

Third Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Ind.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Good morning, Madam Speaker.

Would you canvass the House to see if there's a willingness to call Bill 212, The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave this morning to consider Bill 212, the invasive species awareness day act? Leave? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 212—The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): I move, seconded by the member from Swan River, that Bill 212, The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lagimodiere: Optimistic, as defined in the Oxford's dictionary, means hopeful and confident about the future. Although the previous government did not prioritize a proactive approach to invasive species in our province, our government is optimistic. We are committed to raising public awareness and stepping up the fight against invasive species to remedy previous inaction by the NDP.

Madam Speaker, we recognize Manitobans have environmental, economic and social interests in protecting the ecosystems in Manitoba. Our

government has listened to the concerns of Manitobans, and that is why we are working to restore the confidence of Manitobans in our environmental stewardship legislation and programs. Our government is committed to enforcing and building on robust, scientifically proven environmental protection laws that are amongst the strongest in Canada.

This bill continues on the path of protecting Manitoba's environment by raising awareness of invasive species to the public. We recognize the importance of identifying invasive species because invasive species are harmful to local ecosystems. They can have environmental, economic and health consequences, and approximately 40 per cent of threatened and endangered species are at risk due to invasive species, and early identification can help mitigate harms.

This bill is important because the general public—and, to a lesser degree, most of us—do not understand what an invasive species is, nor the potential serious ecological and economic consequences associated with the introduction of an invasive species to our fragile Manitoba ecosystem.

Most Manitobans appear to be unaware of a—of the mechanisms by which invasive species may be introduced and spread within our province. Madam Speaker, when I started working on this bill last spring, I was overwhelmed by the total number of threats and the number of invasive species already existing in Manitoba. I had to ask myself: Just how did so many invasive species become established without my knowledge or intervention? The truth is, I believe, there still exists an overall lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding about invasive species. In order to help prevent new species' invasion and fight off established invaders, we need to do a better job at getting the message out to Manitobans. An invasive species awareness week gives the opportunity to position Manitobans to spread the word and not the species. It gives the opportunity to inform Manitobans that invasive species are any kind of plant, animal or organism that are not native to an ecosystem and whose presence causes harm.

Madam Speaker, invasive species are the second leading cause of biodiversity loss globally.

Invasive species affects our waterways, pasture lands, wetlands and forests. The key to saving ecosystems from invasive species are prevention, detection and timely responses to identification.

Invasive species are primarily spread by human activities. They include shipping of goods by boat, shipping of wood products as well as shipping pallets and crates that can harbour insects; shipment of ornamental plants and internationally imported, non-native pet sales; transmissions by droplets of water from one system to another. For example, Madam Speaker, unknowingly, citizens most likely brought the infamous hogweed plant, that can cause third-degree burns and permanent blindness, to North America as an ornamental plant. This bill works to protect Manitoba's environment by raising awareness to the public of the issues of invasive species in Manitoba and their effects on Manitoba's environment.

Both aquatic invasive species and terrestrial invasive species pose a significant threat to Manitoba ecosystems. Madam Speaker, there are currently 23 invasive species identified that are present in Manitoba and capable of further spread. There are 11 plants identified that are not yet but could be capable of invading Manitoba. There are 21 common terrestrial invasive species identified and there have been eight other invasive species identified as a potential threat to Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, although we have heard that zebra mussels are one of the most significant threats to the health of Lake Winnipeg, most of us are unaware that zebra mussels are native to Russia and the Ukraine and that they were first detected in Canada in 1980. We know that under of the NDP in the fall of 2013, zebra mussels were found in the harbours on Lake Winnipeg. It wasn't until the fall of 2014, a full year later, that the previous government tried to take action to eradicate them. They were not successful. In 2015, zebra mussels were found in the Red River near Selkirk. Large numbers are now seen at Grand Beach, which was once known as one of the top 10 beaches in the world.

Since their colonization of Lake Winnipeg, they have covered the undersides of docks, boats and anchors. They can grow so densely that they block pipelines, clogging water intakes and damage hydroelectric dams. Their shells are so sharp they are known for cutting peoples' feet, resulting in the need to wear water shoes wherever they are prevalent.

Zebra mussels are filter feeders. And, as they feed, they improve water clarity. Increased water clarity can result in major decreases in concentrations of dissolved oxygen. Decreased water oxygen can lead to the death of fish.

Zebra mussels compete with native species for food and reduce levels of phytoplankton in the water, which is the main food source for many aquatic species. Zebra mussels are believed to be the source of Clostridium botulinum toxin, a deadly poison that has killed tens of thousands of birds in the Great Lakes since the late 1990s. The lifespan of a zebra mussel is four to five years. An adult zebra mussel can produce 30 to 40 thousand eggs in each reproductive cycle and over 1 million eggs each year. The larva are free-swimming, microscopic organisms called veligers. The Lake Friendly project estimates that the cost of dealing with zebra mussels in Canada is about \$7 billion.

*(10:10)

Madam Speaker, what most people don't realize is that zebra mussels can live out of the water for up to seven days and even minute amounts of water can transmit veligers from one body of water to another. This makes it very easy for them to spread, if care is not taken.

Madam Speaker, invasive species do not stop at our waterways. Pasture lands are threatened by a number of invasive plant species.

Another invasive species that is already in Manitoba is leafy spurge. It is infamous for its ability to quickly spread and destroy cattle grazing pastures. It has significant consequences for Manitoba farmers. In fact, the leafy spurge stakeholders group released a study in 2010 that estimated there were approximately 1.2 million acres of leafy spurge in Manitoba at that time. This same study estimates that the presence of leafy spurge causes a total of \$40.2 million in economic losses a year.

Madam Speaker, spotting knapweed, while not as common in Manitoba, has a potential to be just as, if not more dangerous to Manitoba ecosystems as leafy spurge. This is primarily because its 'alleopathic' qualities cause it to change the chemical balance of the soil, preventing the growth of most other plants.

Madam Speaker, maintaining healthy ecosystems is important for both the environment and our economy. Our government is stepping up the fight against invasive species. Manitoba is already

leading the way among provinces in Canada in helping to protect the environment for future generations.

The provincial government released its Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan which we've—which will be built on the strategic pillars of climate, jobs, water and nature. Now the government of Manitoba can lead the way in fighting invasive species.

Our invasive species awareness week falls in line with our government's plan to set out a vast array of initiatives to protect wetlands and watersheds, water quality, wild species and habitats.

This is also why our government is proud to collaborate with groups to support an invasive species awareness week in order to bring together expertise on the matter and protect our environment. Groups including the Invasive Species Council Manitoba, Ducks Unlimited, Manitoba bee producers, Manitoba Forestry Association, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Keystone Agriculture Producers, First Nations, cottagers and farmers. This bill highlights the necessity of detecting and preventing invasive species and recognizes the need for awareness in Manitoba.

Our government will continue to work at raising awareness on the issues of invasive species in Manitoba and their affects on Manitoba. Once we pass this bill, we will be the first province or territory to enact a law declaring an official invasive species awareness week. An invasive species awareness week gives the opportunity to position Manitobans to again spread the word and not the species.

I ask all parties to support us in addressing Manitobans' concerns regarding invasive species and to help restore Manitobans' confidence in our government's stewardship of the environment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Interesting topic brought forward today. Wondering if the honourable

member could inform the House if there are any foreign species in the Missouri River?

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Yes. I have, as most members do, have concerns about invasive species outside of the borders of Manitoba that have the potential of coming into Manitoba. It's certainly something that, you know, we knew that zebra mussels were here since the 1980s and yet we did nothing to protect Manitoba at that time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Altemeyer: And, follow-up to that, does the honourable member have any sense of how many foreign invasive species there are in the Missouri River?

Mr. Lagimodiere: I do not have the exact count myself, but I'm told there are up to 12 different invasive species that could have a potential impact on Manitoba.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Zebra mussels, purple loosestrife are all examples of invasive species. There's fear about Asian carp. I wonder, is there money to coincide with awareness week, privately or publicly, to avoid these species from infiltrating our ecosystem?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Thank the member for question.

