

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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WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
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<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 9, 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: We'll start with second readings of private bills. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 300?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 301?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. We'll move on to second readings of public bills. Bill 205, are we ready to proceed with Bill 205?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. We'll move on to debate on second readings of public bills. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 208?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 200?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

**DEBATE ON SECOND
READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Then we'll call Bill 200, The Results-Based Budgeting Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows, who has six minutes remaining.

Bill 200—The Results-Based Budgeting Act

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, always a pleasure to be up in the House speaking on this topic.

Think I'd like to just speak of—just briefly about some of the things that we have done, because—about reducing costs. I think that's always important, of course, and I just wanted to list just a few of the things like the reduction in the number of regional health authorities from 13 to five. I think that was really significant. The merging of two Crown corporations and also—I mean, the reduction in red tape that will go into, you know, the new legislation with the Liquor Control Commission, particularly, I think, will make a big difference for both, you know, the average person and businesses in our province. So I'm really looking forward to that coming through and seeing some of the exciting changes, Mr. Speaker, that are going to happen in our province because of that.

We also have found \$128 million in-year savings in government departments. We've consolidated government offices wherever possible. We've frozen or reduced the budgets of 10 departments. We've realized \$75 million through the sale of government assets. And those are all really important, but what comes to my mind I think most, Mr. Speaker, as I look at my TV these days, is the essential funding of flood mitigation and bringing that in because it's—we're talking about results-based budgeting. And results-based is what our flood mitigation plan is. Absolutely results-based.

And I know that's looking at it a little different view than what the opposition was looking at when they brought it in, but I think it's the most important thing. What are the results of the money that you are spending in your budget? And the results, as one great example, is the one-in-700-year flood protection with the expansion, and thanks to Duff as well, of course, with his visionary plan originally, and then with our expansion bringing it to one in 700 years. And we never want to see someone else suffering, but I think you can really see the effects, Mr. Speaker, of what happens when you take that flood plan and you pop it into a drawer and you don't want to spend the money.

And it's heartbreaking to see what's going on right now, for example, in Calgary, and the billions of dollars that that is going to cost the people of Alberta. That was just not necessary, and hopefully, you know, this will lead to Alberta also jumping in there—I'm sure they want to now, get some of that flood mitigation work done and hopefully they won't just leave that plan.

But for Winnipeg—and sometimes I think we forget, Mr. Speaker, how blessed we are that that work has happened, and we sometimes forget and think there, you know, there's no danger. There's no floods here. Yes, there are floods. We just are protected because of visionary planning that has occurred in this province.

We were looking at the TV yesterday in Toronto and watching that where it looked like the GO train was going to, like, flood away—flow away. So I really believe that those are key to what Manitoba needs.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I was talking the other day about the alternate universe that we kind of live in, in here, where you feel like, my goodness, the economy is somehow falling in Manitoba, when exactly the opposite is happening here. And every day I open up the paper and find things about businesses that are coming to Manitoba; businesses that are moving into our province, that want to build millions-of-dollar projects. There was another one in there again today, and it's really wonderful to see what is going on in our province today.

The unemployment rate just dropped, as well, to 5 per cent, I believe, in June. It's—but it's been very good for a long time. I think we're third, Mr. Speaker, in the province in that area. And I was speaking to different groups in my area as well with regard to us, because of our increase that we're going to bring in with the PST, being able to participate in the Canada build project. And that is key. We cannot leave that money sitting on the table in Manitoba, and I've already had groups contacting me, asking, when can we apply? When can we apply for those Canada build projects that are going to be going on, and asking me, you know, for how that's going to work?

And so people are already excited, Mr. Speaker, about that project, and they understand that we need to be doing that work and that we need to be continuing to build Manitoba, not to be mothballing projects, not to be not moving forward in areas. We need to be building in so many different areas, and

I'm certainly grateful that I'm living in Manitoba in a time where that is happening. Thank you so much.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to put a few words on the record in regards to my colleagues bringing forward The Results-Based Budgeting Act, Bill 200, brought forward by the member from Tuxedo.

Mr. Speaker, this is a responsible act. It's an act that would bring more accountability to the government spending. People are telling us all over the province that the government doesn't have an—have a revenue problem, it has a spending problem. And the previous speaker pretty much outlined that, saying that the only way we can participate in some of these projects in the future is if we get more money from the federal government.

* (10:10)

Now, I can understand that there are cost-sharing going on—arrangements with many of these projects, and we see them as a result of the 2011 election as well—or 2011 flood as well. And to show the lack of accountability, here we are two years after the fact, and most of these projects have not even begun—certainly haven't proceeded.

Now, a lot of municipalities have received their funds from that flood, Mr. Speaker, but some haven't received their final funding, and I've been dealing with some of those cases myself.

And on top of that, I've got five municipalities in southwest Manitoba now that are under a state of emergency from a flood that's been caused by as much as 13 to 15 inches of rain in that area in the last—none in the last 10 days thankfully, Mr. Speaker—but over a four-day period two weeks ago.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say that it's about accountability and The Results-Based Budgeting Act is something that should be brought in, to provide that kind of accountability in our system because if we don't have accountability and a long-term plan on how to find the end result of stopping this kind of situation from happening over and over again, then I think it's a lack of planning on behalf of any government, but particularly, the one that's been there for 14 years and has spent 0.18 per cent on flood mitigation.

So, it has not been a priority before, won't be now, and isn't in the future, according to their own budget and the things that they have indicated that they want to use this money for. It's been all over the

map, Mr. Speaker, in regards to what they would like to use the 1 per cent PST increase for. It's a 14.3 per cent increase in the tax.

And I think Manitobans, as we saw from the committee meetings that took place in this building over the last 10 days—finished on Saturday, Mr. Speaker—pointed that out very succinctly. These people are normal Manitobans, very concerned about their futures. Some on limited incomes, some from impoverished situations, and they came to say that what's being done in this particular situation will not help them.

It's a detriment to the economic activity that will create jobs in our province. And I see it every day, as you get closer to the Saskatchewan border out where my constituency is, Mr. Speaker, in southwest Manitoba, all of the small businesses there will feel the impact of this 8 per cent PST in Manitoba as opposed to 5 per cent in Saskatchewan. It's a 60 per cent difference.

And if you're in the oil industry and you're buying safety equipment, work boots, helmets, gloves, any kind of equipment, Mr. Speaker, in that regard, perhaps you will pay that higher tax in Manitoba, and so you'll buy them in Saskatchewan because they're travelling back and forth across the border every day anyway.

Mr. Speaker, it does not help those communities, and it doesn't help the communities here along the American border, where they can travel across the American border and pick items like that up as well.

And I think the big thing though, Mr. Speaker, is that the government misses the point that the impact on large businesses in Manitoba is pretty profound as well. A lot of businesses are leaving a storefront in Manitoba, but their head offices are no longer in this province and the government loses out on tax paid to this province because of that move by those companies.

And I think that bringing in some kind of results-based economics, where the government would have to look at its spending, Mr. Speaker, would be a help as well.

But I think the thing that bothers Manitobans the most, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) lied in regards to saying in the election of 2011—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member just used an unparliamentary word with respect to another member of the Assembly. So I'm

asking the honourable member, when we're using language like that, to not make reference to other members of the Assembly. So I'm cautioning the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) with respect to the language he's chosen here this morning.

Mr. Maguire: I certainly know that rule and want to comply with it, so I apologize for the use of that term, Mr. Speaker, but I want to say that the government, then, has put falsehoods on the record in regards to the process that went through the 2011 election, particularly the Premier at that time, when he said that he would not increase taxes. In debates, in the election campaign, he said he wouldn't do it. He wouldn't raise taxes. And he'd balance the books by 2014, which we're only about eight months away from—10 months away from the end of this fiscal year, which will be the '13-14 fiscal year. Maybe he meant the '14-15 one, but he said he'd balance them by 2014, which isn't that far away.

And, Mr. Speaker, his exact quote was, our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases and we'll deliver on that. We're ahead of schedule right now. He said that on CJOB in the leaders' debate September 12th, 2011. Then again, on September the 23rd, 2011, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was asked about specific tax increases like the PST, and he said ridiculous ideas that we're going to raise the sales tax, that's total nonsense, everybody knows that.

