

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed with Bill 300?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Bill 205, are we ready to proceed with that one?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed with Bill 208?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed with Bill 207?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Okay. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 201?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Bill 200, are we ready to proceed with that one?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Let's try Bill 203. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 203?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. All right.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: We'll call Bill 203, The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert, who has one minute remaining.

Bill 203—The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I just want to wrap up my comments from what I was saying the other day about the New West Partnership and just talk about, you know, some of the information that's—that maybe the members opposite would be interested in knowing about the New West Partnership, that when you have a company, like a smaller company in Manitoba, like, let's say Mulder Construction, for example, which is large for Manitoba, but in some of the other provinces like Alberta, there's a lot bigger companies out there. We ended up in the New West Partnership, companies like that, Manitoba companies, actually might lose out and actually end up closing down because you have to put these contracts to tender and to bid. So, in other words, a company like Mulder could actually be outbid by a company in Alberta, and that company could come here and do work on construction projects, and it would actually hurt Manitoba companies.

So I know, while they really think that New West Partnership is the end all, the be all, and it's going to balance the books for Manitoba, it's really not that way. I know that they think on their side that this is going to solve all the problems of the province and make everything better for Manitoba, but it's really not that way.

So with that, I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, good morning, and it's my pleasure to be able to stand this morning and to put some comments on the record with respect to Bill 203, that calls for Manitoba to participate in the New West Partnership act.

And, Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting and appropriate that we are exactly debating this bill this morning. And I see that just only a few days ago, the federal Industry Minister, Christian Paradis, was quoted as talking about—is talking about internal trade barriers and calling them the invisible monster that threatens the economy. And I know that he's not referring to this government; he's referring instead to the real threat of what happens when regions and provinces maintain barriers that prevent business from going ahead from—that prevents business from growing into other regions.

And I think it's completely appropriate that exactly at the time when we are debating this issue, we have the federal Industry Minister talking about the fact that there are simply too many impediments to doing business between regions. And he actually says that we simply cannot do business with each other. He cites the fact that it can often be easier for companies and industries that are based in our provinces to do business in other jurisdictions altogether, internationally, than it can be to simply do business down the street and over the provincial border. And, Mr. Speaker, that's sad.

And I wonder what the member for St. Norbert would say about that. He claims that we think that the New West Partnership is the silver bullet. I think he even mentioned it was the end-all and be-all, according to us, and yet here is the federal Industry Minister, who is coming out to put these comments on the record, and talk about the fact that we need to focus on reducing the barriers to trade. He cites the example that if—of trucks that need to change their tires to actually cross a border and go into other places.

And I'm—before my time expires, I'm going to spend a few minutes talking about one very close-to-home example, of exactly that kind of ridiculous cross-border barrier that prevents a very well-known and successful Manitoba company from doing more to expand their business model. And so I will talk about that in just a few minutes.

But, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to give the context of Mr. Paradis' comments that he made about this internal trade barriers being the invisible monster. Of course, Christian Paradis is this year's chairman of the committee on international trade, the CIT, which I believe is an offshoot of that 1995 agreement between federal and provincial and territorial governments, that came together to try to harmonize

their structures to encourage investment and to encourage mobility.

And if I look at this same article from The National Post, in which Mr. Paradis is quoted—I find it very interesting—he goes on to say that we need to build off agreements such as the New West Partnership. He actually quotes this agreement. He holds it up and says, this is exactly the kind of participatory model that all regions in Canada need in order to form greater 'parties,' in order to leverage opportunity, in order to have more than just the sum total of their population, and their industries, and their businesses, that are allowing them to succeed.

And that is exactly the kind of framework that the New West Partnership represents. It allows groups to talk with other groups. It allows there to be harmonization. It allows compliance costs to fall for companies because all of a sudden they find themselves in a position where they don't have to worry about crossing that Saskatchewan border, or crossing that Alberta border. They can—they know their costs. They know the regulations. They know the degree and layer and severity of red tape, and they know it's going to be the same wherever they're going to go. And that's exactly why Mr. Paradis says, we need to build off agreements such as the New West Partnership.

* (10:10)

And I would invite my colleagues from across the aisle to comment on the Industry Minister's statements, in regard to what red tape costs this country. As a matter of fact, from this article, it states that there are some estimates that put the cost to the economy, of undue red tape, is as much as \$50 billion pour—per year. That is money that is just—it's wasted, Mr. Speaker. Where it could go into efforts to make us more competitive, it instead goes into preserving the status quo; it goes into preserving ideological approaches to doing business. And we need to make sure, more and more in a global environment, in a global economy, that we are lowering those things, that we are doing everything we can do to streamline the way business works in our communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that I would take enough time in my presentation this morning to briefly talk about one company and some of the hurdles that they have faced.

I had the—an opportunity a few months back to visit Meridian Manufacturing, and many people in Manitoba will know Meridian Manufacturing. They, of course, manufacture the most innovative and quality storage and handling products, and they serve both the agricultural, industrial and the oil and gas industries. They been around for 65 years, and they continue to break barriers in terms of industry standards and elevate the bar higher, serving their customers and constantly incorporating new technologies to better serve their customers.

Many people know this company by their parent company, which is WGI Westman Group Incorporated. It's considered to be one of Canada's best-managed companies. I visited their Winkler operation; I'm very familiar with it there. They employ hundreds of people, and one of the products that they actually manufacture are these—what are called double-corrugated-hopper-bin combos. They're these gigantic 16-foot diameter and 18-foot diameter bins. They can hold between 2,800 and 4,800 bushels of storage, and then they are shipped to their customers. They're shipped to the—to those companies who will sell the product, and they're shipped directly to site where their customers are located. And they're shipped in a two-load—a two-bin load format on a very customized low-bed trailer. So when you see things coming on the highway, you know they're there because they're enormous, and they ship them down the highway. But they've been able to do so safely and effectively for years and years. As a matter of fact, they've been producing the 16-foot diameter trailer since 1990, so they know their business and they're very good at it.

Their vice-president sat in a room with me and please asked me to help him overcome some of the unfair hurdles he was facing as a company—things like blanket permits that allow them to safely transport their loads on Manitoba highways. All of a sudden, there were new regulations saying, well, we will no longer operate with the same set of blanket permits. Every time you want to move that two-bin load down the road, you're going to have to give us 10 days' notice. You're going to have to apply on a one-off basis—completely unfair after that amount of expertise and safe transportation of their product through Manitoba roads.

And in order for MIT to issue those necessary permits, they were saying, of course, they need approval from Hydro and from CN for the way the railways were crossed, but—and all those things are, of course—it's reasonable to have those permit

approvals in place to ensure that other vehicles and road infrastructure and pedestrians and other traffic aren't posed any threat because of the transfer of this large, large piece of equipment.

But the fact is that where a company has demonstrated that they can do so safely and efficiently and effectively, it is not fair for government to suddenly throw new hurdles in their way, because those new hurdles raise the cost of compliance. They must hire new people to go in and make sure that these things are put in place. That cost has to be recovered; that cost is passed on to the consumer. And their competitors in other jurisdictions don't have those same costs. And if there's one thing that we hope that the members of the government will recognize, it is that we are not competing Portage la Prairie against Winkler; we are not competing Steinbach against south Winnipeg; we are not competing Dauphin against Fairford. What we're doing is we're competing more and more globally. We have got to find ways to increase our efforts.

I am pleased to say that when it came to some of these issues, we were able to assist this company to some degree in engaging the minister and the department and say, listen, what is fair here?

And, Mr. Speaker, I would want to remind my colleagues of this, that in Saskatchewan the permitting does work differently—a much more blanket approach, a much more streamlined approach that still ensures safety but allows business to happen. Now, imagine, when this company takes this load to Manitoba, they can get to the border and from Saskatchewan on, it's a different regime of permitting. And then they can go through Alberta, but before they get there, they're faced with the hurdles and the challenges of doing business in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's time that this government stopped saying no to partnership. It's time they stopped saying no to the New West Agreement. It's time that they leverage their opportunities, participate with their neighbours and join the New West Partnership.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House this morning to speak to this particular bill and to once again be talking about the New West Partnership, and it seems like the opposition likes to talk a lot about this particular one element of trade in western Canada and one small part of a larger picture, and that's what

I'd like to put a few words on the record about this morning.

It's also interesting in terms of timing. I'll echo the member for Morden in identifying that this particular time to be talking about the New West Partnership, coming off the heels of a premiers' conference, the opportunity for premiers from western Canada to come to Winnipeg, to sit down with our Premier (Mr. Selinger) to talk about trade but also to talk about larger issues and to talk more broadly about some of the common challenges that we all face.

I'd also like to briefly mention the—my appreciation for the way that the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) characterized the debate that sometimes happens around this particular element of trade negotiations in characterizing it as a simplistic view of the overall relationship that we have between Manitoba and our western partners. You know, we certainly feel that trade is an important part of what we do here in Manitoba. It's an important reason for our success, and, in particular, our trade with our western partners is an important element of that, and I know the Minister for Agriculture is, I'm sure, anxious to put on a few words on the record with regards to this, as well, because agriculture is one of those elements that I think we do very, very well in working in partnership with our western partners.