Response to that is, this bill is aimed at bringing awareness to invasive species in Manitoba. With that, it seems to be a multi-ministerial concern affecting both Agriculture, Sustainable Development, Education, so that would have to be the decision on the ministers' parts.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I appreciate a couple of the questions brought forward by our other colleagues throughout the House, and I know that the member from Assiniboia should know that private members' bills are not to be money bills, Madam Speaker. And, as for the member from Wolseley, he had 17 years to worry about Missouri and Manitoba and seems to be getting there.

So, I'd like to ask the member from Selkirk, what additional pieces of awareness is he looking for being brought forward by the minister from Sustainable Development and some of our other Cabinet ministers as well?

Mr. Lagimodiere: When we look at invasive species as a whole, we talked about the terrestrial threats, the plants that have a potential to come into Manitoba. We've talked to Manitoba beef producers

and their concerns with the weeds that can affect their pastures and cause them millions of dollars of damage on an annualized basis. We've talked to some weed experts who talked about the problem with weeds that can potentially affect our crop production in Manitoba. Zebra mussels, we talked about the potential effects on theirs in the fisheries in Manitoba as well. So almost every division of the government can't work in a silo.

Thank you.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, given the member's understanding that there are up to a dozen foreign species in the Missouri River, could he tell us what type of species he's referring to?

Mr. Lagimodiere: I do have lists, entire lists, of invasive species that are out there, and, as I said before, 23 invasive species currently identified as present in Manitoba, 11 plants identified that are not yet, but could be capable of coming into Manitoba. We have 21 terrestrial invasive species that have been identified already. We have eight other invasive species identified as a potential threat to Manitoba that have the potential of coming in. So, if he would like to have a look at these lists, I'd be more than happy to share them with him.

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the member from Selkirk for bringing forward this very important piece of legislation, private member's bill, in regards to bringing forward a—awareness week.

Is there anything—is there other provinces within Canada that has such a declared week?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Thank you for the question. And, in Canada, yes, there are other provinces who have implemented invasive species awareness weeks. British Columbia has an invasive species awareness week. Saskatchewan has an Aquatic Invasive Species Awareness Week. But neither of those provinces have anything in legislation, and, as I said before, Manitoba would be the first province to—or territory—to legislate an invasive species awareness week.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, I know the minister is very concerned about Lake Winnipeg, and we're all very concerned about zebra mussels. But the type of mussels which have been—overtaken even zebra mussels in places like Lake Erie are quagga mussels. And I would like to know what the member is going to promote in terms of preventing quagga mussels getting into Manitoba as an example of what he would try to achieve during this awareness week next April.

* (10:20)

Mr. Lagimodiere: I thank the member opposite for the question, Madam Speaker. And, yes, quagga mussels are another invasive species that are on the list of having potential to come into Manitoba, and I understand there is also another species of mussel that is causing concern in other areas right now as well.

The purpose of this bill, as I said before, is to increase awareness of the invasive species that are out there and to work with concerned groups to help promote the awareness and get the word out to Manitobans so we can identify and help hopefully prevent the introduction of other invasive species into our province.

Mr. Altemeyer: In answering my previous question, the member didn't actually answer it.

My question was how many—could he describe the types of species that he is aware of that are in the Missouri River? I believe he instead provided a list of invasive species that are already in Manitoba. I would ask him to take a second chance now at answering my question.

Of the dozen species he believes are in the Missouri River that would be invasive here in Manitoba, what type of species are we talking about? Plants, animals, et cetera.

Mr. Lagimodiere: As I said previously, when I first started doing this research, I was shocked by the total number of invasive species that were already in Manitoba and the potential threats to Manitoba from outside of our borders. Species such as mosquitofish, rainbow smelt, flying carp, spiny flea shrimp, emerald ash borers, flea leaf beetle, lots of species out there, and I do not know every one that's out there, but I do know the potential is very great. Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: I appreciate the—again, the member from Selkirk bringing forward such an important piece of legislation to bring awareness to not only Manitobans but also to our many hundreds of thousands of visitors that we get in this great province each and every year. I know that, you know, the tagline potentially could be spread the word, not the species. And I know that the member from Wolseley should be supporting this legislation later on. I know that he's—he is mentioning the Missouri River. He had 17 years to try to make sure that we're turning the tide here, no pun intended, Madam Speaker, but I'd like to, again, take this

opportunity to congratulate the member from Selkirk for bringing—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Lagimodiere: I would like to thank the honourable member from Lac du Bonnet for being on board to support such an important piece of legislation.

We—I also want to acknowledge that we had a lot more people that were going to be in the House today. More groups that would be here to support this important piece of legislation. Unfortunately, because of the weather, it seemed a lot of them couldn't make it in, and they—you know, we would have loved to have seen them there. They said they will be following what happens today—*[interjection]*—thank you—as much as they can. And they were hoping it would be televised so they could have seen all the comments. And—but the questions were here today too. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Thanks again to the member for bringing this forward.

It's interesting, the title, invasive species awareness week. I think I might take this opportunity, without being too presumptuous, to provide some information and maybe even help the member from Selkirk with his own awareness of—given the answers to some of the questions that I was asking earlier. And the gentleman from—the honourable member from Lac du Bonnet, as well, needs a little refresher on the Missouri River, so let's just start there.

If the honourable members had been paying attention in question period as recently as last week, they would have heard me ask the minister at the time what her assessment was of the number of invasive species in the Missouri River. Now, the Missouri River has its headwaters in the United States, in North Dakota and it flows south. It ends up as a tributary into the Mississippi River.

The reason why this is relevant is that North Dakota, at the state level, is currently pursuing not one but two massive water-diversion projects which would take water out of the Missouri River and put it into the Hudson's Bay drainage area—which, of

course, is here in Manitoba. One of the projects, the Northwest Area Water Supply project, would take Missouri River water into the Assiniboine drainage basin. The other project, the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, would take Missouri River water east and put it into the Red River, which I'm sure the MLA for Selkirk can appreciate would be a big problem as his constituency is—lies right along the Red River.

So, when I asked earlier today, how many foreign invasive species there are in the Missouri River, it's a question that he should have known the answer to, because I asked the same question in question period and when the minister got it wrong, I corrected the record. It's not a dozen species, it's over two dozen. These are two dozen additional foreign species that are not in Manitoba yet, but they do exist in the Missouri River water system.

I also gave the honourable member the opportunity to describe for us the type of species that are contained on this list of over two dozen, and they, actually, are not limited to just plants or animals. They run the gamut from microscopic organisms, invertebrates right through to fish and, of course, multiple species of plants.

Now, very, very difficult to find this information, I know. It's on the web and it's publicly available. If the minister or the MLA for Selkirk or anyone on the government research team had bothered to look for the environmental impact statement that had been done in the United States examining the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, they would have found all of this info laid out right there for them.

And the very difficult question for the MLA for Selkirk and the very difficult question for every single Tory MLA is, why, if they are so concerned about additional foreign invasive species coming to Manitoba, why has this government been absolutely, one hundred per cent radio silent in doing or saying anything that might help stop the Red River Valley Water Supply Project from happening or, at the very least, make sure that the water is as clean as possible when it gets here?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Altemeyer: Now, there's a lot of noise coming from the opposition benches—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: It's kind of ironic because the government is claiming that they want to create awareness. I have not said anything that is factually in error to the best of my knowledge, and yet it is clearly information that this government either does not have or does not want to listen to. So they can continue to chirp, but I will continue to explain why raising awareness is one thing, but actually doing something is entirely another and something this government is not currently doing.

On the subject of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project and on the Northwest Area Water Supply project, it can be reasonably argued that our government is one of the main reasons why those projects don't exist already. And this is where the—I hope the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) will pay special attention with his reference to 17 years. Those projects would have both been built a long time ago if it weren't for the actions that our government took.

* (10:30)

With the Northwest Area Water Supply project, we were successful in getting a court injunction in the US district court in Washington, DC, to actually block the project from proceeding. That means that all—and the primary argument that we used was that one of potential threats to Manitoba's waterways from foreign invasive species.