That's why these Manitobans were so incensed when they came to the committee the other day. He also made the comment, and I've used this one in previous speeches and in written material, and it's back on September the 2nd, the Premier also said that today's release of the 2010-11 Public Accounts shows that Greg Selinger's five-year economic plan is on track to return—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Again, the honourable member for Arthur-Virden is—and I regret to interrupt him during his comments here, but we're to refer to members of the Assembly by their constituency names or ministers by their portfolio or first ministers by their title. So I'm cautioning the honourable member for Arthur-Virden. I know the member is not a rookie here, so I just want to caution him on his use of the appropriate references to members of the Assembly.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's so many things that this government has done wrong I can't get them all straight.

So, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the member from St. Boniface, this—these are words from the NDP fact check, and, you know, it's a news release—and the member from St. Boniface's five-year economic plan is on track to return the budget to balance by 2014 while protecting jobs and services without raising taxes. Now, that's the only thing they talked about in the budget—or in the election campaign, was not raising taxes. But, you know, talk is cheap. And so you can talk the talk, but they did not walk the walk in this case and there's no—there's just no semblance of what has happened in the last 18 months since the election and what this government said they would do during that election. That's why my colleague from Tuxedo has brought in Bill 200, The Results-Based Budgeting Act, to try and put some accountability into the government to show them how they can manage their own affairs better. And they have not proven that they can, they've let Manitobans down terribly in that regard.

And I think to add insult to injury, it was in last year's budget when they increased the taxes, Mr. Speaker, on home property and group insurance—group life insurance. They raised it on items like manicures, pedicures and hairstyles, raised it up, just broadened the PST out and, of course, that was the third time they'd raised, broadened it out. And then to just up it to 8 per cent on all of those areas was certainly not what they promised in that election campaign that they would do. And I wanted to say that the program or the bill that's been brought in here and recommended by my colleague is certainly much more accountable than the acts of this government since they came in.

Mr. Speaker, there was one of the presenters the other night made the case that there was—I believe it was Ray Garnett—and he indicated that there are makers and takers in the books that he brought forward, 2,000 pages of reading material to the committee. And I would say that this government is more takers than makers in regards to making his point much more—he made it much more eloquently than that. But the bottom line is that this government knows how to take money out of people's pockets, as they've done with the \$1,600 that they've taken out since the election. That's quite a bit considering they indicated that they wouldn't raise taxes at all. Of course, there's gasoline taxes that they raised as well and, of course, they didn't do that again this year, but I guess they felt that they could get all they needed out of Manitobans' pockets with the increase in the PST.

And so when you've got a government that's out of control on its spending, it's very difficult for Manitobans to do anything but what they did last week and come and make their voice heard at committee.

So thank you very much.

* (10:20)

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk in Bill 200. I thank my predecessor for his opinions. Of course, I think I have something to put on record that will maybe make him think twice or more. And, you know, when it comes down to any budget, it comes down to leadership. And anybody, if you knew what the world was going to be like in 20 years or five years or 10 years, sure, you could plan your budget and everything would be hunky-dory.

But that's not the way life is. I mean, you talk to people in Calgary, you talk to people in Toronto, talk to people in Reston, Manitoba, or Winnipegosis, or talk to people in La Pas. They're all dealing with situations that usually they don't deal with. And, you know, with flooding, it could be fires, could be whatever. And our government is a government that acts. It doesn't react. I know up north they've bought a few more water bombers because, believe it or not, in some areas it's flooding, but up north it can be really dry, and so they're preparing for more fires.

Our government's preparing for floods, and Winnipeg is well-protected and, you know, for 700 years. And so when you come—when the opposition comes to us and says, you know what, you promised this, you promised that, you know, as a good Manitoban, I want to make sure that my government is reacting and acting in the best interests of me. And I think our leadership that our Premier has shown in this—tough choices, but he's made the choice that, you know what, Manitobans come first. And I'm going to look at a balanced approach. Yes, we are going to try and balance our budgets in 2016 and, yes, we've made some decisions like cutting the Cabinet wages by 20 per cent. Yes, we're looking at different departments and amalgamations. We're looking at ways that we can save money.

But the ultimate stand that we made is that we have to look at Manitoba as a whole and what can benefit Manitoba as a whole is protecting it from situations where instead of thousands of dollars

being spent or millions and millions of dollars could be spent in flooding. So we spend it in flood mitigation so that if there is a chance of further flooding or, like I say, even fires up north, that we will be prepared.

And when I look at my—our neighbours to the west in Calgary—I have a couple daughters that live there, and you know, thank God, they have houses on the hills, but my brother-in-law is a land developer and he had the opportunity of getting the land right down by the Elbow River. We do a lot of fly-fishing and, I said, darn, you should have got that. And thank God he didn't listen to his father-in-law, because those million-dollar homes were basically not just washed away, but they're—they've got mould all over them.

So it's a sad situation that maybe the people of Calgary or the governments of Calgary could have spent some flood mitigation and saved some areas. And I think when you see our 1 per cent rise in the PST, it will look pretty small what Alberta's going to have to do to pay for their costs for their flooding. So, like I say, I like a government that acts and doesn't react, and I really thank the Premier (Mr. Selinger) for doing that.

There's many things that we have to look at here, though. We have to look at the different approaches of governments. Of course, we're in government, so we are acting to the best ability of all Manitobans. We're looking at a balanced approach. We're not laying off teachers or laying off nurses. We're building and, you know, that's the big difference between us and our fellows in opposition. And when you look down the road, let's say in five years, you're going to look at the brand new hockey rink, you're going to look at the football stadium, and you're going to look at the museum, you're going to look at the airport. And you're going say, wow, you know, someone had a vision. Someone was thinking ahead. The convention centre coming up—someone is thinking ahead. And you've got to think outside the box.

It's nice to just, you know, cut and slash and burn and not have that vision, but I have to, again, thank the Premier, and our side of the House for having the vision, having the guts to stand up and say this is what we're doing. Manitobans have given us that mandate by voting us in, and they respect a government that's going to act and not react.

And going around, I know, in my constituency, which is one of the largest constituencies, they like

to see the government acting and saving money in the long run. So I appreciate that.

We have unemployment that's among the lowest and with steady growth and a growing population. I mean, those are good things. Manitoba knows they can trust a balanced and prudent and responsible approach. And I think, you know, based on the last election, people realize that when they're voting for our side of the House, they're looking at a team that is—has been in government for a while and has used that knowledge and that experience to the best of their ability. And they like where we're going. There is a future; there is a vision. And the vision is great for Manitoba because the future is great here.

We balanced the budget 10 times, more budgets than the last PC government ever did. Our government's decade of balanced budgets has put Manitoba in a strong economic and sound fiscal position.

I don't want to bring up Maclean's magazine but remember, we were, you know, thought to be the miracle province and we still are. We still have that vision; we still have that work ethic. We put jobs and services first, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's very important.

Our opposition and the Leader of the Opposition, he was going to cut 1 per cent right across the board, easy to do, easy to do. We don't need a vision; let's just cut; let's just balance the budget.

Fifty-two million from health care, Mr. Speaker, that's nearly 700 nurses; \$5 million from Justice, about 60 correction officers. Now think of the impact that would have in these areas, think of the impact. I don't think there's any vision there at all, and that bothers me because, you know, you need leadership that is looking ahead, looking to the future and also looking beyond. And I don't think this is any vision there at all.

Sixty million in Education, which is almost 200 teachers. Education is the key and I repeat, education is the key to this province. It's the key for helping out our First Nations people in the north or anywhere. We've got to spend money on the students, on the children, so that there is a future for everyone.

And coming from an area like Flin Flon, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity where my father moved from southern Saskatchewan in the '40s and '50s and had an opportunity working in the mine.

And many of the First Nations that live around my area, they want that same opportunity. They need that education; they need that training for jobs. And I'm proud to say that we want to work towards that.

We have hydro projects coming up and we look to, again, educating and training First Nations people so that we're all part of this great province of Manitoba where there's a vision, where there's strength, and where we'll be working together in—as a group, I guess, in making Manitoba even better.

The PCs' failed policies of cuts and privatizing would take us backwards. And, you know, we go back to the Filmon Fridays and all that. I was part of that. I mean, that's not the way to look at the future. You know, it's— anybody can do that. Anybody can cut; anybody can cut off days, you know. We can save more money and maybe let's have teachers just teach three days a week, you know. Maybe we should have everybody taught by a TV.

I mean that's saving money but that is not what education's about; it's about people. It's about people and we want to make sure that Manitobans are getting the best education; they're getting the best protection from floods and fires and tornadoes. We want to make sure that Manitobans can stand proud in this province and say: You know what? This is one of the greatest places to live. We have great affordability to live here. We have the great outdoors and we also, Sir, have a great work ethic in Manitobans that will go and lead us on into the future.