So I think there's a lot of ways that we can work together in western Canada, but to narrow it down and to focus solely on this one particular method of communication, if you will, I think, is simplistic, and I think it's disingenuous in terms of the overall debate that we have in this House on the importance of trade. For instance, if I could digress for just one second to talk a little bit about the broader agenda on the Western Premiers' Conference, as I mentioned that recently happened, we did talk about trade but we also talked about important issues such as bullying in schools. Now, does this directly relate to our province's economy? I would argue that it's part of a larger tapestry, that, you know, all elements feed into each other, and I think that we, by having a safe and inclusive learning environment at the—even at the most basic level in terms of an education, only strengthens our economy and only strengthens how our economies can grow together.

So I think this is just one example of how, if we limit it to only one element of discussion, we're really not acknowledging the overall policy decisions that we need to make as a region. The opposition will

often say that the sky is falling, that by not being a part of the New West Partnership that we, you know, that we are not being successful. I think we have an excellent relationship with Saskatchewan and we continue to work on that. For instance, the agreement on international—or sorry, on internal trade, and Manitoba's been a leading driver of the labour mobility deal within the Agreement on Internal Trade—and, again, to look at this in a holistic way, not to just focus on one aspect over another but to see that there are many facets even within the economic benefits that we can have in trade.

* (10:20)

In fact, Bill 11, The Proceedings Against the Crown Amendment Act, which is now here before the House at second reading, and I'm sure we'll be getting to that very, very soon in the House. Now, it makes amendments to improve the dispute resolution aspect of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

So, you know, we have within Manitoba elements of our economy that are unique. We have a lot in common with our western partners, but we do have elements that are unique, and I think protections such as this help us to protect those elements that are unique and, in fact, inform the larger debate and to, you know, to share our values with our western partners.

We—the council for—of the federation action plan on internal trade is another example of one of the tools in our tool kit and, again, there's numerous tools, but this is just another one. And, you know, we were the first province to proclaim labour mobility legislation in 2009, and we've implemented full labour mobility for financial services, for example, Mr. Speaker. We're simplifying corporate registration and recording requirements and we're improving transparency in government procurement practices, including through the designation of a single electronic tendering system for publishing tender notices in each jurisdiction.

So we understand the strength that we all have when we work together, and our exports to western provinces account for 43 per cent of total interprovincial exports, demonstrating strong western integration, and we're always looking for opportunities that will deliver benefits for Manitoba.

In 2011 we held our second-ever joint Cabinet meeting with Saskatchewan and we signed a memorandum of understanding regarding

transportation, energy co-operation, improving transmission grid capacity, and we continue to discuss issues like Aboriginal education, trade, streamlining transportation regulations and flood preparedness.

So, once again, to limit either the tools that we have for discussion, for negotiation, or to only focus on the economic or purely—or the most in-your-face kind of discussions on economic integration, I think, is limiting the discussion.

We updated our international trade focus to reflect the increasingly rapid growth and economic importance of the BRIC nations—Brazil, Russia, India, and China—and we've seen great success in these economies. In the last 10 years our export trade with Brazil, Russia and India and China have increased by 463 per cent as an example, Mr. Speaker.

We've worked with our provincial partners and the federal government through their negotiations at the US on Buy America, and we are pursuing trade opportunities with Europe by participating in Canada's trade discussions with the European Union regarding the potential for comprehensive economic and trade agreements.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, we continue to focus on economic integration, not just with our western partners, but we do recognize the importance of working with western provinces and to further streamline trade and to further streamline our opportunities there. But we're not going to limit ourselves, either in the ways that we discuss trade and the ways that we negotiate our futures, but also where we go. We're not going to just say the west is more important than the east or than the south or than the world. We're really, truly, here in Manitoba, a trade province, a province that has done very, very well in our export and in our trade with other nations and with other regions, and we'll continue to do that. We'll continue to focus on that, and I believe that by having this holistic view we'll have the strong, balanced, healthy economy that we've seen and we'll continue that into the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member for Charleswood, I want to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Robert H. Smith School 50 grade 6 students under the direction

of Mr. Dave Leochko. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome all of our students here this morning.

* * *

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to stand up and speak about the New West Partnership and the importance it is to Manitoba.

I have to say, I am really quite shocked by the comments from the member of Concordia, and particularly the member from St. Norbert, who really do not seem to have a grasp of what this means. I know they came in here with notes to read, but it's interesting some of the little side trips they took from the notes. It really points out how the NDP truly feel about the New West Partnership.

And I really am quite shocked that the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) thinks that the New West Partnership is going to hurt Manitoba. I don't think he's done his homework or understands what this whole New West Partnership is all about.

And then for the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) to say that the New West Partnership is simplistic and disingenuous is another description that again is quite shocking coming from NDP members of this House.

But I think what it does it certainly shows us where this NDP government stands in terms of trade and free trade. And obviously the NDP are still in the dark days where they really dug in their heels about having anything to do with free trade. And it seems that they're still living in those dark times where they think that they can go things alone.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba needs to be a player. The world has gotten very global, and what is happening with the New West Partnership is Manitoba is being left behind and left in the dust. The NDP government has isolated us; they've isolated Manitoba.

And, in particular, I point to CentrePort that is going to be hurt by that. CentrePort already has enough problems without this government adding a lot of their own to it. But certainly, Mr. Speaker, I think CentrePort, in particular, is something that could benefit greatly from being involved in the New West Partnership.

Now what has happened is British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta got together and they

launched the partnership. They have created an economic powerhouse of 9 million people with a combined GDP of more than \$550 billion. Manitoba is not part of that. In this case, bigger is better. This is something that Manitoba needs to be a part of instead of being left as an island unto itself.

And, you know, we look around us. Ontario and Québec have a trade relationship. We've now got British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan that have a trade relationship. And here's Manitoba, all by itself, an island by itself that is being left in the dust by other provinces. Now either this government doesn't want to be part of it or nobody wants them because of their economic policies.

But, Mr. Speaker, this partnership, this agreement between the three western provinces is something that this government needs to pay more attention to because it creates a largest, interprovincial, barrier-free trade and investment market, and it will see all of those three provinces work together in an unprecedented way. And it benefits workers; it benefits businesses; and it benefits investors in all three provinces. People want to be part of that success. It's important to our economy.

And I really don't understand by the comments I've heard so far from the NDP, especially the new members who might be better off listening more in the House instead of standing up here with no knowledge and putting some shocking comments on the record.

Mr. Speaker, it's a global economy and barriers for trade have to be broken down, and we do need open trade within our borders to build a stronger Canada, never mind just a stronger Manitoba. And I'm just not sure what this NDP government doesn't understand about that. What they have in the three western provinces are three vibrant economies and they're working together; they're creating lasting prosperity. They've got a model that cements the West as the economic powerhouse of Canada, and we are not part of that economic powerhouse. Manitoba is an island; we're being left in the dust.

* (10:30)

Mr. Speaker, the New West Partnership creates more choices for businesses, more choices for workers and more choices for consumers. What doesn't this government understand about that? And it allows the West to market itself as one region to bolster export development and attract investment;

that is key to growing our economy. And yet we've got a government that seems to be living in the past and is quite happy, you know, sort of covering itself in a blanket and sitting here, trying to protect itself and not see the opportunities that are before them.

I would note, Mr. Speaker, that one of the things that happened as part of this partnership, and it really showed Manitoba's weakness in all of that and Manitoba's inability to look at the benefits that it would bring, was when the three western provinces went on a joint mission to China and Japan. And Manitoba wasn't part of that. And those provinces went there together to promote trade and commerce opportunities and to draw attention to, you know, the New West global leadership in clean technology, natural resources, agri-food and agriculture.

Where was Manitoba? They weren't there. But what did Manitoba do? I guess there was some embarrassment there, so Manitoba decided they were going to do their own; rather than join this economic powerhouse, go with them to China and Japan, they didn't want to be embarrassed, so they spent much, much more money than they needed to, and they went off on their own to visit China and Japan, and they lost out on the benefits that they would have had as being part of this economic powerhouse that went before them.

And so, trying to save face a little bit, you know, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) coddles together a group of people and does his own little trade mission. But he lost some significant benefits of being part of something bigger. And, Mr. Speaker, in this case, certainly, bigger is better.

Now, what the NDP don't seem to understand are all of the benefits of being part of the New West Partnership. And I don't understand what they don't understand about having a very, very open and competitive economy, about improving labour mobility, about seamless registration for businesses across provinces, about streamlined regulations, about enhanced competitiveness, and about looking for the best value for public spending.

We know, in this particular case, the NDP do an absolutely poor job at looking for best value for public spending. So, perhaps, again, in sticking with their own way of doing things, they don't mind that they're not getting the biggest bang for taxpayers' dollars. They've forgotten that their role here in Manitoba is to be stewards of taxpayers' money. The way they talk a lot, you'd think it was their money.

It's not their money; it's taxpayers' money. And this NDP government does not look for best value for public spending.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the government—there are so many benefits to this, and some of the comments put on the record really do show some true colours, here of this NDP government—but I would urge them, July 1st, 2013, is the final day where the whole New West Partnership comes together. Besides a bad day for Manitoba with the increase of the PST, the New West Partnership finalizes on July 1st, 2013.

I would urge this government to get their act together, do something right for Manitoba and take us into that partnership, if, in fact, those three other provinces would even welcome this government. But I would encourage them at least to try because it would be in the best benefit of all people in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to make a couple of comments regarding Bill 203. Obviously, the members opposite, I'm not sure what province she's referring to; I almost think that Manitoba doesn't exist in their eyes. But I want to make a comment here.