Now, what has happened since then, since the last provincial election—it occurred just this past summer actually, Madam Speaker—is that the judge overseeing that case did remove the injunction temporarily, though Manitoba had the right to appeal, on the grounds that the proponents had done a sufficient amount of work on the environmental impacts that she felt the project could now proceed. She wasn't saying it was a good project; she was saying, based on the law in the United States, she could not find any reasonable grounds to continue to block the project from happening.

Guess who the first ones were who raised awareness about this issue publicly. That would be our NDP opposition caucus. The government was either completely asleep at the switch, had no idea what was going on, or they knew about it and decided not to say anything about this incredible threat to the future safety of Manitoba's waters. That's not our inaction; that's our action working for 17 years, and then this government going radio silent.

Now, only after we held multiple public events and got multiple media stories on the issue—only after that happened did the minister take the appropriate action and file an appeal of that court decision on the Northwest Area Water Supply project. So we will see how that court process plays out.

But, lo and behold, if members have been listening, there's not one water diversion project; there's two. They would both draw water from the Missouri River, which has the same invasive species in it throughout the whole river system. And on the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, this government has said and done nothing.

At the very least, you contact the federal government and ask them to engage the International Joint Commission. This is the entity which, for over 100 years, under the auspices of the Boundary Waters Treaty signed in 1909, has successfully mitigated disputes over water issues between Canada and the United States not just here on the prairies, but around the Great Lakes and out west, farther out west than us as well, on multiple occasions.

At the very least, you ask this independent body to conduct their own independent environmental assessment, come up with a reasonable proposal on how the water is going to be treated, if this project should even proceed. This government has not even done that.

I have raised the issue multiple times in question period. It has been in the media on multiple occasions. Water activists all over the province are sounding the alarm, and yet this government, which today is trying to tell us that they're serious about blocking more invasive species from coming to Manitoba, is letting over two dozen new invasive species potentially come to Manitoba, and they're not saying a single word about that.

There is a huge disconnect between—again, Madam Speaker, this is not a new thing for this government, but there is a huge disconnect between these types of celebratory and awareness-raising acts and proposals that we see here in the Chamber on a regular basis—compare that to the actions of this government, what they actually do, or more importantly in this case, what they are not doing.

So I will round out my comments there. Not overly impressed with this government's track record, as you can tell, but I'll listen to the rest of the debate.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Order. Prior to proceeding with debate, we have some students in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you. We have 13 students from Daniel McIntyre Collegiate, and this school is located in the constituency of the member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

On behalf of all members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I'd like to commend my fellow colleague from Selkirk in bringing Bill 212 forward. This bill is so important for protecting our ecosystems in Manitoba from environmental, economic, social perspectives. The bill protects Manitoba's environment by raising awareness to the public, something we really need on issues of invasive species in Manitoba and their impact on Manitoba's environment.

I'm going to put a few brief words on the record. Unlike the member from Wolseley who gets fascinated with his knowledge of—and gives the House a biology lesson from time to time—his government had the opportunity to act on this for 17 years. And I think their track record speaks for itself.

The key to saving ecosystems from invasive species is prevention, detection and identification. Invasive species out compete natural species and they're harmful to many local ecosystems. Consequences are both environmental and economic. Forty per cent of threatened and endangered species are at risk due to invasive species—or endangered species, rather, are at risk. Early detection is key. This is why awareness is so important, and we move this bill forward. Invasive species prey on natural species and they are also potential disease carriers. They out compete natural species and can inhibit reproduction of nature species. They can decrease biodiversity which is one of the key indicators of ecosystem health.

Human activities are the primary cause of the spread of invasive species. The aquatic-terrestrial invasive species pose a significant threat to Manitoba's ecosystems, aquatic invasive species like zebra mussels presently a threat to our freshwater lakes in our province. Combatting the spread of invasive species isn't about looking at what we did or

did not do, but to stop the potential threat and do the right thing now. This includes support Bill 212 and get proactive and stop these species from threatening the province of Manitoba.

Common carp is another one that is—or is a threat, along with many other species. As we heard today, there are many species in the province, and every time we look we are opening the doorway to more to come in.

Another threat is the terrestrial spectrum in the emerald ash borer. This tiny green invader from Asia is attacking ash trees in North America. Since its introduction in 2002 in Michigan, Ontario, it spread to Quebec and 12 states. Manitoba is in its cards. The Forest Health Protection Act proclaimed in 2009 will help the province to prevent accidental introductions of invasive species like the EAB. The prevention of Manitoba forests from harmful invasive pests will take co-ordinated efforts between governments, municipalities, non-government agencies and the public. And this is where the awareness comes in.

Most Manitobans have very little or limited knowledge of invasive species. This goes beyond the responsibility of one department. This is a joint effort requiring municipalities; 'digenous' relations; Growth, Enterprise, Trade; Education; Infrastructure; Agriculture; Sport, Culture, Heritage. We all got to work together.

The three most highly threatened ecosystems are forests, pasture lands and wetlands. Our forests—rather pasture lands and wetlands—just take leafy spurge as an example. It was estimated that in 2010 there were approximately 1.2 million acres of leafy spurge in Manitoba. The presence caused a total of \$40.2 million in economic loss; 10.2 loss in grazing capacity, 5.8 for chemical application and 24.1 due to indirect costs.

Dutch elm disease and invasive phragmites also rank up there. We can see in the city of Winnipeg alone what the removal of infected elm trees costs the city annually.

Madam Speaker, our government is making progress: increased signage, more 'leafid'—or leaflets, more wash stations. In my constituency, a DNA of zebra mussel was confirmed on a plate sample in Singush Lake. This—they shut down the lake immediately. The—all the residents within the cottage area, the cottage country of the Duck Mountains became fully aware. So public awareness is a key.

* (10:40)

Madam Speaker, with a co-ordinated effort, we can become leaders in fighting invasive species. Our invasive species awareness week falls in line with our government's plan to set out a vast array of new initiatives to protect wetlands, watersheds, water quality, wild species and habitats.

Madam Speaker, combatting invasive species is where all parties have to come together for a common cause. I urge my fellow colleagues across the floor to work with government and pass this bill without delay because each day that passes moves us a day closer to saying if only we'd seized that opportunity to do what was right. Fellow colleagues, let's do what's right and pass Bill 212.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I appreciate having a chance to share some words about this issue.

I wanted to begin by saying it would have been awesome if the government would have called Bill 211. First of all, I think that the issue of a 18-month parental leave is an important one and one that many Manitoba families are on side with, and so having the government, you know, call that important piece of legislation would have been a good gesture and probably good politics as well. But there's no accounting for the choices that this government makes, so it is what it is, as they say.

That in mind, I'd, you know, congratulate the member from Selkirk for, you know, having the chance to introduce a bill. It's one that I think he spoke, you know, knowledgeably about this morning. I was hoping that he might have a chance to talk about one of his muskie fishing trips again. I know that he shared with us a few times ago—*[interjection]* A few times ago he shared some updates on, you know, the muskies that he's caught and, you know, some of his fishing trips in years past. And I don't think there was any questions about relevance at that time; it was some good stories. And, you know, when I was growing up I spent a lot of time out on a lake and, you know, we have muskies out where I grew up too and so it's always a good thing.

But, when we're moving across from lake to lake, when we're moving across from one jurisdiction to another or even from one geographic region to another within a given jurisdiction, that's where the issue of invasive species really comes into play. And I can tell you that, you know,

my awareness has been increased over the years through things like the signage that they have on the Ontario-Manitoba border that warns against the transportation of zebra mussels—also, their signage there talking about the, you know, you shouldn't transport unprocessed deer meat and other things like that. So I think there have been some efforts over the years to increase awareness amongst Manitobans on these issues.

However, we know that there's still more to do and, you know, increasing awareness amongst the public is definitely an important part of what needs to be done. But, of course, there's other steps that need to be taken as well.

I also appreciated the member from Swan River's comments because he did speak, you know, both anecdotally and, you know, factually as well about some the impacts that this has had in his region and, I guess, Swan Valley, and clearly it's an issue that's important to him.