* (10:30)

So, having said my few words on this, Mr. Speaker, I just have to say it's an honour to speak here. And also I'd like to say that I think we're going in the right direction and I really believe in our leadership and—

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

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure today to rise to put a few words on the record to Bill 200, The Results-Based Budgeting Act, brought forward from our member. I wanted to talk a little bit about the bill right off the bat and then get into a little bit—what has happened in the past couple of years since I've been elected MLA of the Lac du Bonnet constituency and what I've been seeing.

Number one, the point, Mr. Speaker, that I'd like to bring forward is the fact that reading the bill—the bill was very respectfully drafted. There's no slights to the government in it. It's—some very positive words on how the government can basically look at certain aspects of the way that they govern their finances and give them the ability to take a look at where they can possibly save some of our hard-working Manitobans' money. The bill basically requires the budgets for all the government program services, agencies, boards and commissions to be reviewed on a regular cycle to ensure that they are delivering the outcomes that the public needs. This isn't a bad thing.

My challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to the members across is have they read the bill. There's nothing in here that talks down, necessarily, to the government. It's a very great—it's a well—again well-drafted bill, lots of great ideas and basically I don't know how they can vote or possibly elect to speak this bill out. Basically it's holding the government to account, a lot of the various departments and services that they have on an ongoing basis and basically taking a look at the expenditures and basically are we getting the bang for the buck. It doesn't necessarily have to mean straight-out cuts as the member from Flin Flon put on the record.

But it also comes to speak to some of the facts, and for the next few minutes I'd like to put some of the facts on—some facts on the record in regards to what has transpired in the 2011 election and what is happening today as we're moving forward on this fairly warm humid day out there, Mr. Speaker. Back in the 2011 election, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had basically promised to balance the budget by 2014 without raising any taxes.

Now we fast forward just a little bit over six months from that date and what had happened? We saw an increase in various fees and PST being tacked on other services as well. So basically he said in that election debate, whether it was a leader's debate or various news releases, that absolutely by no means was he ever going to raise those taxes and basically it was nonsense to even think that. Fast forward again just over six months, and we saw roughly \$184 million in new fees and taxes applied to hard-working Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

And then what happened in 2013 budget? Just this—just a short time ago, the government of the day I think is feeling really, really arrogant and instead of doing the hidden fees and taxes that they did in

Budget 2012, they came right out front after the budget, no consultations and they are increasing—they increased PST by one point which is a 14 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, which raises roughly \$237 million a year taking that right out of the back pockets of hard-working Manitobans, and not only hard-working Manitobans, we're talking about a lot of our youth as well who are out there trying to save money, become financially independent, save money for whatever they might want to purchase, maybe it's saving money for that education. That is about one of the only things that I agree with the member from Flin Flon on is quite key: education. We need to spend money on education, but we'd also need to check on the efficiencies of those dollars that are going in as well.

So, we're looking at—in the last two years, in the last two budgets—we're looking at roughly a half a billion dollars being pulled from those hard-working Manitobans. That's roughly \$400 a person. So to a—for a family of four—so, in my situation, we're looking at \$1,600 less that we're going to have this year, Mr. Speaker.

And I know that, you know, the members across the way, they often say, you know, it's only 1 cent on the dollar. Well, to quote a presenter from the Bill 20 committees, that's 1 more cent. And it's not only 1 more cent; it's—the fact is that it's half a billion dollars. We have 1.2 billion people in this wonderful province of ours, and so when you do the basic division, which I know that some of our—*[interjection]* 1.2 million people, thank you.

From—the member from Selkirk had corrected me and so I want to make sure that right off the bat that I corrected the record as opposed to yesterday, we heard the apology from the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) or the so-called apology, Mr. Speaker, for calling our presenters that spent a lot of time, whether it was in the evening—in the hot evenings and on the weekends, as well—taking that time out, he was calling them howling coyotes.

And so, we're still waiting for that heartfelt apology, not necessarily the apology that he was trying to get onto the record yesterday, which was obviously prepared by one of their 192 spinners that get roughly \$12.5 million a year in salary. You'd think that, by this time of 14 years of being in government, that they'd be able to get it right and actually fake it properly.

A couple other things, Mr. Speaker—what I'd like to get on the record quickly is what has happened in

the past and what has the finances looked like under this NDP government. We know that the NDP government of the day has a major spending problem but not necessarily a revenue problem. Since '99, we know that the NDP inherited a balanced budget and sustainable spending from the last Progressive Conservative government under the—under Premier Gary Filmon. And we know that back from 1998-99, the—this NDP government had turned that surplus into a deficit of roughly \$500 million each and every year.

And I know the member from Flin Flon had mentioned that they had balanced the books in roughly 10 years—10 balanced budgets. But, in fact, when Manitoba Hydro had quite the surplus or savings account, what they were, in fact, doing was transferring from the savings account and putting it into the chequing account to make it look like they were balancing the books, but, in fact, out of all those years, they might actually be able to take credit for balancing the books maybe once or twice.

Now, I know that the NDP are constantly blaming the deficit on natural disasters, the federal government, the global recession or a multitude of other factors, but the fact remains they inherited a surplus, turned it into a deficit and steered Manitoba toward an upcoming fiscal cliff, Mr. Speaker.

With this bill, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that Manitoba families need a different approach than the NDP's tax-and-spend non-solutions. With Bill 200, Manitobans will get a complete review of public spending to make sure all programs are delivering real results for Manitobans at the lowest possible cost. That is something that I find that this government is unwilling to do—unwilling to just basically take a good look in the mirror and make some of those decisions.

* (10:40)

So, in conclusion, I would just like to say that the out-of-control spending of this spendDP government has to stop because many of our kids and our grandkids—our future, Mr. Speaker—depend on this government taking a hard look at the way they are running this province. It is a fantastic province. I feel privileged to live in it, but, unfortunately, this government is not the one to be running it.

So I thank you for your time.

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): I'm pleased to be able to stand to speak to this bill, and I have to say

I appreciate the thrust of this bill and the reasoning behind it, that we need to ensure that we are investing in things that deliver the outcomes that the public needs. But I, having said that, believe that our government continues to strive to do this. These things are always a work-in-progress, but I feel confident in the choices that our government has made in its investments in the people of this province.

So, for example, in health care, I mean, on our side of the House we've invested in more nurses because we know that this is a good investment with a good return—thank you. And some of you may remember the experience I had with my newborn daughter when I had her here in Manitoba—I'm originally from Ontario—and I shudder to think about what that experience might have been like. As it turns out, we had an excellent experience. We had a critical situation with my daughter and she was less than six months old, and within three days we had had specialist appointments. We had excellent care. They found a bed for us at the height of the H1N1 pandemic. And we had people that knew what they were doing for this critical situation because we had invested in these people, we had invested in nurses, we had invested in doctors. And I think if I had had that experience 10 or 12 years earlier in the '90s under the cuts that members opposite had put in place, I think that my experience and my daughter's outcome would have been dramatically different.

We've also invested in more doctors and increased the number of doctors that can get training so that we have young people that want to stay and work as doctors in this province. And, again, we know that this is a good investment and that the outcome is good; it's going to benefit many, many people. I was at the committee on Friday night, and a fellow got up to speak. I'm pretty confident he wasn't someone that would normally support our government. But he spoke of the experiences he had growing up in rural Manitoba and how health care that—was well funded, well supported, was well worth the investment, and that a was very sound endorsement for me, that someone, regardless of which party he normally voted for was recognizing that we need these investments, that they're investments that benefit people and that it's something that we can't cut at—cut back on.

Another area that we're doing investments in, and there are so many, is education. Our Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) is investing money in smaller class size initiatives and providing funding for

schools that need a little bit of extra money to do renovations so that they can accommodate these students in better proportions. And my children are probably going to be some of the first kids in Manitoba that benefit from this. I have a 4- and a 6-year-old. So this is something that they're going experience first-hand that's going to help them.

And I was that child when I was 5, 6 and 7 that needed a little extra care from a teacher. And I was in a classroom of over 30 people, and it held me back initially. I know it did. I have very clear recollections of this. And I'm very, very relieved that our Minister of Education recognizes that this is a good investment and the return for that is good as well, because when we support our people, whether they're children or adults, and do the right thing by giving them the supports they need early on, it always saves money down the road. Fine, it saves money; it's also the right thing to do.