We believe in trade: east, west, north and south. You know, it's quite ironic that 75 per cent of our production is exported, you know, food, transportation. And yet the members opposite seem to think that we don't do any of that right now. And we're doing a heck of a job at it. In fact, there—statistically, the member opposite refers to that we don't do any international trade. Well, let me bring some commentaries forward.

When we talk about—we've seen great success in the economics. In the last 10 years, we've export—trade to Brazil, Russia, India and China has increased by 463 per cent. Now, I don't know where—statistically, where the member opposite's getting her information, but I want to assure you, when we talk about what's in Canada, I'm very honoured to attend a lot of the federal-provincial-territorial meetings—Ag ministers. And I want to assure you, we sit around the table and we have a—very fruitful discussions. Between provinces, we rely on one another to share information and help one another out, and that's exactly what we—we don't need to be going forward on Bill 203. We're doing it right now. We're having a very fruitful discussion for the economic 'spinnis' of the appropriate provinces we represent.

And you know—and we talk about the great things we have, let's talk about the Port of Churchill, a very unique item that we have about logistic transportation. Members opposite sooner would see it sold off to some organization that has no merit to the benefit of the province of Manitoba. We, in the province of Manitoba, are working for the betterment, the economic development in the province of Manitoba, and that is why we have a—so—oppositions.

It's quite ironic—it's quite ironic to the minister—or the MLA just spoke. She says, bigger is better. Well, I suppose when we talk about municipal amalgamations, is there any common ground on that one? Is there any common ground regarding it? So I challenge the member opposite that just spoke about bigger is better—well, I think we should get on the same page if that's what she wants to refer to.

You know, Manitoba—just dealing with Saskatchewan, prime example, 2011 we held our second-ever joint Cabinet meeting with the Province of Saskatchewan and signed a memorandum of understanding regarding transportation, energy co-operation and improving transportation grid capacity. If anybody picked up the Winnipeg Free Press this morning and had the opportunity to read the paper, I think Manitoba Hydro is moving forward in some trade negotiations. So let's—maybe we need to recognize the importance of our discussions that we're having around the table. Saskatchewan is, you know—Brad is coming to shed some importance conversation with us, and we want to continue working.

When we talk about, an example, Buy Manitoba. Our government come across working with Safeway. We talked about buying Manitoba products. Theoretically and statistically increase in 30 per cent once that label was identified. So here's a good indication when we talk about province, our identification, yet this Bill 203 seems like we going to sell ourselves out to somebody else. But no, here we go. We're trying to build something within our province of Manitoba, and I'm expecting the members opposite would somewhat shed some light of understanding what we're trying to develop as we move forward.

You know, the beauty of agriculture, as we all know—and I think some of the members opposite know what agriculture's all about. And the great thing that we have to offer, the opportunity—a prime example, last year through CentrePort, we're able to

export soybean, RFI tag traceability–this is what we talk about.

The great thing that agriculture has in the province of Manitoba, Saskatchewan—we all work in partnership, but I want to ensure that when we talk about ag minister meetings we have, we all get along. There's no need for the Bill 203 to even be considered at this point in time.

CentrePort: one of the great things that we have to offer in the province of Manitoba. I sometimes have a mixed reaction from the members opposite whether they're actually believe in CentrePort, the greatest transportation hub that we have. We are, geographically, probably one of the best-placed provinces in Canada to provide those services. We talk about rail; we talk about air; we talk about water transportation through the Port of Churchill. These are new, emerging opportunities for transportation in the province of Manitoba for the benefit of the economics of agriculture, but yet members opposite—well, let's just give it away to somebody else and we don't really care what happens after the fact.

That is, you know, maybe a prime example—let's use MTS. Yes, we turn around and, you know, we had MTS and we sold it off. Now I've got people in my constituency—what happened to cellphone service? What happened to our cellphone service? Well, you know what? Unfortunately, you know, the board of directors soon to have—want to put money in their pocket rather than provide services and—throughout the province of Manitoba. I want to—I was very proud when MTS was government owned. We did what we had to do to improve communication, but you know what? Today, we'd sooner sell to bigger companies, and you know what? The people out in the rural areas, let's just forget about them because, you know, they don't need cellphone service, they live in a different world.

* (10:40)

I really am somewhat difficulty accepting that, and I know my constituents remind me of that on a regular basis. And I says, well, let's not forget what happened, you know, when MTS was sold. It's the challenges we face, but I want to insure you, we are working towards economic development in the rural areas and we will continue to work.

But you know what? One of the great things our province of Manitoba has provided, our government's provided? In the past 13 years corporate tax rates have cut in resulting of

\$2.9 million in the hands—or billion dollars—of entrepreneurs of the province. Our budget in 2013 increased the small business tax threshold of \$425,000, Mr. Speaker. So—but I never hear those commentaries from the member opposite because they don't want to bring it up because they, you know, maybe it's not the best thing for them to talk about. With this increase some 12,750 businesses will pay no small business income tax. You know, here we go. But yet the members opposite choose not to—they choose not to want to hear that. They don't even want to talk about the benefits that we have in the province of Manitoba.

And I'll conclude by saying my commentary, Mr. Speaker, that I think the members opposite need to really sit back and say, are we prepared to sell out our province to be swallowed up by other big companies? Let's be realistic about it; all of them are farmers—producers. The majority of them are producers. I'm sure they would sooner not sell out to their big neighbours. They would sooner want to retain their ownership. So let's talk about some rural perspective. Let's look at some templates of the realistic thing about private partnerships, ownerships. We don't have to do that. We can develop economic spinoffs as we move forward for the betterment of the economy of the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude by saying agriculture is one of the fastest growing businesses. When we talk about \$10.1 billion direct or economic spinoff because of agriculture, are we prepared to sell that off? I don't think so.

So in concluding, I would say it's a great privilege to have an opportunity to speak on behalf of the agriculture economy in the province of Manitoba, and I wish the members opposite would somewhat sit back and reconsider Bill 203 as the way they're 'perpesing' it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the next speaker, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from École Saint-Malo School the 28 grade 3 and 4 students under the direction of Ms. Alison Palmer. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome all the students here this morning.

* * *

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I, too, would like to welcome the kids and parents and teachers from St. Malo. Welcome to the Manitoba Legislature.

And it was nice to spend some time with the member for Emerson this morning out in his great riding, out in—where—actually in Dawson Trail and also spent some time in the member for Emerson's riding, down to St. Pierre had some good visits with some great people down there. So it's good to see it and then good to see your hard-working MLA at work and spending some time in his constituency. So I hope you enjoy the day.

Mr. Speaker, this bill before us this morning is really about the future of Manitoba, and it's the decisions that we make as legislators now that impact students that are here from St. Malo into the future. So I think it's incumbent upon the government to have a look at some of the suggestions that we as opposition members are putting forward.

Clearly, we have our western neighbours buying into the principle of forming a partnership, Mr. Speaker, and, obviously, they're—they see the benefits in forming that partnership and we would hope that the Province of Manitoba, the government of Manitoba would consider that as well. We hoped—we hope, at least, that our neighbours to the west have invited our government in—on board on this one, but, you know, we're not sure of the discussions they've had. But it was interesting to hear the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) did reference, they now have had a meeting or two with the government of Saskatchewan. So we do know there is some dialogue with our neighbours to the west. We hoped there would be some more constructive dialogue moving forward.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to read the communiqué that was put out by the Province here just—I guess it was yesterday, in fact, where the western premiers were actually having a discussion. There's some irony in terms of what they—was presented in this communiqué this week versus their approach to the New West Partnership. And whoever gets up next, I'm hoping they can explain their differences and some of the ironies that I see in that—in this release. You know, the communiqué goes on and talks about the, you know, the diverse needs and the interests that we as western provinces have.

You know, we certainly have a lot of things in common and a lot of things that we probably should share, and, you know, one example of that comes to

mind. I'm thinking of the oil resources we have in Manitoba, certainly shared with Saskatchewan and North Dakota. And there's tremendous opportunities in the Bakken field, in the area there, for investment in the oil business, and it looks like there's quite a number of years of supply of oil and other natural resources there. So it's an opportunity for us as governments to get together and see how we can best move that area and move that industry forward.

And if we're having discussions with our neighbours in Saskatchewan, who are certainly ahead of us in terms of the oil development, that's very positive. I think we should be having ongoing discussions with them. And I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that a New West Partnership would allow those discussions to happen openly and on a regular basis instead of us having to go and ask for special meetings on various aspects of our economy. So it seems to me it would be kind of a natural fit to be part of the New West Partnership.

And certainly, you know, we see it, certainly those of us and the western and southwestern Manitoba, we see the economic opportunities there and we don't want to miss out on those opportunities. Even the, you know, the city of Brandon recognizes, although they're not right close to the oil patch, they're getting closer and closer as the days go forward, they can certainly sense the opportunities for economic spinoff to the city of Brandon. In fact, they see the economic spinoff for the region, which obviously has a positive impact on the city of Brandon.

And we know, we see businesses that, you know, are looking to invest in Manitoba, and I think if they had a signal from our government that we—you know, they're prepared to support business and support that particular area of the province, I think it would be very positive. And I think by having a partnership with, you know, provinces like Saskatchewan and Alberta who are ready—are already quite heavily involved in the oil industry, they certainly have the years of experience and the expertise there, it's probably a resource that we could tap into quite well.