I'd share with the House that I had a chance to—I think it was his former classroom at the Swan Valley Regional Secondary School, I had a chance to visit it and it's quite a classroom. It's a classroom unlike many others. There's taxidermied fish and wildlife and birds all over the classroom there, and there's even a little greenhouse on the edge of the room. So I know he takes the issue of conservation and wildlife management very seriously and has done, you know, some work to help the next generation of Manitobans also think about those issues in the right sort of way; that while we do enjoy things like fishing or recreational boating, that we also have an obligation to the next generation to take care of the earth and the water and the environment so the future generations will be able to do that. And so I definitely appreciate that.

Of course, you know, I put the proviso we are going to want that seat back in the next election, but in the meantime definitely willing to share some kind words with my colleague from Swan River.

Then, finally, you know, the colleague from Wolseley I thought, you know, rounded out the debate so far this morning with some important comments about the organisms and micro-organisms that will be coming downstream here in Manitoba from upstream projects in North Dakota. We know that those issues are top of mind, and so as we talk about increasing awareness on invasive species we should be talking about that across all the jurisdictions that impact on Manitoba waterways and

Manitoba wildlife areas, but also, you know, on all the different methods of transmission for those things.

So, as I said earlier, I spent quite a bit of time on boats and on lakes growing up, and we did, you know, definitely make the most of our time on the water. You know, fishing is a way of life for many of the people I grew up around, both angling—we're kind of partial to walleye, you know, pickerel here in Manitoba. But many of the people that I grew up with actually make their living as commercial fishers today, and so not only the preservation of fish stocks, but also the sustainability of the ecosystem on the lake itself is very important because it's definitely a source of fun. It's a place where we bond with our kids, where we bring multiple generations of the family together—grandparents, parents, kids, grandkids all together out on the lakes, but also we know that there's some important work we have to do.

So, myself, I typically don't transport a water vessel, you know, from a lake to a lake because typically just use it on one lake. But I know that acquaintances of mine, in-laws, you know, some relatives, they do. They do like to travel to different regions, whether that's in northwestern Ontario, whether that's in, you know, southern Manitoba, whether that's in western Manitoba. You know, lake Dauphin and The Narrows and, you know, areas like that are popular for some people that I know. And, you know, even on Red River it's popular. So these are the sorts of Manitobans that we need to reach out to, we need to educate and we need to increase the awareness of.

I—you know, a few times in my life I can think of when—really noticed invasive species coming into play. As a boy I remember, you know, seeing purple loosestrife and thinking that it looked really cool at the beginning, but pretty soon, like, it was everywhere. And then I realized, you know, in a process of education, public awareness campaigns helped me to understand that this is actually damaging the ecosystem that I grew up in and that I actually really enjoyed, and it was pushing out other plants.

As an adult, I was very honoured to cover the flood of 2011, and it was actually a chance to travel to many amazing parts of the province, you know, from the, you know, Hamiota, Melita, Souris areas, down the Souris River, to eventually the flooding picking up on the Assiniboine and then following

that along the way, and then the flooding in the Interlake on Lake Manitoba and then, you know, to—well, lake Pineimuta and, you know, the Fairford River and Lake St. Martin.

But it was during that flooding typically I'd be filing a report, and I'd be wearing hip waders standing in the flood waters recording a broadcast or two. That's when I really started to notice the carp all over the place in our province, and it's really striking to see their unique, you know, fins and backs popping up out of the water. You could tell that they have a very different look than some of the other species of fish that we're used to. And so, again, this only helped to increase my awareness of the issue.

So, in order for us to be able to combat this and to preserve the long-term health of our lakes and waterways and, you know, wildlife areas, the land, the water, you know, we need to do more. We also know that there can be an impact on hydro, as well, that some of these invasive species may disrupt some of the hydro, you know, developments which provide such an important part of the Manitoba economy. So there's also an economic rationale behind us needing to do this work.

But, of course, awareness is just one part. It will also require resources and investment in order to get this project done. And some of those resources, some of those investments can be spent on, you know, public awareness campaigns, but there is a need for, you know, the spray wash stations, probably, you know, disposal areas close to waterways for people who want to discard, you know, bait. Maybe they don't want to drop it off in the lake they're coming out of. Maybe they want another place to dispose of it, you know. Giving them another option there probably wouldn't hurt. And then, you know, probably a need for some sort of—perhaps not necessarily enforcement, but some sort of inspection where, you know, there's an ability to monitor the potential transmission of things like zebra mussels or other invasive species. And these things will take resources.

* (10:50)

I should mention, of course, when we talk about adding spray stations, that we probably also want to see that happen in the ag industry as well to help combat the scourge of porcine epidemic diarrhea, which I know has caused a lot of damage to, you know, piglets here in the province and is a concern for the farmers who raise them, and so that's

definitely a related issue, though, of course, it's a little bit separate.

So, again, this is important. Awareness should be increased, but we should also ensure that there's the necessary investments to take concrete steps and action to support that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the bill which would introduce a—an awareness week in April with relationship to invasive species.

We have had much experience with significant invasive species in Manitoba, from the leafy spurge to the zebra mussels and to many, many others. And, clearly, this is an idea which, from the Manitoba Liberals' perspective, we're ready to support. Believe that this would be a good idea, that doing it in—toward the end of April would be a good time of the year because we're coming into the time when people are moving about and—on the land and on the water and more likely to be spreading invasive species, so we thank the member for bringing this forward.

I think that the plan for an awareness week needs to be accompanied for a plan in terms of what happens, not only in terms of how we make people more aware, but a plan in terms of what needs to be done, for example, for quagga mussels, to prevent quagga mussels coming in, to enable people to understand the severity of the impact, or the potential impact, of letting quagga mussels come in, as well as zebra mussels, because quagga mussels adhere to the soft substrate, and they have taken over in places like Lake Erie and are a major problem there.

And we let, I think, through not quite enough vigilance, zebra mussels get into this province. We have seen the zebra mussels spread from Lake Winnipeg to isolated lakes in the Swan River and other areas, and we need to have a much more vigorous approach not only with regard to stopping further spread of zebra mussels, but in terms of stopping quagga mussels as well.

And so I have been concerned for many years that the approach that we've taken is not vigorous enough in this respect, that we weren't quick enough when zebra mussels got into Lake Winnipeg, to stop the spread to other lakes. And we have something like 100,000 lakes in this province, and it needs a lot of vigilance and a lot of attention to this in order to make sure that we're not spreading zebra mussels, and we now need to learn from what has happened

with zebra mussels and apply that to preventing the incoming potential of quagga mussels as well.

So, with those few comments, I'm going to end my remarks and let others speak, but I welcome this initiative and just hope that we can use it to the full potential impact that it could have to protect what we have in Manitoba and enable us to prevent more invasive species coming in and prevent the spread of the existing invasive species now.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, I'm quite surprised, I'm going to start by saying, Madam Speaker, that I did give an opportunity for members of the government—this is brought forward as an important issue, I think, an important issue, actually, that all members of this House appreciate and are eager to speak to. And yet, no members from the government are prepared to get up and speak to this important issue. So we've had now two members who brought forward issues specific to their constituencies, which, you know, I appreciate. And I appreciate that, being private members' hour, this is our opportunity to bring those issues that our constituents would identify as being priorities, bring them forward in a way, and in a thoughtful way, I think, in a way that we actually, I can—I look across the way and I do recognize that many members are actually listening to the words that I'm speaking this morning, which is, you know, I don't want to give away too much to the members of the public, but that doesn't always—that isn't always the case. But this morning it is because I think members—every member of this House can share some experience, whether it be from their constituents or from their own experiences, to this important debate.

And yet, when given the opportunity to speak this morning—and, again, I think this is an important issue that I hope every member will put words on the record with regard to how important this is—we have no one from the—I—it looks like maybe the Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires) wants to speak to this. I would cede my time if she wanted to speak to this debate—*[interjection]* And she's—okay. So, anyway, it looks like we won't have those words on the record from the member from—where's she from—Riel. We also don't have the member from Lac du Bonnet who's willing to stand up, put words on the record.