We also invest in infrastructure, as I'm pretty sure everybody knows in this room. And the flood protection is clearly something that needs to be done, that has been done on an ongoing basis, but that we realize we need to invest in immensely to avoid having the same kind of situation we had fairly recently. And we are not the only ones realizing this. I mean, you can see what's happening in Calgary. You can see what's happening in Toronto. This is not just a problem that happens in Manitoba. It maybe hits us harder because we're prone to this already, but this is an investment that we need to make. If we don't make this investment now, and we don't get as lucky next year, and we're hit with another severe flood, we're still going to be paying an immense amount of money.

I think everyone on this side of the House understands that if we take the money that needs to be invested in flood protection, it will save us money down the road. It will save people heartache, and it will also prevent more people from being displaced.

So while I appreciate the thrust of this bill, I believe that we are very conscious of making sure that where we invest is money well spent, money appropriately spent, and that the returns that we get are the most beneficial to the public.

I do believe that we always have to continue monitoring what we do, obviously, and that's something that we are aware of, that we do, and we're open to hearing from other people to make suggestions. I think we're very open in that way.

As far as what we do ourselves here, I mean, we are maintaining a 20 per cent salary reduction for all of our Cabinet ministers. We expanded lean management practices. We've reduced the number of regional health authorities. We've merged two Crown corporations. We found \$128 million of in-year savings in government departments. We've consolidated government offices. We've frozen or reduced the budgets of 10 departments. We've realized \$75 million through the sale of a government asset. We've met all of these commitments, and the money we've saved, we are reinvesting in front-line services. That sounds pretty much to me like a government that is very conscious of where they put money and how it's used.

So I, again, I appreciate this. I don't think that it's something you can ever relax about and say that we don't need to worry about it; we do. We constantly work to ensure that what we are doing makes the most sense.

So I think we're the government that we care about people and efficiency. We care about both. It's not just about the bottom line on this side of the House.

And I think that that's kind of an important aspect of that first section of this bill, to ensure that we're delivering outcomes that the public needs, yes. But if someone believes that the bottom line is more important than what the public needs, there's an issue with that.

Being responsible with how and where we invest is a very important guide, but so is a full understanding that investing in people and programs that help people is the right thing to do. And we really understand that on this side of the House.

So with that, I'd like to say thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak to this. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak. I am expecting to speak for at least an hour, but then I know it will only be for 10 minutes.

When I got elected, this was a dream come true. I put my name in for the nomination when I was 65. And the dream come true is that now I have been asked to speak about something that really boils down to what the Conservative governments of before have always wanted to do, which is to categorize, pigeonhole and restrict government. This bill will do that. This is akin to, related, and germane

to the so-called taxpayer protection act, that shackles all subsequent governments after 1994—or was it 1993?

The requirements of that taxpayer protection act will be with the same effects as this one, which is, very innocuously labeled as results-based. It says in the bill's summary, that it will require the budgets of all government programs, services, agencies, boards and commissions to be reviewed on a regular cycle to ensure that they are delivering the outcomes that the public needs. Nice words, beautiful words, and that's the problem with the English language. We could say words and not mean them. And it goes both ways, from the member of this side of the House and the other side of the House.

* (10:50)

The other side of the House has proposed this in order to shackle again subsequent governments because now there will be reviews, which means that maybe what we're asking for is to remove the office of the auditor. Of what use is the provincial auditor if we are going to do this anyway? We have an auditor who says that the efficiencies of these types of government should be done this way or that way, and they are the ones who are measuring the performance of each and every official act, or official departments.

It says also in the bill summary that once the review process is completed for a given program, the budget for the program will be established which means, taken to its conclusion, if the review process, once complete, says that the given program is not working, instead of reporting it, tweaking it a little bit or at least making it work, it will be just put in the garbage, which does not make sense because governments have to be flexible. Governments have to be certain with what they are supposed to do.

The review process itself lends to that type wherein governments will be compelled to not act, which is not good for Manitobans. And the process has to be transparent with the findings and recommendations of program reviews made public, which is fine, but the whole thrust of this bill does not bode well for any government, whether NDP or Conservative. It does not bode well for those who are governing because it will shackle them with handcuffs on what they can do.

Now the government position has always been like this. The budget of 2013 will continue to build a better Manitoba. That's what we intend to do and

that's what we plan to do. I'm—I take pride in being a member of the government as being so open and flexible to doing things the right way, with the best intentions. Nobody could accuse this government that we have bad intentions. The intentions are always good.

Let's talk about the 1 per cent. Let's talk about the 1 cent on the dollar. One cent on the dollar will protect my family for the rest of our lives because of the flood mitigation infrastructure that we will be doing for all those who are living in the province. We will not pick and choose which ones to do. It will be designed so that the province will be safer. Let's take a look at what Toronto is now suffering through. And let's take a closer look at what Calgary has suffered through. The vision of Duff Roblin, when he had the ditch made, and the extension that was made to it by this government, saved the city of Winnipeg. And, indeed, whatever it is that we are going to do later with the Assiniboine valley, Lake Manitoba or Lake St. Martin, with those outlets that are there, it will protect our people and that's what governments are supposed to do.

Now there's no specific program to do that, and that's the reason why we have the 1 cent on the dollar increase with our provincial sales tax. And I understand that and it really escapes me why the opposition party does not see that. Is it because it's always politics? I don't know why they filibustered it.

My friend, the member from Steinbach, spoke for 200 hours. No, it was only a hundred. No, it was only 50. But then to filibuster a government program that will protect Manitoba is not right. It is not right. There's no reason for the opposition to go against that 1 cent on the dollar for the simple reason that it will protect Manitoba.

The noble intentions of the government are always, well, screwed with whatever it is that will politically be acceptable to the opposition.

And my time will be up in 57 seconds, but I will thank the members of the opposition for not heckling me too much. You have made—I have made a lot of friends with them.

But I speak from my heart when I said that maybe we should get on with the business of government instead of obstruction from the opposition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Good morning, Mr.

Speaker, and it's a great pleasure to have my opinions brought forward on the record of regarding Bill 200.

Obviously, the members opposite are painting the picture of doom and gloom in the province of Manitoba. And obviously, I guess, they don't tend to listen to statistics. First of all, the unemployment rate in province of Manitoba is the second lowest in Canada at 5 per cent.

But more importantly, what we're tending to see is the members opposite trying to paint a picture that we should cut and slash programs. And yet I'm still having some challenge in understanding why they're choosing to play on both sides of their mouth when they're saying we should invest in this, but meanwhile let's cut back on this.

A prime example being is, you know, where the flood protection that we're moving forward and the investment of the 1 cent on the dollar is a sound investment. And much to my fellow MLA who just spoke regarding the investments that the Province took on around the flood protection for the province of Manitoba, around the city of Winnipeg. And we're continuing to move forward on that perspective.

I have a brother-in-law who lives in High River, Alberta, spoke to him recently. He says it's somewhat devastating to say that we had a beautiful home that was all paid for. All of a sudden we've got 8 feet of water in our basement. We're looking at a situation that we're probably going to have to have our house rebuilt. He's not the only one. There's a situation where High River, Alberta—now we're talking about flood protection for the betterment. What is the cost going to be to the city of Calgary? Nobody seems to know.

And yet, today's a good example of the investment that we at—this government's made and—in prevention of undue hardship and financial cost regardless. Even if there's government programs, there are still financial repercussions for people that have been affected by the flood.

Yet today, Mr. Speaker, we have the opposition working very negatively towards the positive movements that our government has made over the number of years and we continue to move on.

* (11:00)

As we all know, agriculture within the urban centres—weather conditions are changing on a daily basis and yet we see members opposite working

negatively towards the investment that we're making towards the betterment of the province of Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Mr. Kostyshyn) will have seven minutes remaining.

The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution that we have before us this morning will be titled "Refugee Health Care", sponsored by the honourable Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino). Oh, pardon me, sorry, the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), I got the wrong sponsor of the resolution.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 22—Refugee Health Care

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I move, seconded by the member from Riverview-Fort Garry-Fort Garry-Riverview—I move, seconded by the member from Fort Garry-Riverview,

WHEREAS many refugees are fleeing the most—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. One minute, please.

We're having some trouble with the microphones. Just give us a moment, please, to make certain that they're turned on. It's on now?

Some Honourable Members: It's on now.

Mr. Speaker: So I'll recognize the honourable member for Tyndall Park for his private member's resolution, titled "Refugee Health Care".

