in obesity and diabetes. This is something that continuously—continuously—is being spoken about, and if members opposite would maybe read a national newspaper they would find that never before have we seen a generation coming at us with the kind of health issues that we are facing now. And we see that youth crime rates are continuously skyrocketing, not just internationally or nationally but, more importantly, here in Manitoba.

And yet what we have is a government that for 10 years has neglected—has stood by and allowed these things to get out of control. I find it surprising how little focus, how little attention, is spent by the NDP government, under the previous premier and this one, on youth sport programs. We know that the facilities, schools, are not being used and that was one of the commitments that were made by the former premier, Premier Doer, that all the schools would be open, and we know that that's not the case. We know, in fact, that a lot of youth sport is struggling because they can't get access to school facilities because there aren't enough sports facilities. They can't get in in the evenings because there just isn't the room or it's just not available, and we know that these sports facilities themselves—there's a study just done recently by the City of Winnipeg that has listed many, many sports facilities, especially when it comes to skating rinks, to hockey rinks, that are in terrible shape. And what we see is once in a while there's an announcement made by the NDP government, usually political in nature, certainly not visionary or following a plan, and they will invest in one community or the other.

We know that the City of Winnipeg has approached the Province on numerous occasions to come up with some kind of a plan, somehow come together with a vision for youth sport in the city and the capital region. Do we see that coming forward by this government? No, we don't. We see platitudes coming forth but we do not see this government, in 10 years, come forward with a plan.

The City of Winnipeg has certainly started to look at investing more money. And the mayor, Mayor Sam Katz, to his credit, in the last election has said that he is going to make this a priority. But we know that in the northwest quadrant of the city that there is a definite need for indoor hockey facilities.

We know that there is a real need for retrofitting and for the renovation of a lot of our sports facilities, yet this government has chosen not to invest in these areas. And we hear over and over again, even when it comes to new schools, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this government will announce all kinds of investments in new schools and then will promptly cancel them when the media hype is over on the announcement. They delay them. They talk about that they're going to redraw their drawings and they're going to look at enhancing them, which is just one way of putting forward that they are delaying these projects. We see the kind of overcrowding that's taken place in the southeast of Manitoba. We see what's taking place in the south—in the northwest quadrant of the city, where overcrowding is becoming a health issue, and this government has said that they won't even be looking at it until 2012-2013.

These are the kinds of fundamental problems that affect our youth, and to stand around and applaud themselves and pat themselves on the back is actually shameful, because we know that there are serious issues. We seldom, if ever, hear this government talk about youth sport, talk about what needs to be done with youth sport. In fact, it's probably because we face a tired, old government in the NDP.

I look at the opposition benches, to mention but a few: Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), two young children involved in sports; member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), two young children involved in sports; member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), getting his children involved—his child involved in sports; member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen); member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat);

myself; and it goes on and on, all involved in youth sport, all involved at the grassroots level. And seldom, if ever, do you see a member from the government side at a sports facility; seldom, if ever, do you see them out, Madam Deputy Speaker.

For someone who spends a lot of time at sports facilities, we do not see them there. They are not there. They are not part of the solution. They are, in fact, part of the problem.

And members opposite will get the opportunity to put their comments on the record, as wrong as they will be, but this resolution is window dressing. It's an attempt to try and make themselves look into something that they're not. The stats are there, whether it's today's newspaper or yesterday's newspaper or the day before that, continuously, this is a government that fails our young people.

If they were actually out and talking to individuals and parents and coaches and sports clubs, they would find how much need is out there. And if it wasn't for the federal government and the stimulus program, we would have facilities that would be even further compromised.

And thank goodness for the vision of the Harper government that put money into our sports facilities—certainly no credit to this NDP government. It was because we had a federal government that realized that we needed investments in sports facilities and that's why we have the kind of improvements that we even have. And I find it surprising that members opposite, on a regular basis, will come forward and try to take credit for those projects, projects that are terribly needed.

So we've seen—in the last 10 years we have seen youth health has not kept up to an international standard. We know that youth crime is on the rise. We know that when our students are compared, academically, to the world and even nationally, we come out, if not the bottom, near the bottom, and the list goes on and on and on and on.