And we can't let borders be barriers to doing business. And I think with the premise of a partnership such as the New West, it would break down those barriers, and hopefully the positive discussions that would in—take place after that would be a benefit to all those that want to do business here. And I think what it does, Mr. Speaker, it actually

sends a very positive signal to the business community.

In fact, the communiqué goes on and talks about, you know, strengthening our energy future, enhancing energy infrastructure and all that and talks about marketing in western provinces and the territories. So it talks—it goes on and talks about, you know, communicating with our neighbours and doing business with our neighbours, yet at the same time Manitoba seems to be reluctant to enter into a New West Partnership act, which really speaks to the communiqué and what the premiers were just talking about.

So we're having a little trouble balancing what the communiqué says with the actual—the actions of the NDP in terms of joining up with the New West Partnership, Mr. Speaker. And there seems to be some irony in there.

And I know it goes on and it talks about international trade, and obviously international trade is very important to Manitoba and it certainly has to be. But some of the international activities that have taken place, such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, you know, that—those reference nations getting together and talking about trade.

So here we are, we have the NDP putting out a communiqué saying, we think that partnerships are a good thing. But then on the other hand, when we come to talk about the New West Partnership the NDP says, no, we don't want any part of that. So there's certainly some irony in those two statements moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly, and it was mentioned earlier too, when we hear that the three western premiers travelled to China as a group to try to facilitate economic development, realizing—our Premier then realizing that he missed the boat, he missed the opportunity, he has to set up his own trade mission to go out there and try to catch up on the trade mission, Mr. Speaker. So it's kind of ironic that that should happen.

* (10:50)

And then, you know, the communiqué talks about disaster management, and here's where the government's saying, well, you know, we should have a Canada-wide public emerg alert system; we've got to get everybody playing together so that we have a Canadian-wide disaster management

system. But then the NDP says, well, that's fine, we can talk about a Canada-wide disaster financial—or disaster plan, but at the same time we don't want to do any partnerships with our western neighbours, which, again, seems kind of ironic to me, Mr. Speaker.

And then, the last issue on the communiqué, they talk about the importance of co-ordination across jurisdictional boundaries to protect water quality. Well, clearly, water quality is a huge issue, and, clearly, Manitoba being at the basin of water flows in quite a number of states and provinces, Mr. Speaker, we do have to be aware of what our neighbours are doing in other jurisdictions. And, clearly, the government says, you know, we should have discussions with other Provinces and other jurisdictions in terms of water and water management. But then we talk about the New West Partnership, where they want to join with other—three other provinces that are already involved in a partnership, and the government, the NDP, says, no, we don't want to be a part of any kind of partnership like that.

So here we have three or different items that the NDP says partnerships are good, and then when it comes down to the New West Partnership they don't want to be a part of it at all, Mr. Speaker, which I find quite interesting. And I hope the Minister of Finance, when he gets up, will have the opportunity to explain the differences in their ideology.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to reference the Industry Minister, Christian Paradis, who was this year's chairman of the committee on internal trade.

And, you know, clearly, from a Canadian government perspective, he realizes that there's trade barriers there and we have to do what we can to get rid of those trade barriers so we can all prosper as Canadians, and he says there are too many impediments here. We cannot do business among each other. So, clearly, the minister of trade, he recognizes that there's issues there. And in the article here, as well, there's a reference in the article, in the National Post, actually, talking about what some of the other provinces done in terms of moving forward with harmonization, and they referenced specifically the New West Partnership Trade Agreement. And, clearly, even Mr. Paradis, as the minister responsible, says, we need to build off agreements such as the New West Partnership. So, clearly, the federal government recognizes the great role that these partnerships can have for various jurisdictions.

So we're hoping that the NDP would have a serious look at this New West Partnership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Indeed, it's a pleasure to stand in the House today and talk about something as important as our approach to trade and to water and to economic development, and to remind members opposite that we are surrounded by four borders in Manitoba, not just the one that they seem to be concentrating on.

As usual, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have stepped forward with a plan that's heavy on rhetoric and light on substance. This is something we're becoming accustomed to across the way here. Certainly, the member for Spruce Woods talked about not wanting borders to become obstacles. That's good rhetoric. That's very good rhetoric. Anyone can stand in this House and spew rhetoric. That's fine. *[interjection]* I take that applause as an admission of guilt by all members opposite.

The member across the way from Spruce Woods talked a lot about economic development, but he sure doesn't put his money where his mouth is, Mr. Speaker. He can talk a good game, but he sure can't follow up on it. *[interjection]* And I'd congratulate myself too if I was members opposite to talk about how much hot air they provide for—contribute to global warming.

Just yesterday, I had a phone call which was led by the Minister of Finance in Alberta, Mr. Doug Horner, a very capable, very good finance minister. I think somebody who not only understand what's in the best interest of his home province of Alberta, but he does have a very Alberta-plus kind of an approach, Alberta-plus-the-rest-of-Canada approach. He understands. He understands. He's a Conservative who understands that you can't just see things in your own province. You have to have a bigger view. Mr. Horner sees that.

We were speaking about securities, Mr. Speaker, and we had ministers from across the country on the conference call, and we didn't take just a narrow Alberta approach, or just a narrow Manitoba approach; we took a pan-Canadian approach, something it seems members opposite aren't capable of grasping. We made a decision to move forward, not as western ministers concerned about securities, although I will say every Finance minister in western Canada is concerned about securities, but we took an approach that was good not only for western Canada, but for all of Canada.

Members opposite, you know, have—the member for Turtle Mountain—or, sorry, the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen) was kind of poking fun at the meeting that took place yesterday with all four western premiers being in attendance, Mr. Speaker. And he seems to—can't understand what he called ironies coming out of the communiqué that came out of that meeting. Well, I want to be very clear that the one thing he did not mention, that they belittle all the time, which is certainly part of any province's economic development approach, is the fact that Brad Wall, the Premier of Saskatchewan, came out of that meeting and said we're going to work with the Manitoba government to buy clean, green hydro from the province of Manitoba and distribute it in Saskatchewan to help Saskatchewan economically and to help Saskatchewan environmentally.

That is something that came out of that meeting, that is something that is very beneficial to Saskatchewan and west, that is something that's going to come about whether or not there's a New West Agreement, New West Partnership for any provinces in western Canada. That makes good economic development sense. This government is persistent in continuing our approach, to make sure that we can have a market to sell our hydro into. If it was left up to members opposite, they would mess that up like they've messed it up in the past with Ontario. We're determined that we're going to build Manitoba's future. We're going to do it in a number of ways, including selling hydro into the markets, whether that be Minnesota, Wisconsin, whether that be Ontario or, yes, indeed, yes, in fact, to Saskatchewan and points west, Mr. Speaker.

You know, members opposite talked about the oil and gas industry and they talked about the potential of the Bakken field. Absolutely, there's potential there—not if members opposite had their chance and would mess that up, too, like they mess up hydro.

We are at record levels of production in Manitoba—50,000 barrels per day. Recently, we were acknowledged as being the No. 1 jurisdiction in the world for oil and gas companies to invest. That is happening, whether or not we're part of the New West Partnership, whether a part of that agreement or not.

Mr. Speaker, we have met with—our Cabinet has met with the Saskatchewan Cabinet and talked about harmonizing transportation rules, which is a real benefit for the trucking industry, which is a real

benefit for members opposite who claim to represent the farm community. That's a real benefit our government and the Saskatchewan government got together, make sure that we're on the same page and make it easier for business to be conducted.

I want to make sure I talk a little bit about trade. We have a very diverse economy in Manitoba and we've overlaid a very diverse trade strategy on top of that economic diversity; that makes for a strong economy. And today, in these uncertain economic global times we need to make good, solid decisions like that, to enhance our advantages here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. We trade with Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. About 43 per cent of our trade goes from Manitoba to western Canada; 57 per cent of our trade goes the other way, goes to eastern Canada.

The very narrow focus of members opposite would be a detriment to our overall trade policy. We trade east and west, we trade to both. We're investing in CentrePort so that we can trade not only east and west but north and south. There are four directions that are concerned with trade. We're not just going to take a very—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable Minister of Finance will have two minutes remaining.

The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution we have before us today is the one sponsored by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park, entitled provincial initiatives to support children and youth opportunities—to support children and youth, pardon me.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 17—Provincial Initiatives to Support Children and Youth

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): I move, seconded by the member from St. Norbert,

WHEREAS it is critical to provide supports to school-age children and youth to help them build a strong foundation for success and well-being later in life, as young people are the future of our province; and

WHEREAS the provincial government provides many wraparound supports developed in partnership

with communities to complement school programming and maximize positive opportunities for Manitoba's children and youth while they are in school; and

WHEREAS this comprehensive continuum of supports starts early in life with programs like the Healthy Baby Prenatal Benefit that promote optimal infant development; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba also supports programs in the classroom, such as Roots of Empathy, the PAX program and various initiatives to assist pro-diversity clubs and gay-straight alliances; and

WHEREAS this range of supports also extends to outside of school, providing many young people with positive recreational, mentorship and internship opportunities through programs such as Lighthouses and After School Leaders; and

WHEREAS these initiatives would not be possible without the dedication of countless volunteers, families, staff and community leaders; and

WHEREAS the previous provincial government made the mistake of cutting youth programming and support for YMCAs.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend all those involved in ensuring our children and youth have the opportunities they need to get a strong start in school and in life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue working with community partners to provide programs that support all young people in achieving their full potential.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau),

WHEREAS it is critical to provide supports to school-age children and youth to help them build a strong foundation for success and dispense? Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

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

WHEREAS it is critical to provide supports to school age children and youth to help them build a strong foundation for success and well being later in life as young people are the future of our province; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government provides many wrap around supports, developed in partnership with communities, to complement school programming and maximize positive opportunities for Manitoba's children and youth while they are in school; and

WHEREAS this comprehensive continuum of supports starts early in life with programs like the Healthy Baby Prenatal Benefit that promote optimal infant development; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba also supports programs in the classroom, such as Roots of Empathy, the PAX Program and various initiatives to assist pro-diversity clubs and Gay Straight Alliances; and

WHEREAS this range of supports also extends to outside of school, providing young people with positive recreational, mentorship and internship opportunities through programs such as Lighthouses and After School Leaders; and

WHEREAS these initiatives would not be possible without the dedication of countless volunteers, families, staff and community leaders; and

WHEREAS the previous Provincial Government made the mistake of cutting youth programming and support for YMCAs.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend all those involved in ensuring our children and youth have the opportunities they need to get a strong start in school and in life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to continue working with community partners to provide programs that support all young people in achieving their full potential.