So, anyway, we'll get to how it is important to my constituents. And again, I would like to bring my own personal experience here this morning,

Madam Speaker, because, as many members opposite would know and I've shared many times in this House, my wife and I are very proud owners of one of the original cottages in the Grand Beach cottage area; built in 1938, you know, 400-square-foot cottage, which I got to say is just perfect for my family and I. But it's where we spend our summer vacations as much as possible. We like to be in beautiful Grand Beach, Manitoba. And if you're talking about a community in this province that is going to be hit hardest by some of the changes to the lake and some of the pressures that are on the lake, including aquatic invasive species and other invasive species which the member from Selkirk identified, it would be Grand Beach and it would be all the communities surrounding Lake Winnipeg.

Obviously, that's not the extent of the issue, and I don't purport for that to be the case. Again, I know the member from Lac du Bonnet mentioned pressures in his community. I know others have mentioned pressures in their—on their lakes and rivers and streams, and also in terms of other invasive species that have come to Manitoba. We've heard those experiences. But if you wanted to talk about a place where some of the biggest impacts are going to be felt, it would be at a place like Grand Beach.

And we spend our summers there. My kids—again, I know I've talked about this many times with my children, just seven and five, are growing up at Lake Winnipeg. And so I feel that it's part of my duty as a father and as a Manitoban to talk about the health of that lake that they are growing up on and the importance of protecting our waterways. And I've tried to do that, and I felt that I've actually been helped along by the amazing conservation officers that work at Grand Beach. And I'll give them a shout-out, because they take their time during the summer to actually educate. It's not just, you know, their role to be there as ambassadors, but actually to educate young people. And so they spend the time.

And I've had the experience now a number of times, and my children have, too, where we're sitting on the beach and we're enjoying a great day, and the conservation officers will actually come along, they'll actually bring an example of a zebra mussel and they'll talk about the damage that they potentially are doing to our lake and talk to the kids. And they go up and down the beach and they actually do this to educate and to educate the next generation.

So I think it's all of our duties to do that, to put that kind of emphasis on the health of Lake Winnipeg. But again, this isn't just a problem in Lake Winnipeg, it's a problem for all our waterways. And so I think it's incumbent on all of us as members of this Legislature to bring these important issues forward, as the member has done, and to make sure that everybody is—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

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

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 2—The Federal Government should prioritize Yazidi victims of sex slavery and abuse at the hands of ISIS in its resettlement quotas

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on the federal government should—
[interjection]

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sustainable Development, on a point of order?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Yes.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to point out that I'm very disappointed that the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) had put incorrect information on the record when he said that I declined the opportunity to speak to Bill 212. I did stand up when he ceded his time. He did not acknowledge me, and then he further said that the member for Riel was uninterested or unwilling to speak to this bill. And I would like to point out that that was very incorrect and that he put incorrect information on the record, and so I would like to rectify that.

And I would also like to point out that I'm very disappointed that members opposite did not let Bill 212 go to a vote or to committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on the same point of order.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I know we have guests in the gallery who are eager to speak to the next bill so I won't take too much time on this point, but I do believe that the minister may be reflecting on a—on the duties of the Speaker. I was not—I don't think the Speaker called attention to this, to the member wanting to speak. Obviously, if the Speaker had done that, obviously, we would have respected that decision to move to discussion from the minister, but that didn't happen. I do think she'll have plenty of time to discuss this the next time it comes before the House.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate to the House that points of order are not to be used for further debate, that it is a dispute over the facts and it is not considered a point of order.

But I thank the members for their contributions.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Back to, now, dealing with the resolution.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution The Federal Government should prioritize Yazidi victims of sex slavery and abuse at the hands of ISIS in its resettlement quotas.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I move, seconded by the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma),

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: A point of order?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I believe there needs to be a request for consent.

Madam Speaker: No. No. No, the member is incorrect, and I think he's been told once before that no consent is needed for resolutions that occur in the mornings.

* * *

Mr. Micklefield: I move, seconded by the member for Radisson,

WHEREAS the Yazidis are victims of genocide as recognized by the Federal Government on October 25, 2016; and

WHEREAS Yazidi girls and women were specifically targeted and taken by ISIS as sex slaves, often after watching their husbands, brothers and fathers killed in order to make them available to their captors; and

WHEREAS many young women and girls remain enslaved in these conditions to this day; and

WHEREAS there are reports of up to 60 girls and women committing suicide each month in these conditions; and

WHEREAS many Yazidis remain in camps and must survive without aid; and

WHEREAS one of the largest Yazidi communities in Canada lives in Winnipeg and eagerly awaits the arrival of women and girls rescued from these horrific realities; and

WHEREAS on October 25, 2016, the House of Commons voted unanimously to bring 1,200 Yazidis to Canada within one year; and

WHEREAS the Federal Government has not fulfilled its commitment to bring these refugees to Canada;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the federal government to fulfill its commitment and to prioritize Yazidi victims of sex slavery and abuse at the hands of ISIS in its resettlement quotas.

Motion presented.

Mr. Micklefield: The Yazidis are a group of people of about 1.2 million living mostly in northern Iraq near Syria, although pockets of smaller Yazidi communities exist in other parts of the world as well. Their language, religion and culture have made them a unique and special people group for over 1,000 years.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And yet it is this very uniqueness of the Yazidis that has caused them to be hated and persecuted, most recently by Islamic extremists under the banner of ISIS. These tensions came to a flashpoint on August 3rd, 2014, when ISIS militants raided Yazidi communities in the Sinjar region. The UN report records, and I quote, those who fled early enough to reach the upper plateau of Mount Sinjar were besieged by ISIS.

A humanitarian crisis quickly unfolded as ISIS trapped tens of thousands of Yazidi men, women and children in temperatures rising above 50°C and prevented them from access to water, food

and medical care. On lower ground, ISIS fighters captured thousands of Yazidis in their villages or on the roads as they fled between the 3rd and the 5th of August. The conduct of ISIS fighters, on capturing thousands of Yazidis as they fled, cleaved closely to a set and evidently predetermined pattern with only minor deviations. End quote.

Men and women were separated, children, usually, but not always, kept with their mothers. Men refusing to convert to Islam faced immediate death and were shot in the head or had their throats cut, often in front of their wives and children. Scared conversions also resulted in death. One 16-year-old girl, captured and held for 17 months, remembers, and I quote: After we were captured, ISIS forced us to watch them beheading some of our Yazidi men. They made the men kneel in a line in the street, with their hands tied behind their backs. The ISIS fighters took knives and cut their throats. End quote.

According to ISIS's interpretation of Islamic law, the Yazidis, by virtue of the fact that they are not Muslim, are deemed to be infidels and therefore deserving of such treatment.

Believing it is wrong to marry another man's wife, the killings of Yazidi men not only frightened the community, but make the Yazidi women available, according to the teachings of ISIS. In a practice that continues today, marriages are hastily arranged for the widows who, within hours, find their lives completely changed. The results are horrific. And I quote: Before ISIS attacked, I was happy. My husband adored me, loved our children. We had a good life. ISIS held me for over a year. I haven't seen my husband since the day of the attack. I dream of him.

And that's from a woman who was held for 18 months.

Yazidi women are routinely passed around, divorced by one captor and married to another all within an afternoon. Used as sex slaves, these Yazidi women must take a birth control pill every day in front of their captors or receive a monthly birth control injection. If birth control fails, they are forced to have abortions.

Virgins deemed worth more sell for higher prices. Barbaric virginity-recreation surgeries are performed on Yazidi women, sometimes multiple times, so that they will fetch a higher price for their sellers to buy them at markets, farms or online.

Children remain with their mothers or are placed into Muslim families, never to be seen again.

But these marriage rules are not always followed so carefully, and gangs of ISIS fighters rape many of the Yazidi women repeatedly. The women are housed either in apartments or at compound-like facilities, sometimes called farms, or in underground holding cells in secret areas. These underground dungeons are routinely used to hold groups of women for ISIS to use as and when they please. Women are kept in these underground chambers for days at a time with minimal food or water and next to no sunlight, called out only to be raped and sexually abused, then returned to the—and then returned until they are taken out again by the fighters.

Some of these Yazidi women die; others are severely malnourished; others are kept alive by food and water dropped into the hole through which everything and everyone comes and goes. Women held in these pits dirty themselves, scratch themselves and do all they can in an attempt to make themselves unattractive. A film called *Three Days in the Hole* is being made about these atrocities. An estimated 60 Yazidi girls or women kill themselves every month.