* (11:20)

And yet the government gets up—the government will get up and pat itself on the back and talk about how great it is when it comes to doing these things, even though it's failing, on a daily basis, our young people. I would suggest to this government that they do take an interest for once in youth sport, that they actually do come out with a real plan, that they come out with a strategy, some kind of a vision how they're going to deal with it. When I was out in Brandon and

I toured how young people are playing soccer in Brandon, it was shameful. There was a bucket on this plastic floor on the field. I said to one of the refs, I said: You can't have a bucket sitting on the field. What if one of the guys wipes out and hits his head on it? Oh, oh, he says, that's because the roof is leaking so bad, we can't have them playing with water on the field. I raised this with the government. Nothing's been done about it.

There are such needs around the province and, instead of recognizing that maybe a five-year plan has to be put in place to deal with youth sport, instead, what do they do? They come up and they start patting themselves on the shoulder, which is actually shameful at best. They should be coming up with a real plan to deal with youth sport, not platitudes, not more media announcements, which then they promptly cancel or delay later on. We need real solutions for real problems when it comes to the problems in youth health and youth crime in this province.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to thank the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) for bringing this resolution to the House. I know that he has always cared about the youth in Manitoba and thought about their future, but I think now with a new baby at home, he's probably got a particular emphasis on what's going on in our future and opportunities for our youth. And I suspect that probably within the next couple of years, he'll spend a lot more time beside a soccer field or maybe in an arena watching ringette or hockey or whatever else his daughter may grow up to choose to do, or perhaps, like me, spend a lot of time sitting outside a dance classroom while they're studying ballet and jazz and, well, most of the time, just hanging out in the change room, from what I can see is their favourite point. And let me also say right now before I speak a little bit more to the resolution that the member brought in, that my daughters are at their first volleyball tournament this afternoon. Very exciting, I can tell you, and I wish them all best luck while they're there, but I know the most important part is that they're going to be playing and participating and that's the part that they're most excited about as well.

I do thank the member for recognizing the work that this government has done in making sure that youth not only have opportunity, but also have initiatives that get them excited about getting

involved, whether it's in school or work. One of the new things that we're talking about today is the Manitoba Youth Corps, one of the initiatives that came out from the Premier's Economic Advisory Council. I think that's just another way that we're showing folks that the government of Manitoba has declared young people are a priority.

Now we know that, unfortunately, not everyone in Manitoba, not all young people, do get the same start in life, but they do all have the same potential. And that's why it's up to us as a government to make sure that they are given the direction, the support and the encouragement to make sure that all Manitoba youth can reach that potential and find whatever it is that success will mean to them.

The Manitoba Youth Corps has two particular initiatives that I want to speak about. One is the Manitoba Mentors, a youth mentorship program, and also Manitoba Youth Employment, which is a new program to match potential youth employees and employers, because, of course, we know that there's different paths that kids take. Some of them find that they enjoy academic life and finish grade 12 and want to go on to either university or perhaps a college program; others, it's more a trade is their sense; and some are ready to join the workforce, and it's important to find opportunities for all those folks. I enjoy when you go to grad season every spring. I go to several grads in my constituency, and you can see the different paths that youth are taking and many of them are going on to university programs with a particular idea of what they want to be when they're finished. Others go through the Louis Riel arts and tech program, which I think is fantastic because a lot of those young people coming out of grade 12 have already got a career lined up. I've seen so many of them around the community, whether they go in for hairdressing or auto mechanic repair, and then you see them, you know, by summer—by the next fall, there they are working and contributing in the community, and it's really great to see them being involved.

I know that the program will connect 2,500 high school students to mentorship and job opportunities, and this is really important to have those kind of opportunities in high school. I think there are certainly some young people that, as soon as they get to high school, already know what it is that they want to do and have a really clear path, but others, not so sure, and the best way to figure that out is to try a number of different things.

You know, I know my husband credits a high school job placement as what formed his career. In high school, he was thinking that he'd like to be a conservation officer like his uncle, someone that he admired very much who was a conservation officer for many years in Manitoba, and thought that he was going to go in that direction. But then, through high school, got a sort of a mentorship apprentice job placement with Shaw Cable and discovered the world of television and realized that it had everything that he was looking for—that you could build things with wires and transmission and, you know, the behind-the-camera scene's things that I don't understand at all, actually, but luckily people like him know how to make that work—and from that experience decided to study television in college and has now gone on to have a 20-year career in television. And it might be something he would have never discovered if it hadn't been for that opportunity in high school to give that a try.