Ms. Blady: I bring forth this resolution as a means of thanking the many people that take part in providing a safe and supportive environment for our children, as a way of thanking those—whether they are staff, whether they are volunteers, whether they are

community leaders—in all of the programs that exist in this province now to support our youth, especially in their crucial developmental stages when they are in school.

I think we're all familiar with the phrase, it takes a village to raise a child, but in this day and age in the 21st century, we do not always have the kinds of supports that existed in smaller scale societies where we had the immediate supports of—whether be it neighbours, multigenerational households. And so, how I see the programs that we have and the volunteers that come together and the staff that come together, community leaders that come together to support children, really it is a 21st century equivalent to a village raising a child.

And I guess the best way to begin, after thanking these—all of these many people, is to sit there and take a look at what it is that they provide and how it does start, really, at the earliest of ages, and to think about our Healthy Baby program, for example, as one of the earliest starts that we have, and that this early baby program really is designed to get kids off to the right start because not every child has everything that they need in terms of a supportive family and economic supports that many of us take for granted. And through the Healthy Baby Prenatal Benefit, families with a net income of less than \$32,000 a year can receive up to almost \$82 per month in financial assistance for nutrition. It also provides supports for parents, and it's a very crucial time, and as someone that has been a single mother, knowing that you have supports around you during your pregnancy and in having your child, makes a huge difference. And what we're finding is that these kinds of programs, as with the others that I will take time to discuss, they really show positive results. And we have had participation in the program leading to up to a 9 per cent reduction in low birth weights, a 6 per cent reduction in preterm birth, a 5.7 per cent increase in adequate prenatal care, and up to 21 per cent increase in breastfeeding initiation, which is very crucial in terms of what it provides both nutritionally as well as what it provides from a psychological and a developmental perspective.

Again, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I am so proud of is the fact that part of this—I should also credit the org—how this is all organized, and we—the fact that we now have a Department of Children and Youth Opportunities which works with other departments, including Education, Healthy Living and Justice, and the fact that we have Healthy Child

Manitoba which is a long-term cross-departmental strategy to help families, communities and raise children who are healthy, safe and secure, well it's—part of that is the organizational aspect of it. All of these things come together and I am, again, thankful to those that make it work.

We also have preschool services and early learning, and what's interesting is that we have some first-in-Canada projects, including the early learning model at Lord Selkirk Park that includes a curriculum that promotes literacy and language development as well as a family resource centre. And it's using an Abecedarian Approach and, again, an Abecedarian Approach, for those that are familiar with the literature and familiar with the program, has been proven to show positive results in early learning. And, again, those first five years are crucial.

And to transition straight from that into the school years we've got the Roots of Empathy program which, again, is an amazing one and one that I've spoken of previously in this Chamber in terms of the impact that it has had on my son and his participation. But what's interesting is that it was so successful that we've actually implemented a Seeds of Empathy program which is an adaptation, and now it goes into child-care facilities and nursery schools. And the significant part of the both the Seeds of Empathy and the Roots of Empathy program is it teaches children to understand their own feelings and to feel empathy for others to promote emotional development and social skills and, again, very much a support that allows kids to learn how to express and identify their emotions in a positive way.

And having had the opportunity to meet docker—Dr. Embry, who is part of the PAX program, tells me that we, again, transition now into something else that provides students with a wonderful approach. Again, under the larger Healthy Schools initiative where the PAX program is, again, much like Roots of Empathy which helps children with their emotions, PAX helps kids with their behaviour. And basically what happens is this good behaviour program is something that, again, provides them with lifelong learning skills, physical and emotional health, as well as doing things like the avoid—basically creating a healthy environment where, in the end, kids involved with the PAX program have a tendency to be involved in any kind of negative behaviour, including later on in terms of involvement with drugs and criminal activities. And

so what's interesting is it creates behavioural conditions for active teaching and learning.

And I don't know how many here are familiar with it, but the behavioural games that are played involve the rewarding of PAXs and 'spleems' for particular types of behaviour, and then there are rewards for those—you know, the team that has the most PAXs, for example, may get to do a particular activity that would normally not be allowed.

And there are days, Mr. Speaker, where I honestly think that if we could just figure out the way of incorporating it within the parliamentary rules, that the PAX good behaviour game, while it tends to be geared to school-age children, might set the tone a little bit differently in here. So—but that's something for future consideration in terms of how one fuses the PAX program with the Westminster parliamentary model.

But as I said, it is one of those things that is a wonderful tool, and for every dollar invested in that program we see a \$96 saving in terms of what is provided for—what is provided elsewhere. In other words, these kids do not need to be involved with Child and Family Services or 'provi'—or involved with the judicial system in a way that they might not have been otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that is so important, and I guess I should say, is that there are so many programs here that I could talk about, but with the limited time, I know that my—that many others in the Chamber will talk about some of these programs. But one that is particularly near and dear to my heart and—is Bill 18, the safe and inclusive schools act, because every student does deserve to feel safe and respected. And it provides the necessary supports and it defines bullying and recognizes that bullying takes many, many forms.

* (11:10)

And what I admire most about how this legislation has been put together is that it requires school boards to establish a respect for human diversity policy, to promote the acceptance of and respect for others in a safe, caring and inclusive school environment, and that this includes student activities and organizations that use names like a gay-straight alliance.

And I'm very proud of the school division in my neighbourhood because the St. James school division has provided support for this legislation, and they are clear, open and forthright in that support. I would

like to thank the superintendent, Ron Weston, and I am also very proud to say that each and every high school in the St. James school division does have a GSA, whether it is my alma mater, what used to be Silver Heights and Sturgeon Creek but now Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate; whether it is the St. James Collegiate, where I was able to be with the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) for the launch of the Day of Pink with the Red Cross program; whether it is Westwood Collegiate where the first GSA was formed, and I was able to speak and recognize the students that formed that and—in terms of a private member's statement; or whether it's John Taylor Collegiate where my own niece Taylor was part of forming a GSA and is an active member—and an active member because one day she walked into school with her once-long hair cut short and she was greeted by homophobic students who decided to call her a dyke. They were that afraid of somebody being different, they picked on someone because of a haircut and made allegations—allegations that had nothing to do with who she was, but their fear took them into that place.

I am proud of the fact that we are putting forth this legislation because we have been at the forefront in Canada of taking action to prevent bullying, and I do believe that our work with Egale, the Canadian Human Rights Trust, is again one more thing that, in providing a safe and caring schools guide, that they will be able to do more.

So, I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, I am so thankful. To the many people that work in our neighbourhood, I am thankful. To the YM-YWCA, who I had the pleasure of being at the YWCA AGM, I am thankful for the work that they do. And I look forward to an ongoing relationship with all of these people.

And I look forward to the swift passage of Bill 18 because GSAs save lives. And the supports that we provide for our youth, up through their infancy and up through high school, are what make them stronger adults and the true future of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to put—to speak to this resolution, brought forward by the member from Kirkfield Park.

Provincial initiatives to support children and youth: Whereas it is a—it is critical to provide supports to school-age children and youth to help

them build a strong foundation for success and well-being later in life, as young people are the future of our province.

This is a statement that I could not agree with more. I think I've used this comment about the youth being our future in several of my speeches.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution does mention the hard-working Manitobans that complement school programming and maximizing positive opportunities for our youth. Manitoba is a have province with Manitobans that are proud of Manitoba and want to make Manitoba better, but we are a have province with a have-not government.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is about the NDP patting themselves on the back, making themselves believe that what they're doing is great. But there's a lot of facts missing from this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, just a few short days ago, the member from Kirkfield Park was attacking the Blue Crew that was in her constituency. They were youth—

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I believe the member is or was about to wade into an area that you've taken under advisement, and so it is not in order for him to discuss that in the House.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, I have indeed taken this matter under advisement, and I have not had the opportunity yet to bring back a ruling to the House.

So I'm asking for the consideration of all members of the House when debating this resolution here this morning that they 'convine' their comments very directly to the resolution itself under consideration and not stray into the area for which I have yet to rule.

So I'm asking for the co-operation of honourable members, especially the member that has the floor now.

* * *

Mr. Smook: That was all I was going to say on the matter.