Some quotes from the UN report: We were registered. ISIS took our names, ages, where we came from and whether we were married or not. After that, ISIS fighters would come to select girls to go with them. The youngest girl I saw them take was about 9 years old. One girl told me that if they try to take you, it is better that you kill yourself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that quote is from a girl who was 12 years old when she was captured. She was held for seven months and sold four times.

Another quote: We were driven into Raqqa city at night and held in a building there. I was there for three weeks before I was sold. Throughout that time, ISIS fighters were coming to buy women and girls. All of us were Yazidi. I think I was sold 15 times in all. It is hard to remember all those who bought me.

And that's from a woman who was held for 12 months and sold about 15 times.

*(11:10)

Another quote: Some women and girls reported ISIS fighters taking photographs of them without their head scarves. One girl aged 18 recalled

being ordered to smile and laugh while fighters photographed her. End quote.

Speaking on this issue on October 20th, 2016, federal MP for Calgary Nose Hill Michelle Rempel summarized the realities for these women. Quote: Thousands of Yazidi women have been raped dozens of times a day by dozens of men. Right now, Yazidi children are being trained to become suicide bombers after being stripped from their families. Right now, tens of thousands of Yazidis lie in mass graves. Right now, Yazidis in refugee camps in Greece and in Turkey know that they can never go home. Right now, these same refugees are being persecuted and beaten in these same refugee camps. End quote.

Although there are approximately 50,000 Yazidis displaced and living in UN camps in abject conditions, the UN estimates that there are still several thousand—over 3,000 Yazidi women and girls living as sex slaves under ISIS.

On October 25th, 2016, Canada's House of Commons voted unanimously to bring 1,200 Yazidis to Canada within one year. Three months later, on February 21st, 2017, the Liberal government amended that commitment to, quote, include other victims of ISIS, end quote, as part of that 1,200 number. This left Canada's Yazidi community unsure if their people were now overlooked or rolled into some larger plan.

Less than a month ago, on November 7th, 2017, it was reported that 807 victims of ISIS have been resettled, 81 per cent of whom are Yazidi. That's 654 people.

So, to summarize, 13 months after committing to bring 1,200 Yazidis to Canada within a year, only 654 have actually come.

Winnipeg is blessed to be home to one of Canada's largest Yazidi communities, and these Yazidis are hoping their friends and family are not forgotten by the federal government. I'm here to tell them they are not forgotten and that those who do not have a voice for themselves have a few voices in Canada who are speaking up for them.

I close with one story. I've spoken with many in Winnipeg's Yazidi community about these war crimes. Some of the stories are unimaginable, and there are times where I have done everything I can not to burst into tears as I've listened. But a few weeks ago I was invited to a Yazidi wedding. We've talked about so many hard things, one community

leader told me. Now we will show you how we celebrate.

And celebrate they did. They danced and ate for hours and made me do the same until my shirt was soaked with sweat. Amazingly, these people do not have a victim mentality. They are eager to start a new life and they are doing so right here in our city. These are wonderful people. They are motivated, they are hardworking and helping each other to find a new home and a new life in our province.

I hope all members of this House will join me in calling on the federal government to fulfill its commitment and to prioritize Yazidi victims of sex slavery and abuse at the hands of ISIS in its resettlement quotas.

Thirteen months after committing to bring 1,200 Yazidis to Canada within a year, only 654 have actually come. The federal government said it would do more. It can do more. I hope we can agree to ask Ottawa to do what it has said.

This is the right thing to do, and I invite all members to join me in sending a united statement to Ottawa and to the Yazidis of Winnipeg.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 10 minutes will be held and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: The first question may be asked by a member from another party. Any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties. Each independent member may ask one question, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I do want to just congratulate the member for Rossmere for bringing forward this private member's resolution. I think that we are inclined to support the resolution this morning. And I just want to congratulate him on bringing forward a resolution that will create more awareness, but also potentially will change the lives of individuals who have been—suffered things that we can't even imagine.

I would ask the member, why is it important to support newcomers coming to Manitoba?

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I thank the member opposite for the question.

I was once a newcomer, and I came here with suitcases and didn't know very many people, and if

people didn't support me, I would not be here. That's why it's important to support newcomers.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Certainly support the member's resolution, and obviously it's a heart-wrenching situation.

Mister—I wonder if the member can highlight the prosecution and the near annihilation of this group early in ISIS's time, and why these are genuine refugees and Canada would be a great place for the Yazidis to settle and prosper.

Mr. Micklefield: I thank the member opposite for the question. I think there were maybe three questions in that question. I'll try as best I can.

The Yazidis are legitimate refugees because they have been run out of their homeland. The place they've been for centuries they can no longer go. In fact, they have nowhere to go. They are wedged into UN camps, and those who can escape to other countries, we must acknowledge sometimes by all manner of ways, do so, but these are people on the run.

And, if we are the home of hope, as we sometimes like to say, I think that we should offer some hope to people in these kinds of situations.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I do want to thank the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) for bringing this important matter forward. I think it's difficult to listen to, and I've heard the stories first-hand myself, difficult to listen to but absolutely essential to listen to. And I appreciate what we're doing today in this Legislature, but I think there can be more that we could do.

So my question for the member is, what other things can we, as citizens of Manitoba, and can we encourage our constituents here in Manitoba, to do to help the Yazidis?

Mr. Micklefield: I thank my colleague for the question.

I think people often think of helping newcomers as a very grandiose, difficult, large task, but it doesn't have to be. I think that if we can make some time in our schedule, in our lives—maybe you have an extra chair at your Christmas table, maybe you have a spare evening—these people are not difficult to make friends with, and this goes for all newcomers. I think our lives are enriched when we make room for others, and very often these communities are only too willing to welcome new friends and trying to find their own feet in a new and strange culture.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): We, too, in the Liberal Party are very ready to support this resolution, believing it is important to bring more Yazidi people here. There clearly has been some progress under the Conservatives. I think there were three Yazidis who came, and we now have more than 600. But we have some long way to go.

I would ask the member, how many Yazidis does he think we should bring in total to Canada and to Manitoba?

Mr. Micklefield: Well, I would love it if we could be surmising about total numbers. I'll just say, more than we have right now and as many as is reasonable, practical, legal, logistically sane and safe.

But this resolution is calling on the federal government to fulfill its initial commitment, and hopefully after that we can have further discussions.

* (11:20)

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I just wanted to take a quick moment to once again recognize the folks that we have in the gallery. It's so important that you're here to hear this debate. It's important that we can put some words on the record to support your community and support the experience that you've faced. I look forward to speaking more to that.

My question, though, is to building off what others have said. We've talked about what we can do as MLAs. What can the government do to support newcomers as they come here, especially refugees? How can the provincial government be supportive of those newcomers when they come here?

Mr. Micklefield: I thank the member for Concordia for that important question.

I have spoken with the provincial minister on this topic and he has informed me, first of all, that as part of the federal government's commitment, the federal government recognizes there are funds involved in these kinds of things and has pledged those funds. The federal—the provincial minister also pointed out to me that the Yazidi people actually have quite a remarkable track record of helping each other settle, and that's been my experience as well. In fact, there may be many more in the gallery, except that so many of them are at work and they told me that's why—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Fontaine: So I would ask the member for Rossmere how he thinks that Manitoba can be a leader in protecting human rights.

Mr. Micklefield: I think Manitoba is a leader, and I think the step that we're looking at today is by voting for this resolution. I think that many small victories are a good step and that's what I hope we can all contribute to this morning.

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): I want to thank our guests in the galley. Welcome to Canada. Welcome to your Legislature now. Thank you so much through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, having their presence here. And the member for Rossmere has mentioned the amount of connections he's had with that wonderful community and he eluded, of course, that many are at work right now and we're so grateful to have a few.

But can the member talk a bit about how these new Canadians, some of our newest ones, are finding their way integrating to Canada, how, you know—again, echoing what some people have said—how other people can help. But how has their experience been so far and in that connection of how they can reflect that to the process?