So you can see that those opportunities can open up the doors. It can also make people realize, maybe that's not what I want to do, maybe I want to try something else. And I think all of those are really good lessons in life.

We know that the youth of our province represent the hope for the future. We know that we need to give them as many supports as we can to ensure that they have a hope and purpose for their future. And we know that when young people don't feel like there's any opportunity for them, that's when trouble can arise. I think the member said it earlier, that keeping young people busy is essential to keeping them successful in life, because we know that there's lots of energy when you're in high school and you can channel it one way or the other, and if we can help young people channel that energy into something positive, not just for themselves but for the community as a whole, that's really the goal. And that's why this government promises targeted programs to help kids stay in school and out of gangs, because we know that we'd rather—as we've said on this side of the House, we'd rather see kids steal second base than steal anything else. And let's give them that opportunity to stay in school.

We know that school is a different experience for every child. Some go through and excel at academics; others find it more challenging. And that's why supports are in place to help those children stay in school with different support, whether that's extra help in the classroom or maybe that's channelling their energies into a different sort of

opportunity, more the trades rather than book studying.

To accomplish this goal, we've got a portion of the new Youth Corps resources that will help at-risk youth find employment as an alternative to gang life, because we know that youth who turn to gangs are sometimes just looking for a place to fit in, trying to be validated, and perhaps being offered something that they're not getting at home. So let's offer that at school. Let's offer them a place to fit in at school or in the workforce where they can feel a sense of pride. And we all know that it's good to have a routine in your life, and whether that is getting up in the morning to get ready for school or to go for a job, it's healthy to have a reason to get up, to get ready and to feel good about yourself.

We know that successful and innovative programs that work with the families as well will help steel—steer children towards education and not crime, because of course it's not just the schools that are responsible for the success of our children; it's all of us, it's families, it's the community at large. And I know how much I depend on my extended family and the community around to support my children, and we all need that extra help as well.

This government recognizes how important recreation and sports can be to children, and that's why we have set aside \$500,000 to hire seven recreation directors to help in inner-city recreational centres. We know that in areas like where I represent in Southdale, we certainly do sometimes have trouble finding the volunteers to fill the programs, but we do have them. There are volunteers that run our hockey and ringette programs, our soccer programs and baseball. But in some areas, that's more of a challenge and that's why we've hired those recreation directors, so that children have somebody there that they can depend on, somebody who is focused on programming.

We've also added additional Lighthouses. I've had the opportunity to visit a Lighthouse in the—I believe it was in the constituency of the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard), and it was a really interesting opportunity. I was there visiting some friends and watching the great work that goes on in our Lighthouse programs. And you see those children really form bonds with the people providing the programming there, and they almost seem like a family. The children all seemed a bit like brothers and sisters, all working together, and it was a friendly group with a lot going on and pretty high

energy. But I think it's a great place for our children to have to go.

* (11:30)

I've also talked a little bit before about—I met one of the officers that works in an inner-city school who lives in my constituency. I was really impressed with the work that she does every day, and she talked to me about the fact that having an officer in the school not only connects to the children in the school, but, of course, their families and the communities as well. She talked about how it is a preventative program, that, because she's in the school she hears about concerns or needs before they become problems that the police have to get involved in. And children who maybe didn't have a positive experience with the police force now run up and hug her when they see her; they're not intimidated by the uniform. And I think that's a fantastic way to connect to children as well.