In the last 13 years, this NDP government has managed to make Manitoba the child poverty capital

of Canada. Too many youth are living in poverty, and a result, they're falling behind the rest of Canadian children. We all know that youth living in poverty have other steps that they have to hurdle before they can be the same as children who have more benefits in their life.

Currently in Manitoba, 43,000 children live in poverty. Manitoba has a child poverty rate of 17 per cent. This poverty rate is almost three points higher than the Canadian rate of 14.2 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg referred—released a 2010 child poverty report. In this report, 32.6 per cent of people under 18 years old, or 92,650 children, in Manitoba were low-income children. And we know that if your income is low it is harder to take part in sports programs, to take dance lessons—it all just generally hurts the development of children, their life skills.

In a 2011 Food Banks Canada report showed that over 55,000 Manitobans accessed food banks in the month of March alone, an increase of over 37 per cent since March of 2008. Of the individuals who were helped, 50.4 per cent were children under the age of 18, which is significantly higher than the 38 per cent national average.

In a September 2007 survey conducted by Probe Research of young adults, over half believe that this NDP government was not doing enough to address poverty. Mr. Speaker, that poll was conducted seven years ago, and since then the NDP has made no progress on reducing the rate of child poverty across this province.

In the last 13 years, this government has not addressed the cost of housing for those on income assistance. We all know that when children have to worry about where their next meal is coming from or where they're going to sleep that night, has a drastic effect on those children; these children suffer.

Instead of meaningful initiatives from the government to bring Manitoba youth and their families out of poverty, we see wasteful spending, spending initiatives that will subject them to higher taxes. This government spends its budget on about everything it can except on helping our youth.

Since the budget of 2012, the provincial government has stuck their tax-grabbing hands into the pockets of all Manitobans. Record increases in fees, taxation rates, PST: these are tax grabs that mostly affect low-income families.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's welfare rolls have swelled to 60,000, almost 20 per cent higher than Saskatchewan. Manitoba continues to spend more on welfare every year, but yet with no results. We see the welfare rate increasing. Since nine—2009, the province's welfare budget has gone up by nearly 10 per cent. This government needs to get serious about getting people off welfare and into jobs.

We have a government that has no issue of finding millions to waste on any number of projects, from a western route for Bipole III, to making sure the NDP friends have cushy jobs. But when it comes to investing in programs designed to get people off welfare and into work, they've shown that they won't spend the money that's been allotted to those projects. From 2006 to 2007 to 2009-2010, the NDP budgeted \$14.7 million for Building Independence, but only spent \$7.4 million on that program.

* (11:20)

Poverty can be a vicious cycle. Many parents on welfare with children at home want to work and get off assistance, because they know to help their families and create opportunities for their children they need to make more money than what they can get on social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Kirkfield Park in this resolution talks about previous government made the mistake of cutting programs, and what is this current government doing? In fact, two years ago, the NDP government suspended its support for the 'sosh'—school-based program offered by the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. Fortunately, following public outcry, some of that funding was reinstated, but many schools are still struggling to implement such needed addictions services.

Manitoba has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in Canada at 47 for every 1,000 Manitobans. This is almost three times the rate of Ontario and Québec. Teen pregnancy rates matter. Most teenagers are too young to burden—to bear the burden of having children. Most teen mothers do not have the resources to raise a child. Having a child at a young age is correlated with lower levels of education and income for many years to come. Mr. Speaker, high rates of teen pregnancy are found in northern Manitoba, and over half of teen pregnancies are Aboriginal.

Let's talk about other program cuts. Mr. Speaker, just this spring the minister of youth and child opportunities announced that they were cutting

spending on the Green Team program. Anybody who did not apply for that program last year would not be able to apply this year and get funding. We talk about making cuts to our youth, I believe there's a number of programs that are very important to our youth and this government is guilty of making cuts to programs.

Let's look at our child welfare system. The government is responsible for over 10,000 children in care. That's what you need to have a city; 10,000 people is what you need to have a city. And with all these children in care we know that children in a foster home situation struggle more than families—when they come from stable families. The Auditor General of Manitoba delivered a report to CFS in 2006 that indicated that the computer system that they were using was outdated and should be replaced. This program is still being used in 2012. This is a government that can account for every single penny in the lotteries and liquor system of this province, but yet cannot account for children in care.

The one thing this government has done for our youth is take—

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

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I'm pleased to put some accurate information on the record. I'd like to thank the member opposite for putting entertaining information on the record, but now I'll put some accurate information on the record. I'd like to correct some of the information he put on. Although, I do agree with one thing that he did say. I believe poverty is a vicious cycle, and you have to invest in it to make sure that there is a difference. And so, I'll compare and contrast what the Conservatives did and what we've done.

The first one that's the most obvious is he mentioned the whole issue of foster homes. I find it interesting that they cut foster rates multiple times, I think it was three times, throughout the '90s. They eliminated the Foster Parents Association, and they removed the child tax credit. So, in other words, they clawed it back from the poorest families. Now, when you're talking about being a mean-spirited government the Conservatives do win the prize. Because how could they claw back the 'tild crax' credit that was provided by the federal government? How could they cut foster-parent rates multiple times? And how could they eliminate the entire organization? So I do compare and contrast us. I do

say that, yes, it does show where you invest does make a difference. They cut those services directly multiple times, and I have to say that we reversed those cuts.

Number 2, I would also like to correct the member. Actually, the only cut to AFM happened in 1998 to 1999 by the Conservative government where they cut the AFM from 10.5 to 9.6 million dollars. It's the only cut in AFM history. We've encouraged and increased that, and I'd like to let the member know that there's 29,000 people, mostly young people, who are getting preventative services from the AFM right now today. And, you know, those increases, where we have almost doubled the resources, tripled the prevention initiatives in this province, were voted against by him and his party every single time. So we should probably put some accurate information on the record.

The other interesting points that the member should know is twice in a decade—twice in a decade—the minimum wage went up. And if you're talking about investing in children and families and people, what you do is you make sure that people have adequate income. And, you know, the Conservatives raised it twice; we've raised it every single year to help support young families and initiatives. And you know what? We've increased the basic personal deduction every single year, and I'd like to contrast that with what happened in the Conservative days.

So I think that we also have to look at where we're investing. The member opposite inaccurately mentioned about where we're investing. I'm pleased that I was part of the—a government that started the prenatal benefit where we're providing \$80 per month for people who are low income. And that's to help with food. We get them involved with the Healthy Baby program. They get milk coupons. They get prenatal benefits. They get the support from professionals. And, Mr. Speaker, while we introduced that program where it helps and possibly affects thousands and thousands of children, I was proud to be part of a government that initiated that project, that supported that and put the resources into it, and I would actually have been very, very embarrassed if I was a Conservative. Why? Because they voted against healthy babies and healthy mothers. And I think that was really telling as to how they voted every time.

I look at other supports that the member opposite said was wasteful, things like the mentorship program.

Now, I do know that when I grew up I had some mentors that helped me in sports and in school, that took time and really took their talents to make a difference in me. I'm pleased that, although I announced the program, my friend and colleague, the minister for youth, actually put the puck in the net and actually set up the mentorship program that's available throughout the province with multiple partners, including the Jets foundation and others. And I think that what that's doing is providing a Big Brothers Big Sisters type organization, a bigger view and having thousands and thousands of people get the support necessary to move it forward.

I also would like to let the member know that the PAX good behaviour game, as was mentioned from my colleague from Kirkfield Park, that is a very, very good program. It's actually one of the most—they call it a behavioural inoculation. People who have been involved in the PAX good behaviour game actually have less suicide, less involvement with drugs, less teenage pregnancy, and, Mr. Speaker, that's a very, very cost-effective program that is in this province. And, by the way, for the members opposite information, this was the first province or jurisdiction in North America that implemented it in a large-scale program, and thousands and thousands of kids are benefiting. And it's not even in the long term; in the short term, it improves school and classroom behaviour.

I'm pleased to continue to push the Healthy Schools program as my—part of my ministry where we're getting kids involved in multiple programs that keep them healthy, everything from healthy mental ability to activity and food, et cetera. I look at the member opposite, and I don't think those investments in children, in healthy babies, in the home visitor program and the PAX good behaviour game and even the fact that Roots of Empathy came here and celebrated—celebrated—10 years of involvement in St. James-Assiniboia. And I was there, and I know that it's only an investment of a few hundred thousand dollars, but what it is is it's young people getting and learning how to be—have empathy for others.

* (11:30)

And remember, this is a world-famous program. It's rolled out around the world to teach empathy, to teach appropriate behaviour among people. And, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake, the Conservatives voted against that program. They voted against Roots of Empathy where children are working with babies. And I personally love it. I think it's a good program

because it teaches people how to behaviour—behave appropriately and not be aggressive.

So then I look at other programs that we have brought in that the members opposite didn't. And an example would be, as we've been working on, working with young mothers to—that are—have difficulties with addiction—and we expanded women's treatment. And so in—with the co-operation of Behavioural Health Foundation, we have a women's-only program we opened about a year and a half ago with Behavioural Health Foundation. It fast-tracks pregnant women to make sure that they deal with their addictions, even so far as trying to stop smoking, and, Mr. Speaker, that allows for healthier birth weight and parents and more appropriate healthy results.

The other thing that's interesting is I've had the pleasure, from 2004 on, to work with the whole breastfeeding initiative. And I'd like the members opposite to know that we've increased breastfeeding by over 21 per cent. We actually have people learn about it, and we continue to make sure that more and more people are promoting breastfeeding, and it is healthier for the baby.