Mr. Marcelino: WHEREAS many refugees are fleeing the most desperate situations where violence, poverty and persecution endure; and

WHEREAS effective June 30, 2012, the federal government cut most health-care benefits for non-government sponsored refugees, and

WHEREAS health-care coverage for refugees has been a federal government responsibility; and

WHEREAS the federal funding cuts are hurting families and will lead to longer term and more expensive problems if ignored; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has temporarily agreed to ensure that refugees, among the most vulnerable people in society continue to have coverage; and

WHEREAS this assurance builds on several other improvements the provincial government has made to universal health coverage to ensure families living in Manitoba have access to doctors and nurses when they need them including eliminating the health insurance waiting period for military families, providing more flexible coverage for snowbirds, introducing free cancer drug coverage and eliminating tray fees; and

WHEREAS the federal government has also offloaded health coverage for RCMP officers and their staff effective April 1st, 2013 onto provinces; and

WHEREAS in uncertain economic times, it is important to ensure that families in Manitoba have access to health care, including the preventative services that have been affected by these cuts.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the actions of health-care providers and advocates for the refugee community who have worked tirelessly to ensure that in the face of these federal government cuts that these individuals continue to have access to health care here in Manitoba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the federal government to restore funding for refugee health care.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Tyndall Park, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum),

WHEREAS many refugees are fleeing the most—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

The honourable member for Fort-Garry—the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Mr. Marcelino: As we say it, the approach that we have with this resolution is to urge the governments, both provincial and federal, to take care of our families, whether refugees or not. What we have done with this resolution is we are urging the federal government to come to the table again.

This is an issue that's really close to my heart. I have worked with some refugees before and, indeed, from my point of view, and considering that I came here only 33 years ago, we—I classify myself also as a refugee. I came here without any money in my

pocket except for \$72 US. And when I arrived in 1980—in January of 1980, I did not have a pair of boots that will suit -30 degrees. I didn't have my own jackets for the winter season. I didn't know that it would be that cold. I didn't know. But then I got lucky, because the first day I was brought to the Manitoba Health Services Commission office right on Empress and I was told that on the very first day I am covered. I am covered because I am an immigrant.

But refugees do not have that. They don't have that coverage. They don't have that luxury. They cannot access the usual facilities that are available to immigrants like me. When I said that we are all refugees here, because in some way or another our forefathers—I mean those who came here earlier, were taking refuge in this country from some sort of economic collapse or political crisis, or war or ethnic violence. Some of those friends that I have cultivated over the years came from Rwanda. It used to be called Rhodesia, and for those people who would not be familiar with their lot, I'll tell you what they do not have. They do not have access to dental care. Some of them do not even have access to a nurse or to a hospital or to a doctor. Indeed, it was one of those unfortunate circumstances that the federal government had to cut those funding for the simple reason that they think that they could just slash and pretend that those people do not exist.

The Province has come to the table, and the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) together with the government has offered to cover what the federal government will not, albeit temporarily. This resolution will, in some ways, attempt to ask the federal government to return to the table, help us out and see that those who need it the most get what they need.

* (11:10)

I am reminded of that story about a guy who died and he was in heaven or hell, or they call—Christians call it purgatory. So he says, St. Peter—for those who believe in this—he says, St. Peter, show me how hell looks. He says, why do you want to see hell? I just want to see if it's more comfortable.

And St. Peter opens the door, and he's shown sumptuous meals, all over the place, food overflowing, but there's one condition. All those who are residents of hell have long spoons so that they cannot feed themselves. And all of those residents of hell were emaciated and thin. So they said, well, why

don't we change the spoons? He says, that's one of the conditions, long spoons.

And then St. Peter opens the gates of heaven and, same thing, lots of food, long spoons, but the residents of heaven were not emaciated in contrast to the ones in hell. So St. Peter said, only because those residents of heaven have known how to feed each other.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): And it's my pleasure this morning to get up and put a few words on the record with respect to this resolution, and I want to thank the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) for bringing this resolution to the floor of the Legislature and allowing opportunity for MLAs to talk about the very special place in the world that Canada is and the kind of nation that has always opened its doors, even from Confederation, has opened its doors to so many people from so many places around the world, and has always demonstrated a commitment to bring inside its borders more and more people.

Indeed, the face of this nation continues to change and it reflects the values and the high value that Canadians place, they understand what this nation has afforded them, the peace and the opportunity and the ability to travel and the ability to seek your own end in life, and Canadians feel strongly about giving that same opportunity to others.

As a matter of fact, we're talking about world refugees, and I'm reminded of the fact that June 20th was World Refugee Day, and, of course, that gives us a chance just to focus again on the world's many millions of refugees who are in need of protection. And truly, we must always refocus our attention on the fact that we live in such luxury and we have such incredible opportunities afforded to us and we need to be reminded as citizens in a western nation that not everyone enjoys these same things that we do, and we constantly need to focus our attention on that.

As a matter of fact, I constantly try to bring my children's attention to the fact and I try to encourage them. I say, you know, we should travel. You should make a point of travelling, make sure that you don't always live in the bubble that is North America because traveling and maybe being part of some kind of a volunteer effort or going on some kind of a mission or some kind of a trip really does serve to open people's eyes to what the world looks like in other places.

And so we know that Canada does protect thousands of people each year. We know that it does so in keeping with its humanitarian tradition and with its international obligations. And we know that there's various agencies and groups and faith-based groups and community groups who also bring refugees to Canada and here to Manitoba, people who have suffered persecution, people who have suffered violence and people who have suffered human rights abuses. And they come here to Canada and they make a new home and they get a new life. And we understand that's a, you know, I believe that, right now, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates there are more than 15 million refugees in the world. And we understand that they don't all end up on the doorsteps of a third country. But in some cases where they cannot return to their home country and where local integration isn't possible, where they've moved to be away from the conflict, away from the trouble, then in those cases, sometimes we can make a new home for people and, indeed, we have thousands and thousands of times over in this country.

And I think just about my own area of Morden and Winkler and how we've got so many people who've come to our community, not just as people who've successfully come here through the Provincial Nominee Program, which is a program that our government started in the '90s—a very successful program—a pilot project really that began in the city of Winkler with one group of people who said we could relocate people from all over the world if we had a framework within which we could do it.

And I've spoken to those entrepreneurs and those community builders who said, we should be talking to provincial government about making such a program. It was on that basis that this government—or a PC government actually did the heavy lifting and engaged those groups and said, we believe we could accomplish that. They engaged the federal government, and they created the conditions in which they could bring all kinds of new people to serve—to help with labour and business and jobs.

But also in our communities, we also have refugees who've relocated to Manitoba. And I know even—I attended a function at the Winkler mall last winter and it was a community celebration of newcomers to our community. And I sat and spoke with a gentleman next to me who was from Guatemala, who told of a harrowing escape that he'd made as a young father. Realizing his country would no longer provide protections to he and his family,

he arranged for his wife and older children to escape in another way, and then he and his infant daughter escaped—she on his shoulders—hiding in the jungle for three days and making their way over the border, hearing the gangs and hearing the gun squads and staying out of sight and keeping his daughter quiet in order so that he could escape across the border—eventually came to Mexico, eventually to Canada. They live in the community of Winkler. They've got children who are now married. They have grandchildren there and the kids keep telling him, Dad, when are you going to write a book? And he says, it's so difficult for me in English. They say, well, we'll record it if you would only give us the word. So we have situations like this all over in Manitoba.

I know of a gentleman who always tells me about the fact that, just like my ancestors, he was of Mennonite descent, and he recalls being a very, very young child—he's older now—and his mother walking with four children out of Prussia, walking for three days and three nights and not allowing the children to rest until she knew they could come to a safe place.

That's—and, of course, in all these cases, Canada and Manitoba has represented that place of safety and that place of opportunity where people could come out of this tremendous trouble and hardship and have a new life here.

This resolution that the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) has brought forward commends the actions of health-care providers who have provided health care to refugees, and we do understand that in this province, we have so many front-line workers who provide care above and beyond their professional responsibilities every day, often outside of the limelight.

I know that, for instance, just speaking with the Dental Association here in Manitoba, I know that the association hosted a free day of dentistry for refugee claimants in Manitoba, and they provided those services to over 250 people at that time. But I also know that dentists, on an ongoing basis, also give of their time and of their expertise. As a matter of fact, at Siloam Mission, on average, there's a dentist there about three days a week in a state-of-the-art clinic that they've outfitted.

I know that in my own community, a very famous doctor that some of my colleagues here in the Chamber will know, Dr. Chandy Jacob, for years and years in Morden and Winkler—for about 40 years, he

was the only surgeon in the area, and he was available 24-7 for about 40 years to do surgeries with an odd holiday or vacation day now and then. He's just an institution. He's been a tremendously hard worker and given so much to the community above and beyond what his profession or any kind of reasonable demand could've been made on him.