We've also announced \$3 million in funding for the Bright Futures Program because we know that when students stay in school and graduate and plan for post-secondary education, that we know that they have a better future as well.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a stack of initiatives here in front of me of all the things that we've done for youth and everything that we will continue to do for youth, but, of course, I won't have time to say them all. But all I can say is that this government is absolutely committed to the future of Manitoba, and you can't be committed to the future of Manitoba without focusing on the youth, because, of course, they are our future. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I, too, want to thank the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) for bringing this resolution forward today, and I do want to take the opportunity to congratulate him, once again, on the birth of their child, and I know there's no greater thing than bringing a newborn child into this world, and having experienced that myself, it's an incredible thing. So I want to congratulate him once again on that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And, of course, what we see by when we bring children into this world, what we need and what we want to do is make sure that we provide them with the best possible opportunities that we can, and, certainly, as a provincial government, I know that this government is very good at taking opportunities to pat themselves on the back rather than looking at, you know, members of the community who are

really making things happen within our communities. And so, on that, I mean, I know that it mentions in the resolution today that—it talks about the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and certainly I want to commend, not this government for what they've done—and I'll talk about that in a minute where I believe they've actually failed children in our province, but I do want to commend Bob Silver, who is a constituent of mine, and other members of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council who, I believe, have a passion for our youth in our province.

And I've spoken to Bob about this several times, and Bob feels very, very strongly about wanting to put programs in place to keep our young people here in Manitoba. And he's spoken passionately about it in the past; he's—he has—and I believe other members of that economic advisory council want to ensure that, as a province and as a community, that we're doing everything that we can to provide the best that we can for our children, and I know that Bob has worked tirelessly to ensure that we keep our young people here in Manitoba and provide those opportunities.

Where I have a serious issue though, Madam Deputy Speaker, is with this government. In order to provide those opportunities to children in our province, and the job opportunities and the programs that this government is talking about and patting themselves on the back for, we need to ensure that the children in our province are at least given an opportunity in our education system. And what's happened and what we saw from a report that came out today, or perhaps it was yesterday, but the latest Stats Canada report, the PISA report, the Program for International Student Assessment, Madam Deputy Speaker, what this report shows is astonishing, that, between 2000 and 2009, Manitoba had the largest decrease in performance in reading when compared—in comparison of performance in reading, from 2000 to 2009. And what that says is that this government is failing our children when it comes to reading in this province. And I think that it's so important if—because if our children can't read, how can they go out and get these jobs and participate in these programs that members opposite are patting themselves on the back for?

And so I think it's important and it's incumbent upon all of us to put the facts on the record with respect to this, and members opposite need to stop patting themselves on the back. The facts show that this government, between 2000 and 2009, has failed our children when it comes to reading comprehension in this province.

And it doesn't stop there and I just want to go on to note that when we look at comparisons of performance in mathematics, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the same report, in the program of the PISA report from Stats Canada that was recently released, between 2003 and 2009, Manitoba had the largest decrease among all provinces in Canada when it came to performance in mathematics. The largest decrease in performance.

How can a government honestly stand up in this province and say that they are providing hope and opportunity for our young people, Madam Deputy Speaker? And it doesn't stop there. I wish it did, but it doesn't. It goes beyond that. We—Manitoba had the largest decrease among all provinces in Canada when it comes to comparison and performance in sciences. That is not something to stand up and pat yourself on the back for, and I think it's high time that members opposite get their head out of the sand and they start to realize that if we continue to fail our children in the areas—in the basic areas of reading, math, and sciences, which is what this government is doing, we will never ever be in a position to provide the kind of hope and opportunity with the programs that members opposite are talking about because they are failing our children and so I think it's extremely unfortunate.

And I know that there are members. I know that we all care about and we all want to provide the opportunity, the best opportunity that we can for our youth. I know we're all passionate. Many of us have our own children and grandchildren that we want to provide hope and opportunity for in this province, Madam Deputy Speaker, but how can we do that when we've got an NDP government that is failing our children in the very basic areas in our province, being reading and math and sciences?

They can set up all the programs and spend the millions of dollars that they want on all the programs that they want but if our children aren't getting the basics in our own province, how can they honestly stand before Manitobans and say that they are providing hope and opportunity for the future of young people in this province? So I ask them that. How can they honestly stand before this Legislature? How can they honestly stand before Manitobans and say that they are doing the best that they can, when they're failing our children, Madam Deputy Speaker?

So I think it's of no surprise that once these facts are on the record, it's absolutely impossible for members in this Chamber to stand before

Manitobans and say, and commend the provincial government for the action that it has taken, because it's been deplorable, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think it's time again that members opposite get their head out of the sand and realize what is actually taking place.