I look at other things that we continue to do. The member opposite spoke about the Green Team. I find it interesting that when I was Minister of Youth, a couple of years ago, I was proud to increase funding drastically by the Green Team. And, again, we brought it up; we made sure that the kids that are participating in Green Team have a higher minimum wage. We make sure that they can participate. In fact, what we did was we expanded the program where young people are working with other young people to keep them busy because busy kids are good kids. And, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be the minister that moved that forward. And, again, I was surprised that the members of the Conservative Party voted against the Green Team summer employment and youth working with other employment youth to keep them busy.

As far as recreation, I look at the Lighthouse program. It's something where kids are keeping busy in the community. They are using rec centres, their schools. And, you know, they're teaching the appropriate support.

So much to talk about and so little time, Mr. Speaker.

I look at investments in school. One of the biggest social programs and one of the biggest prep

programs, and the biggest equalizer, is education. And I'm pleased that we continue to fund schools at and above the rate of inflation. I'm pleased that we've expanded the support where we were making smaller classrooms under grade 3. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that we're not doing what the Tories did, which was cut basic education—multiple years—cuts, thrown out teachers out of the classroom, larger classroom sizes, larger taxes and poorer results.

I'm pleased to be part of a government that cares about education and funds education appropriately. And make no mistake, they were zero, zero, -2, -2. We've increased the funding and we truly believe that we're a kids government, we're a family government, and we support families and children. Unlike the members opposite, who talk a good game, but when it goes to putting the puck in the net, never quite manage to do it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to put a few words on the record in regards to this resolution that's been brought forward. And after listening to the last speaker, it really motivates someone to retaliate, but at the same time, I won't.

Children and youth make up 20 per cent—or 26 per cent of Manitoba's population, a number higher than a national average, Mr. Speaker. And children are the future of our province. With our support, we can guide them to good decisions and making good decisions in their life, as they move forward.

But how well are the children and youth in Manitoba under the NDP actually doing? And perhaps it might be, to the member that had just finished speaking, to his benefit, to sit by and listen to how well his programs are not working. You see, they seem to think that if you spend money and you don't get results, it's still okay with spending the money. Well, it's not.

What we would do on this side of the House is much different. We would invest the money in our youth. We would invest that money from the very young until they are able to leave their homes, the security of their homes, and make their way in the world.

And the way things are going right now, that way would probably be making your way west. Go west. Isn't that what the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn) suggested? If the lights are brighter in

Saskatchewan, that's where they would go, and we've had a net out-migration from the province of Manitoba since 1999.

And we heard a lot of things today earlier also about the co-operation that we have with other provinces, Mr. Speaker, and the co-operation is—and they're certainly praising Brad Wall, and so they should. They should worship him because that's where one third of their budget comes from. It comes from a have province. At one time I was always good—at least Manitoba had the opportunity of saying, at least we're not Saskatchewan. We don't have that opportunity any more. All the other provinces are saying, well, at least we're not Manitoba.

However, since 2001 Manitoba has had some of the highest school dropout rates, and we just heard the member speaking about how important education was and how much money they're spending on it and the smaller classes and so on and so forth. But the results aren't there, Mr. Speaker. In 2009 Manitoba's high school dropout rate was 14 per cent. The only province that we were behind—or that was behind us was Québec. It's horrible, the dropout rate.

In September of 2007, and that's—a lot of promises were made by the NDP government in 2007, the same as they were in 2011, and as we look back on these now, we understand that most of those promises no one had any intention of keeping.

But in 2007 a survey was conducted by the Probe Research of young adults. Over half believed that the NDP was not doing enough to address poverty, and that's a fact. That is a fact in Manitoba. Under the NDP, 47.6 per cent of the people use food banks in Manitoba, and now that—of the people, 47.6 per cent are now children. That's a outrageous number, and why are they using these food banks, Mr. Speaker, when we hear that there's all kinds of opportunities, that Manitoba is growing, businesses are growing, employment is growing? There's all kinds of opportunities, but people are in the food bank; 47 per cent of the people that are in the food bank are children. And it's a known fact that it's difficult to learn well if you haven't been able to eat well and you're not healthy, and that, I'm sure, is one of the big reasons why there is such a dropout rate.

What about the Aboriginal youth in the province? They're Canada's fastest growing population and they face unique and difficult challenges that the NDP promised to address, but they haven't addressed that. Aboriginal children

make up 80 per cent of the children in care in Manitoba. The federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development notes that the number of First Nation children being placed in child care is increasing at an alarming rate. In Manitoba, findings reported by the Department of Education find many Aboriginal children are far behind non-Aboriginal children in a number of areas where they—when they begin school.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's no reason for that. There should be no reason whatsoever. But under the NDP, health-care standards for children and youth have not improved, and the minister of child and youth opportunities even disclosing disappointing health outcomes in his 2012 Healthy Child Manitoba report. This is an individual that has an opportunity to make changes. This is a minister of the government who promised in 2007 to make changes, who promised in 2003 to make changes, who promised in 2011 to make changes, and still our food banks are overloaded.

In 2012 the Healthy Child Manitoba report also demonstrated mothers who drink alcohol while pregnant are on the rise, and this despite a five-year multi-million dollar commitment made by the NDP government in 2007 to improve Manitoban awareness of the impacts of alcohol use during pregnancy.

* (11:40)

Now, Mr. Speaker, you and I and members of this House do understand that you shouldn't be drinking alcohol and what the effects are, and we see the effects and the effects are very costly on the health-care system.

But at the same time, when we invest a multi-million dollar commitment to improve the conditions and the awareness of Manitobans, and we don't check the results—we don't check for results—we just say, oh, we'll throw the money and it's going to—it'll solve the problem. It hasn't solved the problem.

So when someone brings a resolution like this forward, it's kind of redundant. Go do your homework. Go do what you were supposed to do, what you said you would do. Do those things.

Don't come out here and tout all the good things that you think happen to—fuzzy things—we've put millions of dollars into this and we've put millions of dollars into that, but the bottom line is they weren't result-oriented and nobody is checking that.

A study of infant mortality in Manitoba—it was shown that, under this NDP government, the death rate for Aboriginal babies is more than twice the Canadian average. That's unacceptable. That's unacceptable any place, but in Manitoba, especially, that's unacceptable. We have the ability to change that. This government has had the ability for a number of years—many promises and millions of dollars to change that, and did nothing to change it. They will just sit there and say, oh, yes, we're doing this, we put more money into this, we put more money into this. But no results—no results, Mr. Speaker.

While I applaud the work being done by the communities to help children and youth at a local level, this government has left much to be desired at the provincial level. They've left everything to be desired at the provincial level.

But as we go through the life of a child growing up in Manitoba, when they get off to a hard start like that, Mr. Speaker, it's very, very difficult to climb the ladder. It's difficult to climb out of those situations.

And so, as they get to be students, as they get to be, hopefully, staying in school but not quite ready to graduate, what we see then is they look for employment—part-time employment, summertime employment, something to help them and their families move forward.

Program like The Green Team program provided excellent opportunities for this to take place, and this government, in this last budget, slashed it—cut it. They cut it to next to nothing. What we see is where there were at least two—two employees, what we have today is a hundred hours—a hundred hours to do a park in Roseau River, Manitoba. The park was donated to the community; it's a community park. It's funded just by donations and volunteers, hard-working Manitobans. And this Province cuts a program that gave entry-level students an opportunity, plus put a burden on an organization, such as we have in Roseau River, a beautiful park on 59 Highway.

This is not the only program that they cut, Mr. Speaker. They've slashed many of these programs that gave entry-level students an opportunity to participate, and you know exactly what I'm talking about. The member over there is waving and saying, what are you talking about. But when you do tell him, he doesn't hear, unfortunately, and I would hope that they pay attention going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): Holy smokes, Mr. Speaker. I-first off, I've got to thank the member from Kirkfield Park for bringing the resolution forward. I could probably spend my whole time trying to correct the record from the member from Emerson. I don't want to do that, because I know there's a lot of good things to talk about, and the reality is is that if we want young people to do well, if we want families to do well, particularly vulnerable families, you know, they need a government; they need people who believe that there's solutions, there's opportunities. And, clearly, the member from Emerson struggles with that.

I want to talk a little bit about what I've said before. I think it's always important that we recognize that if we want to maximize the talents and the potential of families and young people, it starts before they're born, and it starts providing families with as much possible choice as possible. And it starts with—we started with investments into the prenatal benefit, touching over 4,000 women a year, Mr. Speaker. We know this kinds of investments improves healthy baby weight. It—there's less preterm births. We've made investments with the Manitoba child benefit, over \$3 million. The National Child Benefit, \$48 million that the members cut, we've actually put back into the pockets of families.

But one of the things that we have done is we have continued to invest in services that matter most, and I want to share a few of those. Family's First home visiting program where people from health care go in and they meet with families. They talk to families. They find out where their challenges are. Our Healthy Baby community support program, we know programs like this. So not only did we reinvest the \$48 million back into families, but we maintained all the services and expanded all their services when it comes to early childhood development. We know that this improves access to services and resources that families need most. We know that this provides a strong network of support for families from all different backgrounds and we also know that this builds confidence and self-esteem for parents, particularly parents that struggle the most.