And there's so many more places where we could talk about the incredible contributions that people make, but I also want to note that, Mr. Speaker, that this resolution also talks about the fact that it's important for families in Manitoba to have access to health care, and we couldn't agree more with the member from Tyndall Park that Manitobans should have access to health care.

* (11:20)

But, Mr. Speaker, in fact, we understand that, in this province, we have tremendous challenge when it comes to accessing the health-care system. As a matter of fact, earlier in this session of the Legislature we brought to light that Manitoba is getting Fs across the board when it comes to having an accessible health-care system. Indeed, Manitoba scored the only failing grade out of all Canadian provinces and territories when it comes to accessibility in the system, according to this year's provincial health-care index by the Fraser Institute.

Mr. Speaker, we know we've got a lot long ways to go, and not just for refugees receiving health-care services in Manitoba, but for everyone. We need to build a stronger system of health care that really does deliver what this Minister of Health says it will deliver. She said her goal is to provide a health-care system that is current, accessible and responsive to the needs to Manitobans and, yet, we know that even in February of this year we were reporting there were 17 rural hospitals with suspended or downgraded ER services, and many, many more communities have come to light since that time who also have tremendous challenges.

We have 180,000 Manitobans without a family doctor and we have more doctors than ever who are leaving our province. This minister can bring doctors to Manitoba; the problem has been we have failed as a province to be able to retain doctors here, and 2,200 doctors have left Manitoba to practice in other jurisdictions simply since the year 2000.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on. I know that when it comes to access, Manitoba scored the second worst of all 10 provinces when it came to people who have

been seen by a doctor but they're waiting to be treated. And there are so many other areas. We know the challenges exist.

I do thank the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) for bringing up this resolution, and I look forward to hearing the comments that my colleagues will put on the record in regard to this import resolution.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for Tyndall Park for bringing forward this resolution.

And I'd say to my colleague across the way, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), it's not often that I have the gut emotion when he says, I could go on, to encourage him to do so. But today would be one of those days, actually. Because I listened really closely for 10 minutes of him speaking about some important things, but not once in the 10 minutes did I hear even a syllable from the member opposite acknowledging the heartless and cruel cuts that the federal government has made to refugee health care—not a syllable—the very essence of what this resolution is all about.

Now, the member opposite spoke quite eloquently about a particular story of an individual, a refugee that he has come to know, and I appreciate the comments that he made on the detail that he provided about the very strenuous journey that this individual went on to build a better life. I applaud him for acknowledging that. But I question, Mr. Speaker, how he can tell a tale, you know, full—full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, when he doesn't acknowledge the federal government has hacked and slashed this program. It's absolutely appalling.

I would also go on to say, Mr. Speaker, that I listened carefully to the member opposite—who's a titch sensitive right now because he doesn't want me to point out that he didn't even acknowledge what the feds are doing—that he made mention of the really tremendous health-care providers in our province and, indeed, across Canada who are providing exceptional care to refugees that have come to Canada. And they're doing so in the face of virtually no support from the federal government who has turned their backs on refugees.

Now, many of these physicians, these nurses, nurse practitioners are passionate advocates, Mr. Speaker, calling out to the federal government to right this wrong and to show some compassion. And, indeed, they're providing this care to these

individuals who need it arguably more than any other person dwelling on our land.

And I heard the member talk about the fact that Canada is very proud of the fact that they have always welcomed people from other countries, and that is true. We are very proud of that, which leads me to question why our federal Conservative government would sully that extraordinarily positive record by turning their backs on people who need our care the most.

Now, you can tell I'm a little excited about this, Mr. Speaker, and I think we all should be. And I would make reference to a really splendid article written by André Picard of *The Globe and Mail*, who, of course, has dedicated his journalistic life, really, to covering health care and public health. And in May of this—or May of last year, I should say, he wrote an article entitled, "Why cutting health care for asylum seekers makes no sense".

And I have some thoughts about this but there's no chance, Mr. Speaker, I could possibly say it any better than Mr. Picard did when he began his article and said, it's hard imagine a gesture more cynical than nickel-and-diming people who have escaped torture, rape, starvation, war and other forms of persecution and sought out Canada as the land of hope and opportunity.

And cynical indeed is this move, Mr. Speaker, by our federal government to, with a single-minded focus on whiffing down their deficit, choose refugees of all people, to cast aside and turn away and not provide this kind of coverage.

And I'll go, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Picard says in his article very eloquently, Jason Kenney, federal Citizenship and Immigration Minister, has defended these cuts saying that Canadians should not benefit for—pay benefits for refugees that are, and I quote, "more generous than they are entitled to themselves", I end quote. He even suggested that the mandatory medical examination that asylum seekers undergo is more preventative health care than most Canadians receive on a regular basis.

Mr. Picard goes to say, to suggest that a mandatory checkup looking for tuberculosis and intestinal worms is superior to daily access to medicare is beyond the pale. This is, at best, dishonest rhetoric.

And so I wonder, Mr. Speaker, why anybody can stand in this House and speak about how important it is for Canada to stand proud and to welcome people

from other countries, while at the same time they're not crying out, nay, even acknowledging that our federal government is turning their backs on people who need help the most.

We know that when universal health care came into being, medicare came into being, it was a true partnership, Mr. Speaker. Hand in hand, the provinces and the federal government would share the cost, 50-50. But we have seen a slow, cruel syphoning away of their end of the bargain. And today they, at best, cover 20 per cent of the costs and they're working very hard to take away coverage for RCMP and a number of other groups to diminish this coverage even further.

Mr. Picard goes on to say in this article, who could be more needy than refugees, people who tend to come to Canada with little more than the clothes on their back and too often with horrific physical and mental sequelae? Is denying, he goes on to say, legitimate refugees access to services like prenatal visits, insulin to treat diabetes and medication to treat high blood pressure really a civilized response or even an economically sound one, he asks. A good question indeed.

Failing to offer this type of preventative care will, at best, only result in much bigger medical bills down the road and new Canadians who are less able to be full citizens, Mr. Speaker.

So I would suggest to the member, that he take a moment and reflect on what this resolution really says. And what it really says is that collectively, regardless of political stripe, we have to stand up as Canadians and demand more of our federal government. We have to say to our federal government that this was just a bad decision; it's a bad decision when it comes to economics. It's far, far better to deal with the early causes and symptoms of diabetes, to deal with the early situations that result in individuals needing to have dialysis than having to go down the road and pay heavy costs in acute care for amputation and various other, very intense acute interventions that will cost the taxpayers of Manitoba, and, indeed, Canada, even more down the road. It just makes economic sense.

Members across the way purport every day to be the great protectors of the public purse and yet, indeed, they demonstrate absolutely no vision or awareness, it would seem, of what actually costs in health care and what is actually an investment in health care, Mr. Speaker.

So I really do question the member in his comments today when he claims that he cares deeply about refugees that have come to Canada and their families; when he claims to deeply respect the health-care providers that are giving this tremendous service to our refugees right on the front line. And yet turns a completely deaf ear to the cries from those individuals that say our government—federal government has made a mistake and this is a wrong-headed decision, not to mention completely, thoroughly and morally void of any sort of compassion and feeling.

* (11:30)

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about people that have fled environments where they have been tortured, women have been raped repeatedly, where they face the atrocities of wars morning, noon and night, and they come here simply to find a new life. And really, indeed, as Mr. Picard references, do the members opposite honestly think that people that are coming from Somalia and the Sudan are coming here for free dental care? Honestly, it goes beyond belief.

But I want to let the members of the House know that we are giving the federal government an opportunity to do the right thing. Certainly, here in Manitoba, we were the first jurisdiction to step up and say we won't turn our backs on refugees. We will cover those important costs, but we're keeping the bills, Mr. Speaker. We're keeping a tally and keeping the receipts and we'll mail them off to the federal Minister of Health and we'll mail them off to the Prime Minister. I'll even send a copy to Jason Kenney himself. And we will give them an opportunity to say, you know what? We screwed up. We want to show that we have a heart.

I'm not entirely sure if Canadians will believe this after this time, but they have an opportunity to cut the cheque back to Manitoba and the other jurisdictions that have followed and say, we did something wrong. We made a mistake. We reneged on our core responsibility, not just for refugees but also for the RCMP, and don't get me started with 19 seconds to go, on their responsibilities to First Nations that they are absolving themselves of daily.