Mr. Micklefield: I thank my colleague for the question.

As I was saying earlier, this is a community who understand that—the value of work. They want to settle here. They are eager to take language lessons and they do. In fact, I was speaking with some earlier this morning, and I was impressed even that some of the older ones had a pretty good grasp of English. And they are also, as I was mentioning, finding jobs as all kinds of different professions. I know that one of my friends is a bus driver, and I know that others are in university studying and aspiring to make a positive contribution to their new home.

Mr. Teitsma: One of the ways that I became increasingly aware of the plight of the Yazidi people and of the efforts made to resettle them into Canada was through Operation Ezra, and I'm wondering if the member is familiar with Operation Ezra and if he can share some more information about that with us.

Mr. Micklefield: I thank my colleague for the question.

Certainly, there are different groups who have reached out to the Yazidi community, and I would applaud the efforts of every group that has done so. Operation Ezra is an initiative of the Jewish

community and has been applauded in this House in previous months, and they have brought some Yazidi families to Canada and to Winnipeg and have helped them settle, helped them find a home and work, and language helps, and other helps as well.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Yes, I came as a immigrant, a new immigrant, and I gone through all those problems the newcomers go through, and I will ask the member: What kind of support will be available from the Manitoba government to improve their skills and also for their settlement?

Mr. Micklefield: I do thank my—the member opposite for that question.

The provincial government—all provincial governments for many years have taken immigration seriously, put significant amounts of funds into immigration to Manitoba, and I think that our province has much to be grateful for. We are on record as the most generous province in the country, and I think everyone in this House is very proud of Folklorama, the largest international festival in the world, which celebrates culture, diversity; it's a testimony to the success of our immigration programs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate is open. Any speakers?

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It truly is an honour to rise today to put some words on the record with regards to this resolution. I am going to try to keep my remarks fairly short because I know there's others in the—other members that would like to speak to this.

But, again, I wanted to start by thanking members of the Yazidi community for coming here today, for being here for this important debate and to show your strength and resiliency to all Manitobans that you are here today, that you are a strong community. And a community that stands up for human rights, as we all do, I think is important here. So I wanted to welcome you here this morning.

I wanted to, as I mentioned in the previous hour, start just from a personal place. And, again, I know there are many here who can share similar experiences. But as many members of the Chamber know, my family came to Canada as refugees a number of years ago now, as Mennonite refugees to

Canada. And so, my family's experience is like many refugees. They were persecuted because of their faith and because of their cultural distinction in the place that they were, and they were victims of a war that was not of their making or not of their participation.

And so in that way, when I read and I hear about experience of the Yazidi community, I see a—many parallels, and I see so many ways that we are similar. You know, I read about the—being pushed out of their towns and villages and their traditional lands and having to travel many miles to find safety. And I had the experience over the past number of years of talking to members of my family who had very similar experiences being pushed out of their towns and villages, out of their homelands and having to travel, and the impact that just that experience had on their—on our family.

Now, I also talk, though—when I talk about our family coming as refugees, I talk about the amazing hope that coming to Canada represents. And I feel that, again, to mention that the resiliency experience— or, shown by this community shows that. It shows that that's the path forward that they're interested in taking, because this is the place of hope. This is the place where people from all over the world can find refuge and can find a place where there are supports, there's a community that welcomes them, and they do have a future here, and their family has a future here, and their children and grandchildren do.

And so, when I come to this place as a legislator, I represent the community that my family came to when they came as refugees to Canada. I hope that you see that same hope, that your children and your grandchildren may one day occupy these very seats in this Legislature and be part of the fabric of this community. Absolutely. So, I'm incredibly honoured to rise to talk about this.

One other point I should make that really touched me about the experience of the Yazidi community is that I know that the Mennonite Central Committee, which is started by refugees from the Mennonite community, actually is in Iraq and in the Middle East working with the Yazidi community. And so, again, to express that feeling that we've come here as refugees, we've been welcomed in this place, and now we're able to give back, again, an experience that I think they may share.

But this is an important resolution because it speaks to who we are as Canadians and who we are as Manitobans. And I feel that, you know, there are many experiences from around the world right now

that we can point to where there's unbelievable tragedy and unbelievable hardship being experienced by people for no other reason but their faith or their cultural background or their gender. And so this speaks to those experiences.

* (11:30)

I feel that we—in all opportunities that we have in this place, if we can urge the federal government to open up the floodgates to bring more people to this province where we can show our generosity as Manitobans and we can bring them in and we can support them. And I feel Manitobans have a big—have big hearts, and I know that as a government we want to show that support as well.

So in—on the opposition benches, certainly, we feel that this is an opportunity for us to talk about that, to encourage the government not only here to support newcomers as they come, but to urge that federal government to really step up, see these crisis for what they are, to bring people here to this country, to show them the love and the hope that we have in this place and to build a better world because of our generosity. And I think we are certainly able to do that.

So I thank the member for bringing this forward.

Again, I thank the community for being here. It's such an honour to have you here and to show this support, and I look forward to seeing support from all members for this resolution here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): From time to time, we have debates like this. In fact, I, along with the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), we are the three ranking members today in the Chamber; we've been here since 1999, and they would remember some of the debates we've had, non-partisan debates, debates where we all got together. There was the Holocaust Memorial Day, we passed that one; the Komagata Maru incident, we passed that unanimously; Holodomor remembrance day, massacre of—starvation of millions of Ukrainians. Then there was the apology of the residential school victims which we followed the lead of the federal government on; debate on the Nanking Massacre; Ukrainian freedom movement from Soviet domination—all very powerful, very sad and tragic moments in the history of our world.

So why, today, the Yazidi community? Why do we debate today about the Yazidis? Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say, bar none, the Yazidi community is the most persecuted religion or people on Earth—bar none, today. Even more so than the Jewish community and the Christians, the Yazidis are a target of persecution and massacre.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And the Yazidi faith—and I apologize if I'm going to use an electronic device to get my definition. The Yazidis are ethno-religious minority who are the remaining of an indigenous Mesopotamia religion dated at least 6,767 years ago. The name called Yazidi or Ez Wxode Dama, meaningfully, it was created by the Lord God. The Yazidis are among the world's oldest marginalized communities as adherents of one of the oldest remaining religions.

And I know a little bit about the Yazidis. I've been to a lot of their events: weddings, new year's functions and the like. I love coming, love how warmly we are greeted, love the food. The dancing—I think I almost have the dancing down pat. I am proof that some people probably shouldn't be dancing, but they show a lot of patience and they teach us how to dance.

But, when you go and you speak to the Yazidi community and you speak to the new refugees, it is so clear the hurt and the damage in the community. And you feel it, and you see it, and you hear it. The stories are appalling. That's why we today in this Chamber should do the right thing, as we have done for all those years that I've been here. We've taken on the right issues; we've debated the right issues and we always show leadership as a province. In fact, we are the biggest donors per capita in the nation; we are the highest level of volunteers, bar none, in the nation; we always bat above our level. We are always there as Manitobans. And so too is it right that we are here today.

In fact, I had the opportunity to meet a little boy, and we—probably saw his pictures. He was rescued from ISIS. His name is Emad Mishko Tamo. I believe he was here. I was in Brandon at the time—couldn't be here when there was a private statement discussing him and how he came out.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And there's a man by the name of Steve Maman who's out of Toronto, and he is the founder of the liberation of Christian Yazidi children of Iraq. He

alone has already been credited to have rescued over 140 Yazidi and Christian women and girls that had been captured by ISIS and that were forced in sex slavery.

There are many among us who take these issues serious. There are many among us who have historically taken these issues serious. And today is, again, one of those days where we take a serious issue—an issue that must be uncovered, that light must be shone on.

I would like to point out to the House that the Holodomor was taking place while the New York Times was making apologies for the Communist regime. And there were voices out of Winnipeg, out of this city, who stood up and said there's something going on in Ukraine that's wrong. There's something evil going on. And the New York Times, one of the pre-eminent newspapers of North America, was trying to cover it up. Shame on them. We stand head and shoulders when we take on these issues and we debate them.

This little boy—I'm not ashamed to say, when I did talk to him, I got emotional. Cute little guy, but boy can you feel the hurt when he talks to you. And you can see the pain in that little guy's eyes.