But one of the most important things that it does, Mr. Speaker, is it gives people in their communities a strong sense of belonging. It makes people know that they belong in their communities, that they can reach out and get the supports that they need. They actually

get out and volunteer more. They actually participate in what's going on in the community more. Investments like we made here, 26 parent-child coalitions that bring educators together, business leaders, health providers, non-profit, elders, seniors, families. You know, people come together. I got to sit with the members from Lac du Bonnet and La Verendrye. We sat together at a parent-child coalition. We talked about the reports that members opposite talk about. Those are our investments. This is what keeps us ahead of every other province when it comes to early childhood development. The very places they get their speaking notes from is from the investments we make in evaluations, in data collection, in research. And we got to sit together and talk about how we can improve the lives of young people. We invest in the early development instrument where we're—the investments put emphasis on literacy, on language, on numeracy for young people so that when they enter school they know that's where they belong so they're not actually behind.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I talk about belonging so much because I got to travel the province and do healthier and safer community consultations. I literally talked to thousands of Manitobans, and so many of them talked about opportunities for youth, creating more opportunities for youth. And so, why do we do that? Well, because young people need something positive to belong to, because if you don't give them something positive to belong to then they don't wait around. Someone will seek them out and get them involved in something negative. Now, I know this because when members opposite were in government a lot of the programs where young people could have a structure in which to have something positive to belong to were actually cut. When I travelled the province and I went through and got to meet with people at friendship centres, they talked to me about how those programs were cut. As a young guy growing up in the North End, local YMCA programs were cut. So young people didn't have positive things to belong to.

You know, we've been able to create—I'll give you one example, Mr. Speaker, one—just one initiative as an example of this: our Lighthouses, 71 Lighthouses in the province of Manitoba all throughout the province, over 1.4 million visits. Now, that's young people being involved in positive activities in their community. The other thing about the Lighthouses, it has generated an incredible amount of partnership, an incredible amount of

support. So the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) talks about all these wonderful volunteers and all these people getting out. I agree with him and I'm very glad that the Province of Manitoba made these investments for people to get out and volunteer to support children and youth. Lighthouses is a great example of that. We've built the structure. Within that structure young people build their skills. They build on their talents and we provide them great supervision, great mentorship. And what we've done is that structure allows organizations like the Winnipeg Foundation, the United Way, volunteer organizations, non-profits to come together to support young people, just like our parent-child coalitions.

Once again, how do we provide young people a 'pos' sense of belonging? Well, we work with people like Mark Chipman and the Winnipeg Jets True North Foundation with our After School Leaders program. Mr. Speaker, did you know from the ages of 7 through young people in their mid-20s we invest over \$20 million. We partner with hundreds of organizations, the idea of a shared responsibility, working together to make sure we're creating these structures and together every single summer, over 60,000 young people are busy doing positive things in their communities, doing incredible things in their communities. Now, that's part of an after-school network that's for southern Manitoba and northern Manitoba.

* (11:50)

You know, Mr. Speaker—so we've created many programs, many partnerships to give young people positive stuff to belong to. The other thing that we've been able to do is make sure that we invest to make sure that we maximize the skills and talents of our young people in this province. A great example of that is mentorship.

And I want to let the member for Emerson know that—about The Green Team program, that isn't true what he said. In fact, our Green Team program is one of the most popular, effective programs in the country, Mr. Speaker. It's the envy of other provinces, our Green Team program. We continue to invest in the Green Team program. In fact, young people this summer are going to be busier than they ever have been.

We continue to improve these programs year after year after year, Mr. Speaker, because it allows young people to get work experience; it allows young people to think about the kinds of careers that

they want to do right here in Manitoba. We invest \$8 million—it touches over 13,000 young people, our mentorships.

And there's 20 different types of mentorships that we provide. There is mentorship around recreation services, mentorship for young people who want to get involved in the sciences. Young people who want to—who have an interest in the arts, in the music; young people who are interested in culture, Mr. Speaker, who want to get out and do cultural programs.

We know programs like this increase academic achievement; we know that, you know, we're providing—making record investments in our classroom, Mr. Speaker, but we're also extending the school day, before school, after school, lunch hours, weekends, summers. It's because we understand that that also improves learning outcomes for young people.

And we're making record investments, like our Bright Futures program, around giving young people, all young people, a tap on the shoulder to say, post-secondary is for you.

So we're—what we're able to do, Mr. Speaker, is maximize the talents and skills and create a structure and partnership with so many other organizations, other non-profits, other community organizations, to make sure we're doing that; record investments in the classroom to enrich our curriculum, providing unique programs for some of our most vulnerable families to build their self-confidence and self-esteem; and providing record investments in early childhood development and parent supports.

Now, it doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to talk about the tuition waiver program, first of its kind in the whole nation—the first of its kind in the nation, where young people who've been part of the child and family services system get to go to the University of Winnipeg tuition free.

Now, we've made investments; we've said we're going to continue to support them through their living expenses, we're going to continue to provide housing, we're going to help them with their textbooks, we're going to help them with food. We're taking some of a—we're taking some of our most vulnerable young people and we're saying to them, look, I understand you have some hardship, I understand you have challenge, but within that we see potential. And we're going to invest in that potential; we're going to invest in that possibility.

That's how you build safer, healthier, stronger communities, by making those kinds of investments; by—where most people see hardship, where most people see potential—making those investments. Which you don't do if you want to maximize people's talents is you don't cut programs. You know, you don't take away these programs, you don't take funding away from friendship centres, you don't cut local YMCA, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to speak to this resolution brought this morning by the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) talking about supporting children and youth, and there's good news and there's bad news. So let's get the bad news out of the way first and then we'll speak about the good news. And the—

An Honourable Member: Good news first—good news first.

Mr. Pedersen: No, we'll do the bad news first, it's fine. We'll—I'll have time. I'll make sure I get the good news out first.

The bad news is that the number of children in care since 2000—in 2000, was 5,568 children. And now, today—or last year, actually, 2012's—9,730, up 74 per cent. That's not good news at all. And the number of families receiving care from Child and Family Services is up 21 per cent in the past 12 years, so that's not good news. The number of children in foster homes is up 60 per cent, up from 3800 and some, up to over 6,000, and that's not good news.

And what it is, is it's poverty that drives a lot of this and, unfortunately, poverty has continued. We're the poverty capital of Canada under this NDP government and that continues. And it's something that this government does well, is that they tax. They tax a lot. And they've added \$1,600 per family, and that affects every family in Manitoba, and it particularly affects those who are living in poverty. And that's—will continue to—these numbers will continue to grow.

And on—and the government continues to talk about investments, and they just don't realize that government doesn't build the economy. They want to build the economy. They want to be the builders of the economy. It's Manitobans, it's Manitoba taxpayers, Manitoba businesses, Manitoba families,

that build the economy, not this government, at least successfully, anyway, because we've seen how unsuccessful this government has been.

But, Mr. Speaker, the government members were eager to get into the good news. So here's the good news. We now know that the NDP got paid \$278,810.51 from Elections Manitoba in a vote tax. They put themselves ahead of children in this province. Every one of these MLAs is now going to get \$7,535 courtesy of the taxpayer. So, where's the priorities here? Is the priorities in children? Is it in—*[interjection]* You really believe that? You really believe this is democracy, to pay yourselves ahead of Manitoba children?

Now, this is just, that—the good news continues because this is only for 2012. If they keep at this now, they'll be able to do this for 2013, 2014, 2015. Every one of these MLAs will collect \$30,000, over \$30,000, out of the Manitoba taxpayer. They won't have to lift a finger to finance their next campaign. That's disgusting. That is just disgusting. They're putting themselves ahead of Manitobans, ahead of children, ahead of all these children that are living in poverty. We now know where their priority is.

And when they talk about—excuse me—when they talk about, in this resolution, where it talks about wraparound supports, I now understand what they're talking about. The wraparound support is for each MLA. They will wrap this support, the taxpayer, wrap the taxpayer around them. They will take \$1,600 out of each and every family—just in this year, never mind the years to come—that they will take out of every taxpayer from Manitoba because they're either too lazy or too afraid to go to the door and ask for support. And I think it's a combination of both. If I had to guess, I would say they're too lazy to go out there; they feel entitled. They don't care about children who are living in poverty; they don't care about families; they don't care about those people who have to decide before the month has ended, they're out of cash. They—are they going to buy groceries or are they going to buy food? This government continues to put themselves ahead of that, and that is shameful on their part.

So, we now know what wraparound supports means. Wraparound supports means gouge the taxpayer, pay themselves first, put themselves at the front of the line. This is like a food line, and they're at the front of the food line because they will tax Manitobans. And what this resolution does, it's—definitely supports the NDP in their tax-raising

abilities. Because we now know we have—they—it's been asked, we have asked very many times: Are you taking the vote tax? Are you taking the vote tax? How much are you taking? And we've never got an answer until last night.

In Elections Manitoba committee, we found out they're getting \$278,810.51. They've already cashed the cheque. It wasn't even a matter—should we cash it or not? They couldn't run to the bank fast enough to get this puppy in the bank for themselves. And yet, they talk about poverty and people who they have some—trying to make like they have some semblance of care for them, but we know that they pay

themselves first. And that, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely disgraceful. I would like to see them go out to the taxpayers—go to the taxpayers, go to the doors—and ask them: Is it okay if we just pay ourselves \$7,500 a year—\$7,535 per year, per MLA—so that then we don't have—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Midland will have three minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed 'til 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

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