They have a chance. They can cut us a cheque, say, we did the wrong thing, and they can show that they truly believe that Canada is the land that we all believe it to be under their leadership.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Good morning to you. I certainly want to thank the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) for bringing forward this resolution. I'm sure the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) feels much better now that she's got that—vented that piece of information. So I'm sure her day will proceed much better now.

Mr. Speaker, we in Canada, as Manitobans, as Canadians, we have—we are so lucky in this country to have the country that we do have, and we've welcomed both immigrants and refugees to this country and to our province, perhaps in record numbers even. And it's great we're able to share our bounty and not only share our bounty but these, whether they be immigrants, whether they be refugees, coming to our country have now been able to become full, participating citizens in our communities.

And I have one example of my experience with a refugee family. I'll just use his first name. His first name was Joseph and he came from Iran, and I got to know him about 20 years ago. And that was after they had moved into our community, but Joseph and his family literally left Iran on the back of a camel. They were—this was back in the—it would be the late 1980s with all the unrest in Iran, and he feared for his own safety. He feared for his family's safety, and so they left Iran in the middle of the night on the back of a camel

And it's an inspirational story for those of us who have never experienced this, to actually be able to experience—or to hear of his experience, and after they got out of Iran, they ended up in Germany for about a year and then they were refugee sponsors to Canada—or pardon me, Mr. Speaker, the Mennonite Central Committee Canada was the sponsor for them here in Manitoba, and they came to Winnipeg. And Joseph and his wife and their three young children—if I remember correctly, it was two sons and a daughter—and they began their life here in Winnipeg.

And they received their permanent residency status over the course of time. Joseph was employed. His wife was employed. They became contributing citizens to our community, and this was all before I got to meet Joseph. And how I got to meet him was that he bought a small farm right next to our farm, and Joseph's dream was to be a farmer. And it was—we got to meet—got to know him, got to know his wife and family. Actually, he stayed in the city, and he sort of used this as his country residence. And we

got to know him through that, and got to hear his story.

And it's a very inspiring story and it's something that, as I said, for us who have lived here all our lives, we just can't begin to fathom what they went through but—and Joseph actually wrote a book about his experiences, and it's an interesting read, to say the least, about his book.

And—but Joseph wanted to be a farmer; he always did want to be a farmer, and so he bought this small hobby farm. And the first thing he did when he was on his small hobby farm, is he planted a—rows and rows of trees across his 80 acres of farm. And while Joseph was—while he wanted to be a farmer, he just was sort of lacking a bit of agricultural technology. He actually went back to university just prior to buying his farm and took the diploma course in agriculture. But—and he certainly had the heart for agriculture; it just wasn't quite working out so well for him. And he planted all these trees in the middle of the sod on top of some very light sand, and now the trees didn't do that well. But it was—he had the inspiration anyway.

And his livestock enterprise was also interesting. And Joseph and I have laughed about this many times since he did it. But he—Joseph wanted to have sheep; he wanted to have sheep on his farm. So he went to a sheep ranch and he bought a couple of lambs. And he threw these lambs in the back of his station wagon. He brought them home, set them out on the front lawn and the lambs promptly disappeared, never to be seen again. I think the coyotes were a little fatter after that. But that was the end of the sheep farming for Joseph.

An Honourable Member: Were those coyotes howling?

Mr. Pedersen: So, well, you know, the coyotes, we use to hear them howl every night. So it's a bit reminiscent in this place these days.

So—now, sheep farming didn't work out so well for Joseph, so he decided to—and his—actually his book is called as the crow—no—As the Rooster Crows, pardon me, Mr. Speaker, As the Rooster Crows.

So his other livestock enterprise was to buy a rooster, because he always loved to hear the rooster crow first thing in the morning. So he brought this rooster home in the back of his station wagon. But he learned from the last time, not just to let the rooster go as the sheep did.

So what he did is that he put a string on the rooster's leg and tied it to his front lawn. So that there—the rooster would be there. First thing in the morning he'd hear the rooster crow, and it would be—it would remind him of his homeland in Iran. Well, the first night the coyotes were back to visit and all that was left for crowing in the morning was a pile of feathers.

So Joseph then decided that livestock farming certainly wasn't going to work well for him. He did keep the farm for a few more years. He actually worked for me—he came and worked for me a couple of fall harvests. Just a great person, a great worker and certainly had the work ethic. And eventually he sold the farm and went back to the city. And I did run into him here a couple years ago. He's working in the city here now. All three children have gone through university. They are all engineers and they're doing very well.

It just shows that the potential that this country has for our—for people that we welcome from all over the world—the bounty that this country can offer to anyone who wants to work for it.

And, you know, through all this, Joseph never complained about his—about having to leave Iran. He missed Iran. He would like to go back but, obviously, for safety concerns, he can't do that. But he never complained about the services that were available to him. He was always thankful for the ability to come here and for the good fortune that his family has had since they've moved here.

And so, Mr. Speaker, again, I just certainly welcome the opportunity to talk about refugees, and how they contribute to our betterment here in Manitoba.

* (11:40)

And, once again, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) for bringing forward this resolution. And it certainly gives us a chance to express our thank you to these people who have had unfortunate circumstance in their home country, and been forced to leave, and that have made their homes here in Manitoba. It's made our province a better place and it's made—it's fulfilled their lives, and the experience that they have gained is something that many of us will never be able to experience, but we should always reach out to these people, understand what their story is, and so that we can become better people also.

So with that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism): I'm very pleased to speak to this resolution and thank my colleague for bringing it forward.

The way that we treat refugees defines our country, Mr. Speaker. The Interim Federal Health Program was brought in in 1957 and it paid for basic health care for refugee claimants and refused claimants until they have left the county. Refugees receive temporary health, vision, and dental insurance up until they were either accepted and eligible for the health care provided by each jurisdiction or until they decided to leave Canada. The annual average cost is about \$552 per refugee claimant.

On Canada Day, 2012, Jason Kenney removed all health care for refugees coming into Canada by cancelling the Interim Federal Health Program. He then proceeded to set up his own website which encouraged people to go on the website and congratulate Jason Kenney for ensuring that refugees did not receive better health care than other Canadians, Mr. Speaker. Oh, Canada. What is happening in our country?

I want to tell you how things are currently working, Mr. Speaker. If a refugee goes into the—into an emergency clinic, emergency ward, or a clinic, a doctor's office, and is coughing, they will be refused health care unless someone can pay out of their pocket for that care. If that same individual goes back two weeks later and this time is coughing up blood because they actually have tuberculosis, they will be given care, not on a humanitarian basis, but because they are now a public health risk.

So people are moving from being refused care to being declared public health risks, Mr. Speaker. That's not my Canada. I don't think that's your Canada, and I'm really disappointed that on this issue of all issues members opposite are not standing in support of coverage for refugees.

You know, we have, in Manitoba, we have been very, very fortunate with our community here. People like Tom Denton and Hospitality House, individual churches, other organizations, have worked very hard to privately sponsor refugees to come to Manitoba. And it's with a great sense of pride that I can inform the House that in 2011 Manitoba welcomed more refugees per capita than any other province or territory in the country. This is pride, Mr. Speaker. This shows what the people of

Manitoba are about, and we should all be very supportive of this.

Now, when our government learned that the health care was actually going to be denied, this was after doctors and medical people mobilized across the country of Canada as I've never seen before, Mr. Speaker. I've never seen doctors come out in the way that they did. When many of us went to The Forks, to the meeting place in Winnipeg, there were over 200 doctors there and there were several hundred other Manitobans who were concerned about health care to refugees.

Despite rallies similar across Canada, Jason Kenney, again on Canada Day, brought in the—refused to continue the program and cancelled it in its entirety. Now, when we learned this in the provincial government, we became very concerned and we determined that we simply would not see people suffer in the province of Manitoba. And so we were the first to declare that we would cover refugees for their health care until they were eligible for the Manitoba Health benefits. We were the first in the country, and others followed. Even Premier Brad Wall from Saskatchewan followed six months later when a refugee in Saskatchewan was denied cancer care. Even Brad Wall has come online and has seen the humanitarian need for this.

The way that we do it is we work through income assistance and we get people enrolled in income assistance so that they will receive basic health care, including dental, vision and other cares.