And these figures are from Stats Canada. They're from a report that comes out, the PISA, the Program for International Student Assessment, Madam Deputy Speaker. These are the facts and figures that tell us exactly what has been taking place with respect to our children's education in our province for the last nine years under this NDP government, and the fact is they failed them then, they continue to fail them now, and how can they honestly stand before Manitobans and pat themselves on the back and say that they are providing hope and opportunity for our young people.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, this resolution comes at a time when Manitoba children and youth are struggling under this NDP government, and whether it's in the education system, which I have already talked about, the health care system, or, actually, more importantly, tragically, our family services system. This government has failed to make Manitoba's children and youth a priority in our province and the results have been devastating.

* (11:40)

We see rates of youth suicide that are tragically high, especially in our Aboriginal communities. We see long wait times for pediatric health-care services, and I want to digress for just a moment, because I was at the Children's Hospital Research Foundation event last night that was for our children. It was a fantastic event. It gave us all the opportunity to bring our kids there. And we heard from the Burnell family, and what the Burnell family told us, they had a young child with a brain tumour. And what they told us is without the health—without the help of the Children's Hospital Research Foundation, their child could not have gotten the care that they needed within our public health-care system. And that's why this government would have failed them without the organizations like the Children's Hospital Research Foundation to help, and the Burnell family made that very clear last night.

And I think it's another example, Madam Deputy Speaker, of how this government continues to fail our children, not only in the education system, not only in the health-care system, but in the system—in

our child welfare system where the children are the most vulnerable.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is no way that members opposite or anyone in this House should support this resolution today. Thank you.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): I, too, like many others in the Chamber, would like to congratulate the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) on their new addition to his household, and I hope that he and his wife do get some sleep in the next little while. Bringing a new little person into the world and into your home can be a little bit disruptive, and it definitely will change your perspective on a lot of things.

And I know, though, that long before he had a child, he was always concerned about youth. His activities in the community, the work that he did that led him to this Chamber, was grounded in his commitment to youth and to the community, so I know that, as a result of those lifelong interests, his daughter is very lucky with the parents that she has been given, and I look forward to her coming in to visit. I know that it's a wonderful thing to be able to bring our children into this building and to be able to provide them with different kinds of role modelling, and I know that he and his wife will be excellent role models for their little girl.

So I look forward to her visits to the building and the light that she will bring into this place, because too often when we are here and when we are discussing things, even if it is discussing youth, focus gets taken off the immediate needs and turns into partisan bickering. And I think that one thing that can be said about everyone in this Chamber is that there is a commitment to youth at a personal level for all of us, and I don't think the accounting of who's shown up to a soccer match recently is really a credible criteria for that.

I, also, as an educator, know that when we look at grading rubrics and when we look at statistics, there are—there's never a perfect system. So I commend members opposite for trying to address statistics and numbers that they've given recently, but I also caution them: do not put all your eggs in any one grading rubric. It's—that's just not a sound way of doing things, that in a holistic teaching environment, one addresses a number of components, and I think that's where the member from Concordia, in bringing forth this resolution, brought forth something that addressed a holistic approach to youth investment in education.

As someone that has both raised a child, a young child here in the '90s, and my second child with a decade between them, I've literally had sort of parallel experiences, and I can tell you it has literally been night and day. The opportunities and the educational supports and the youth supports that were there in the 1990s were ghostlike at best, bordering on the non-existent, relative to the kinds of things that have been put forth by this government.

So I really have to again commend the member for bringing this forward and to remind the entire Chamber of the kinds of things that we have been doing, because this hasn't been just about: let's put some funding into some elite schools, as proposed by members opposite. This has been doing things like bringing forth the Bright Futures fund. This has been about investing in youth at risk. It's about increasing literacy and numeracy at—for those at-risk students, and I find the notion of members opposite advocating for Aboriginal youth at risk kind of passing strange. It's kind of like Pig-Pen from Peanuts advocating for personal hygiene; it just doesn't ring true. I don't know, maybe I've just dated myself with that Charles Schulz reference there, but it strikes a similar chord.