Either we have siblings or we have children or maybe grandchildren. We can't conceivably think that somebody would do such horrendous acts to the least amongst us, to the children who can't defend themselves. So sometimes it takes a Chamber like today to stand up for the least, for the weakest amongst us. And that's what we're doing.

The member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), spoke. For others, that'll probably follow. This is the right debate to have. This is the right resolution to be unanimous on. We've done it many, many times before. Let us do the righteous thing. Let us stand up for the least and the weakest amongst us.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I want to thank the member for bringing forward this resolution. I think it's important that we do have unanimity on it today. I note about a year ago we, on this side of the House, made a member's statement supporting Project Lazarus in Winnipeg. It's an exemplary project that brings together the Jewish community, the Mennonite community and many church congregations to support Yazidi refugees being here in Manitoba. And, from all accounts, they've done extremely well. They've been stellar members of our

community and have integrated extremely well into Canada where we do place a high priority on human rights. So I'm very pleased that we're moving forward on this resolution today.

And I would say this: the fact that the United Nations has declared the plight of the Yazidi people to be a genocide is a rare experience at the United Nations, to have that consensus to ensure that it's officially recognized as a genocide, because everybody knows that when you get to the United Nations, just takes one of five countries to veto any major resolution. And to have a global consensus on this is something that is extremely rare. Usually, they only achieve a consensus after it's too late. But in this case, we have a chance to send the proper message to the federal government to follow through on this.

It—they made a commitment; let's follow through on it. Let's ensure that Manitoba is a welcoming community. And it is. We have demonstrated that. Members have spoken about their families coming here to avoid oppression from other parts of the world. All of us have members in our families that have come from other parts of the world, whether it's the Odessa region, whether it's Russia, whether it's other parts of Europe that had to take the flight to freedom in order to have a life that they thought was going to allow them to live with dignity and respect in their own communities. And here in Manitoba, we can be an example of that. We can be a leader on ensuring that everybody has the right to live with dignity and respect, regardless of their religion, regardless of their background, regardless of their race, regardless of their gender, regardless of their orientation. All of those things are things that we can do here in Manitoba, and this motion today is completely consistent with that.

* (11:40)

And, yes, in supporting all of universal rights, human rights, we still can prioritize those people that are at the greatest risk of being extinguished not only culturally, not only linguistically, not only religiously, but extinguished in terms of their very existence, their very existential existence as human beings on this earth. And the Yazidi people have for decades been victimized by many oppressive regimes and have seen their numbers dramatically diminish, and to have them here in Manitoba where they can flourish with their language, with their culture, with their traditions is something we can be proud of.

So I do hope today that we will make this a unanimous resolution and work together to ensure that we have proper supports, settlement supports for families that are coming here, opportunities for them to fully integrate into our education system. And I've been into the schools and seen the young Yazidi people integrating fully into our schools and being a dynamic part of the schools, and in some cases providing leadership in the schools as young people on human rights issues, issues such as antibullying. So we can do many things here to make sure that Manitoba is a welcoming place for newcomers, particularly refugees.

It was just a couple years ago that Manitoba took the largest per capita number of Syrian refugees into our province. We identified that we could take up to 3,000 people, which was the highest per capita number of people in the country. And all of our community organizations and all of our government agencies pulled together through a Cabinet committee that co-ordinated that effort, and we resettled 3,000 people and they're, for the most part, doing well.

I know in my constituency, recently we had a community dinner, a Christmas dinner for one of our schools, Marion School, and I was—discovered that we had 17 new Syrian families that had moved into the neighbourhood. I hope that we have some Yazidi families that move into the neighbourhood as well. And I hope that when we bring people into our country, we do everything we can to help them have all the opportunities and services that are available within our community—at the school level, particularly community schools; at the social services level where there's support for housing and support for families; at the health-care system level where they need to have access to prevention services as well as the regular opportunities to participate in things like inoculation programs for viruses and the flu, all those kinds of things. These are things we can do together in Manitoba.

So this resolution today I think is one that we can all join hands on and be supportive of. We will win as members of the Legislature by supporting this. We will be following the example set for us not only by the Yazidi leadership itself, but by the churches and by the non-profit organizations and by the cultural groups and ethnic groups in Winnipeg which have come together to support prioritizing Yazidis refugees as people that are welcome here in Manitoba. When we do that we set an example not only for future generations, but we set an example

for the rest of the country, and even a little bit of an example for the world that when genocide is occurring we will be there to support people to escape those kinds of extinguishment activities going on, and we will do that in a way that allows people to live with dignity and respect within our own community.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this resolution. I thank the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) for bringing this forward. It is an important resolution.

I want to start by welcoming the people from the Yazidi community who are here today and say it is wonderful to have you here in Manitoba and in Canada. We welcome you here and we thank you for the contribution you are already making in Winnipeg and in Manitoba and in Canada.

The stories which we've already heard a small fraction of the atrocities which have been committed against the Yazidi people are horrifying. Just listening to these terrible stories of persecution leads us to ask, how could such awful things happen in our world today, and it is just because they have been happening and are continuing that it is important that we act and we continue to push for better opportunities for people in the Yazidi community and for those who are in the Yazidi community who want to come to Canada to be enabled to do so.

We have made progress. Under the former Conservative government there were three people who came from the Yazidi community to Canada. We are now more than 600. It is an important step forward, but it is not enough, and that is why we have the resolution today, because we need to push for more action.

This was one of the first issues that I raised with Jim Carr when he was elected a Member of Parliament, the prioritizing of enabling people from the Yazidi community to come to Canada. And I know that it is an issue that Jim Carr, as a Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South Centre, has been engaged in and has been pushing hard for, and he is one of the reasons we have got more than 600 people in the Yazidi community already in Canada.

But I know that there have been challenges for a variety of reasons, but we are Canadians, we are used to challenges and we must push through those challenges and what—we must do more to enable

people from the Yazidi community to come here who want to come here and have a good life, a great life here in Winnipeg and in Manitoba.

I salute the Yazidi people who have been through tremendous persecution, tremendous trials, tremendous struggles in order to get here. It is a story which we need to be more aware of and a story which we need to recognize as we accept and encourage more Yazidi people to come here and make their homes with us here in Manitoba.

So I am very pleased, as a member of the Manitoba Liberal Party, to join everyone else in this Chamber in embracing this resolution and thanking the member for Rossmere for bringing it forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any other speakers?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Again, I'd like to thank the member for bringing this motion forward.

The 'yazidi' community in Iraq has been long prosecuted, even in the Ottoman Empire to present day.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct the Minister for Infrastructure in his comment about—in his comments. The—according to the order of precedence Manitoba, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is the ranking member in this Chamber, followed by former premiers, and then the member from River Heights as a Privy Councillor, and those who follow that.

* (11:50)

Mr. Speaker, the 'yazidi' people have gone through a terrible ordeal, most famously—most recently when 40,000 'yazidis' were forced to take refuge in a mountain about 1,400 metres high and were isolated by ISIS forces, starving, thirsty and about to die. President Obama air-dropped supplies so that the people would survive, and until the Kurdish and 'yazidi' forces could create a corridor for the mostly women and children to escape. They did escape, and what I find interesting and fascinating is in spite of the horrific treatment of the women and children who were sold into sex slavery, murdered, tortured—in spite of all that, apparently, up to a third of the fighting force in the Kurdish-Yazidi coalition are many of those women, warriors fighting to save their families, their country, their children, fighting against extremism. These are the type of people that we should welcome in Canada, people who believe in family, people who believe in freedom, people

who put their lives on the line to have a better life for those who follow.

I'd like to thank the member for bringing this motion forward, and may God be with all those in the world who suffer, and maybe we as Canadians can help a fraction, but every person counts in the 'yazizi' community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? *[Agreed]*

I declare the resolution carried.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm wondering if you could canvass the House to see if there's agreement to call this unanimous.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call this resolution unanimous? Agreement? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): Would you canvass the House to see if there's a willingness to call it 12 o'clock?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the will of the House to call it 12 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being that—the hour being 12 p.m., the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

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