You know, Mr. Speaker, people come as refugees, some of them have actually had their limbs mached off. This is the sort of situation people are coming from, and we know the refugee who came to Manitoba, when the doctors learned that the interim federal health care was going to be covered they moved quickly to provide him with a prosthesis. So he now can walk on two feet, and thank God that they did that. He went in, he was fitted for his prosthesis and he walked out, and the next day do you know what he did? He started to look for a job because he wanted to give back to the province of Manitoba who had given him so much. This is what happens: people come, they are broken, they are unable to trust, they are unable to believe that life could be better, but they come here and because they're provided with health care, because they're provided with other social services they begin to believe that life could be better for them, for their families and for their children.

There is a woman living in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, her name is Louise Simbandumwe, many of us know her. She was a refugee from Burundi. Her family left Burundi when she was 11 years old and they went to India. When they were in India, they were told—they were given a secret message that her mother's brother and his family had been murdered and it would be best for Louise's family not to return to Burundi. So they were living in a refugee camp, not a lot of food, not a lot of clothing, not health-care coverage of any kind. They came to Manitoba when she was a little girl, and the thing that she felt most was that she was no longer not wanted, that here in Manitoba she was wanted. They were provided health care that—under the interim federal health program, and she will tell you to this day that if they hadn't been provided that health care, there's no way they could've made it.

Louise Simbandumwe went on to be a Rhodes Scholar, Mr. Speaker. She achieved academically. She chose to come back to Manitoba. She works for SEED Winnipeg today in the inner city. She works with low-income people, people with challenges and, yes, even refugees to help them organize themselves financially. Some of them have created very successful businesses. This is the payback she's given us, and we benefit every day from what she has given us.

It is extremely concerning, Mr. Speaker, to see that even though it has been proven time and time again that the sort of cruelty, short-sightedness, even economic non-rationality by not providing people with the health care they need, the federal government continues on. It's also very concerning that members opposite would not stand in support of this resolution, that members opposite would prefer to see people suffer for ideological reasons. It's very concerning to see what the federal Health Minister is doing not only with refugees, he is also refusing to allow families to reunite by making it—by canceling the program, putting on hold the program to sponsor parents and grandparents for two years. He has on his desk a list of countries that—a list of countries that he has determined are safe, and if people present as refugees from those countries they're refused status. I don't know how a minister in Ottawa has the ability to determine whether a country like Congo is safe or whether a country like Rwanda is safe or whether a country like Romania is safe for people such as the Roma.

I encourage the House to stand together. I encourage the House to support health care for

refugees, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage the House to stand up for Canada and reclaim the country that we all want to be. Thank you.

* (11:50)

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): A pleasure to rise today to talk on this resolution, and I certainly want to acknowledge the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) for bringing forward this resolution so we can have a discussion about refugees, immigration and health care and, certainly, as the resolution talks about, health care for all Manitobans.

Certainly, I want to echo some of the sentiments that I heard earlier about, you know, the great country we have and the great province we have in Manitoba, in terms of our great record on immigration and our record on allowing refugees here. Clearly, we have a great country that allows that and a system to allow people to come here to, you know, for the opportunities that we have here in Canada as well. And, certainly, people from around the world see those great opportunities that we have in Canada and, in fact, in Manitoba.

Clearly, the great results we've had on immigration here in Manitoba have been talked about time after time in the Legislature, and we're certainly happy to be a part of that and certainly happy that the Progressive Conservative government brought in a framework to help the immigration here in Manitoba. And it really—we've seen it across our province too. We've got immigrants all across our province and we're still seeing immigrants from just about every country around the world arrive in Manitoba. And it's nice to see that the people that are arriving in Manitoba, you know, both as immigrants and refugees, they're not just staying in Winnipeg. They're actually moving out to other communities around our province and, in fact, into rural areas.

It was quite interesting to read the latest census. I had a chance to look at that just a couple of weeks ago and certainly looked at the census from my areas and my communities in Spruce Woods. So it was quite interesting to see the immigration and, in fact, those numbers of people who have decided to come to Manitoba and, in fact, southwestern Manitoba to make their livelihood, and certainly encouraged by that. And, certainly, it was something, you know, even a few years ago in Brandon, we were a pretty—not a very diverse population when you walked down the street in Brandon or pretty well any community in southwestern Manitoba, but we've

certainly seen that change in the last few years. And people see the opportunities that are out there in rural Manitoba, as well.

Clearly, with some of the value-added processing that's going on, and I think I can point fingers to companies like HyLife Foods in Neepawa who do business all around Manitoba. They certainly are attracting quite a diverse population there, and I think that's certainly great for those people and their families and, certainly, I think, a positive step for communities like Neepawa and communities around there. And, certainly, the same can be said for Maple Leaf and the production that goes on just outside of Brandon. We've certainly seen—saw quite a change in the population within Brandon, and, again, people from just about any country you could name coming to work there. And, certainly, those people don't just live in Brandon. They've spilled out into other communities such as our smaller communities, and it's certainly encouraging to see them assimilate into those communities and interact with the people that are already there.

And, clearly, the resolution does talk a little bit about providing access to health care for Manitobans, and I know the government has certainly been talking a lot about trying to make sure that we all have family doctors. Unfortunately, it looks like we've got a lot of work ahead of us. Some of those statistics say that we still have 180,000 Manitobans that do not have family doctors at this time. And, certainly, that's something that we think has to be looked at and maybe there's changes that can be made that would certainly improve that situation. We know by the numbers that we've had a pretty dismal record of retaining doctors here in Manitoba, and that's certainly unfortunate. So our out-migration of doctors are certainly an issue for us, and, hopefully, the government will be taking some positive steps to try and stop that particular trend because it is quite alarming and it impacts all Manitobans.

I know, in my area, we are facing some pretty serious doctor shortages right now, and it's certainly impacting—hospital beds have been forced to be closed.

We've also seen emergency rooms being forced to close. We've—into a position now where facilities are sharing on-call emergency services, and it certainly complicates life for area residents when you're not sure on any given day which emergency room that you should be headed to, and it's certainly

a major concern. Clearly, we've got—I know Glenboro and then Carberry, for instance, have been sharing services—oh, probably over a year now—back and forth, Mr. Speaker, so it certainly is a—provides a challenge for not just the people within the community but certainly people that are travelling through the communities to determine where the closest emergency room would be located.

And, Mr. Speaker, we just found out we've got the same situation in Killarney and Boissevain emergency rooms. Just this week, in fact, there was announcements made in the local papers, and there was notices sent out to the communities there that those two facilities will be sharing emergency services. So, again, people will have to be aware of which facility—which particular facility is going to be available to them.

And certainly in the summer, when a lot of the—that particular region, there's a lot of tourist activity in that area, so, you know, we don't have just the regular population that we have to deal with. We also have the tourist population that we have to deal with as well. And it would be one thing to—if all of our emergency, you know, paramedics were—and those stations were open on a 24-7 basis in the region, but the fact of the matter is they're not all open 24 hours a day and seven days a week. So, it gets to be quite a complicated process, and it gets to be the situation where logistically trying to get people that may be encountering emergency situations at a—could potentially be at a—quite a great distance away from an emergency room. And that's the complicated challenges that we have.

And you never know from time to time which facility will be open on any given day, so it certainly makes it a challenge for people in the area. And I'm sure it makes it a challenge for the first responders, as well, in that—in the region there to make sure that they're up to speed in terms of the availability of emergency rooms, Mr. Speaker.

And clearly, we hope the government would come forward with some sort of a positive framework where we can have a discussion with the communities that are impacted so that they can also put forward solutions to it. Clearly, we've got a lot of great people in the front lines doing all kinds of great work in the health-care side of it.

And in terms of the refugee side, as well, I know there's a lot of people involved in that in terms of helping refugees once they arrive in Canada. And once they arrive in Manitoba, there's a lot of people

involved directly with those—a lot of organizations that are doing great work on behalf of those refugees as well. And clearly, when they arrive at a foreign country such as ours, there's a lot of things that they have to adapt to and certainly, there's challenges there, so it's encouraging that we, as a country, make people available for those refugees so that they can work their way through the system and hopefully make sure that they have the health-care services that are required—if they should require those services and that's certainly very critical, Mr. Speaker.

So, with those few words, I just wanted to thank the member for bringing forward this important resolution. I am sure the government will be lobbying—I would expect they would be in ongoing discussions with the federal government in terms of this particular situation. And with that, I just wanted to thank you for the opportunity to say a few words on this important issue, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I'm—I feel appreciative of the opportunity to stand and put some comments on the record about what is an important issue in Canada.

We certainly do know that we have many challenges in the health-care system, and I know that a number of refugees that come to Canada certainly face many challenges in their journey to get here. And we certainly value their—you know, the contributions that they make once they're—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 9, 2013

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