And so, I mean, I think that's the thing we have to think about, is what has really been invested here. Again, when you think of the Bright Futures fund, it does include Power Up!, which is a tutoring program that does offer over—operate over the school year to engage students in activities that reinforce academic learning, social skills and goal setting.

And that's the other thing. Again, thinking of that package, that it's not just about, can you pass this test, can you do this. I mean, that's the other thing. I know members opposite are all about the testing. Well, I can tell you, again, from an academic perspective, some kids test very well but don't actually know the material. Other kids can have a very comprehensive understanding of something, but when it comes to sitting down in a room and having to regurgitate it into a little format or check off the right little box, it doesn't work for them.

So, again, we have to look at a holistic approach, and that's what this thing like—these programs like Power Up! do. They provide this holistic program.

And what's interesting is it's also staffed by fourth and fifth university students majoring in education. So we have a mentoring process here and we have a process where the teachers, the future teachers, are learning by mentoring kids. They're

being given that sort of in-the-classroom experience as they complete their degrees. So from a pedagogical perspective, it works very well for both the students that are being tutored as well as reinforcing the teaching skills that those university students are acquiring as they move forward to become educators.

And this kind of component really encourages at-risk high school students to support younger peers as well. So then we have not just the fourth- and fifth-year students mentoring some students, but then you have other students mentoring downward. And again, peer support, from a pedagogical perspective, really enforces things. And these are the kinds of programs that we're investing in.

This is what we're doing is we're taking these at-risk students and giving them opportunities that might not otherwise present themselves. And it also—this particular Power Up! program also ties into other programs that are a part of brighter futures fund, which includes the Community Schools Investigators, or the CSI Summer Learning Enrichment Program. So once you have your Power Up! program running the academic year, then these students now have a CSI summer program to make sure that there's not that academic loss that can sometimes happen over the summer months for any student of any learning ability or with any range of opportunities. And it's a five-week program that, again, engages inner-city children between the ages of six to 13 in learning opportunities throughout the summer, so, again, filling in a gap that might be there in their education and engaging them in activities that do offer literacy, numeracy and science developments as well as cultural and educational experiences, nutrition information, field trips and \$400 bursaries for all successful participants.

One of the things that's been really interesting is seeing how some of these programs—the kinds of changes that they've made in kids' lives. In talking to the folks that run the CSI program, you find out that there's a lot of students that go into this program and they might even be a little skeptical at first, but they come out and they come out saying, I want to be a scientist. They come out saying, there's this whole other world that I didn't think I would have an opportunity to go to, but now because of this bursary and because of this exposure and because of this mentoring, I have hope.

One of the things that I have to say that I was really proud to be a part of in my previous life before

entering this Chamber was the inner-city ACCESS program and being part of the Aboriginal Child Welfare Initiative, because in working in that program, I dealt with a lot of students whose academic past—most of which transpired in the '90s—really left them at a disadvantage. There was nothing there to encourage them to stay in school. They had socio-economic issues that prevented them from following through in school, didn't even make school an interesting option. Now with the advent of the ACCESS program and these other kinds of programs that we make available to youth, these are students that are now—I've had some of my very first classes of students now graduate out and they are social workers and they are nurses. And it is really nice to see them go forth, but again, knowing that if somebody had told them 10 years ago that they were going to be an employed professional with a post-secondary education, they never would've believed it.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not an exercise in patting oneself on the back, as members opposite would like to try to position and spin it, but in fact this is about sharing with Manitobans the kinds of investments that have been made. And as the member from Southdale mentioned, we have quite—there's quite the stack of programs; this is merely the tip of the iceberg.

* (11:50)

I commend the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) for bringing this forward and giving us the opportunity to remind people how important youth are, and how this province and this government have been investing in youth. And again, as I can say, having raised a child in the '90s and raising a child now, night and day difference, and it's very nice to be in the warm shiny daylight even on a cold day like today that—metaphorically speaking—that the kinds of investment that we've made here have not just benefited suburban kids like mine, but the idea is we are investing in all youth, in all children, and giving those kids, especially ones at risk that maybe haven't had the opportunities that kids like mine have had, to bring them forward, and it's wonderful to see them going forth in science degrees, vocational degrees, going on to become nurses and medical professionals.

And, again, thank you to the member for Concordia for bringing this forward. I look forward to a successful passing of the resolution. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I rise today to put a few words on the record regarding the resolution on youth opportunities that was brought forward by the member for Concordia.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I—it never ceases to amaze me how this government likes to congratulate themselves and talk about all of the wonderful things that they have done for youth in the province when we see all of the statistics that are coming out today that show that we're in decline, not moving in the right direction. And it's also very sad, as I listen to members of the government speak, that I didn't hear one word or one reference to some of the youth, some of the children, that will never have an opportunity because they were killed at the hands of failed policies in the Child and Family Services system that were put in place by this NDP government. They will never have hope and they will never have opportunity to grow and thrive and become productive members of society.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's a sad, sad set of circumstances that we face in Manitoba today as a direct result of policies and legislation and implementation of those policies and legislation that were brought in by this NDP government. And how many children have we seen fall through the cracks? How many children have we seen murdered at the hands of families that those children found themselves in as a direct result of putting children in harm's way in our Child and Family Services system?

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And the pattern repeats itself time and time again, and Phoenix Sinclair was the first example, five years ago, of a child that was moved into the natural mother's care and ended up murdered and missing for nine months before the system even realized that she wasn't there. It was a travesty. It was devastating and, Mr. Speaker, we have seen two murderers, two killers, convicted and we did have a premier, Gary Doer, four years ago that promised a full public inquiry so that we could get to the bottom of what happened to Phoenix Sinclair, and we still, today, are waiting for that inquiry to take place.

And it would be okay if the government had learned from that failure, but they didn't. We saw, again, Gage Guimond killed at the hands of a family that he had been placed in by this government and their policies. And, Mr. Speaker, we had a review done of his case and his circumstances and we had piles of recommendations. I think there were

144 recommendations that were made to this government about what went wrong and what should be done to fix the system and you know, to date, we still haven't seen many, many of those recommendations implemented years later. And Gage Guimond became another statistic as a result of this government's failed policies.

And Mr. Speaker, we have a Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) that stands up in this House day after day and doesn't accept any responsibility or any accountability for what's happening in his system and we've seen instances and cases again of children that have died and they've been murdered. They've been killed at the hands of caregivers that this government has placed those vulnerable children in.

We've seen one six-year-old boy who luckily had the ability to go to the neighbours and cry out for help. He was old enough to reach out, to know that something was terribly wrong in his life and go for help. Mr. Speaker, he had to go three times to the neighbours. The police were called three times. They turned the case over to Child and Family Services and what did Child and Family Services do? This minister's Child and Family Services system. They put that young boy back in that abusive, unsafe home and finally, finally, someone took the issue to heart and that little boy was removed from that abusive situation but not after many, many instances of that child being battered and hurt and damaged, not only physically, but I'm sure mentally too.

And yet, we have a minister that stands up and says, things are getting better in the system. We're doing things that are making children safer. We're putting safety first. Well, Mr. Speaker, tell me. I don't know how anyone can stand up with a clear conscience and indicate to this House that things are getting better. But that isn't the only case. Luckily, that young boy had the ability to cry out for help and he was finally listened to.

But, Mr. Speaker, we know that, just in October of this year, that Dillon Breana Belanger was killed by her mother in Stuartburn when she had been placed with her mother, who terribly abused her, and ultimately ended up killing her. We are still seeing, today, the kinds of things that happened five years ago when Phoenix Sinclair was so tragically murdered.

We're seeing children being murdered continually within the child and family services system that was set up by this government under their legislation and their policies, and it's unconscionable, Mr. Speaker, to have a resolution on the Order Paper today that talks about hope for youth in our province when we have seen, time and time again, hope being snuffed out for children within our child and family services system, children that are the most vulnerable children in our community, the most at-risk children in our community.

And Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to see no accountability, no transparency, no full reporting of what went so terribly wrong, time after time after time, and child after child after child, and it's continuing, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know how anyone on the government side of the House can stand up with a clear conscience and say that things are better for children today in our child and family services system than they were in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot condone, I cannot understand, and I can't fathom how they could pat themselves on the back and bring forward resolutions—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have one minute remaining.

The hour now being 12 noon, we will recess, and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

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