

Third Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LXI No. 30A - 10 a.m., Thursday, April 23, 2009

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 23, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I seek leave to move directly to Bill 217 this morning.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to move directly to Bill 217, The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 217—The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act

Mr. Speaker: So, second readings, public bills, Bill 217, The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), that Bill 217, The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, certainly very pleased to bring Bill 217 forward for debate in the House today, and certainly want to take this opportunity to thank the minister for his support on this particular bill, in seconding the bill that we brought forward back in November. Actually, this was done through something I believe in very strongly and talked about in this House and that's consultation.

I want to thank John Williams, in particular, the past president of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation and want to welcome the new president, Dale Garnham from Lockport, as the new president.

In fact, I had an opportunity to talk both with John on this particular bill, and yesterday I was speaking with Dale and asked that he may be able to come in and hear the debate on the bill. Unfortunately, neither one was able to make it. But, certainly, we'll be providing *Hansard* to those good people.

Also Lloyd Lintott, the Leg Affairs committee chair for the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, also another great individual that will give us some input on the drafting of this particular bill. As you know, this bill was based on other provinces' legislation. Ontario has similar legislation, the province of Alberta.

When we look at drafting this legislation that's going to be workable and be something that we can work with within the province of Manitoba, we certainly want to make sure that it's harmonious with other jurisdictions as well so it doesn't contradict those legislations. When we have legislation that does come forward, we want to make sure that we do preservation of wildlife as well. We understand that the right to hunt and fish is a God-given right, but we can't take that for granted. We want to make sure that, whenever we do this, it's going to be done so that the procedures that are followed through the Wildlife Federation and through the right to hunt and fish is done in a way that is going to manage wildlife, as well, and support it.

We know that a number of people, especially in the northern part of this province, do a large amount of trapping. That is a way of life. It's the way this province was built. It's the way which we know and understand that a number of management practices have been put in place to preserve wildlife and also manage wildlife.

I know, in my particular area, and the Member for Lac du Bonnet's (Mr. Hawranik) as well and a number of other areas, where wildlife and, in particular, wolves have come in. We've had an influx of wolves in certain areas and we need to manage those. This will give us some of those tools in order to be able to do that.

Also, in regard to fishing, we have a huge amount of tourism that comes in to the province of Manitoba. We are known for our great lakes, our great water, and certainly want to preserve that as well and manage it in such a way that we have that for our children and our grandchildren.

Also, the right to hunt. When we look at that, we look at a huge number of guides within the province of Manitoba that bring in a huge amount of economy into the province of Manitoba. I have one particular

outfitter in my area that you all may know quite well, and that's Wyman Sangster. He is a guide and brings in people from all over. In fact, Wyman was sharing with me the fact that the hurricane and the waters that came into New Orleans, he had a large number of people booked to come in from that particular area, and just the fees that he lost as a revenue item were some \$60,000. So you multiply that out times what they're going to be doing as far as spending money on hotels, money on food, money on recreational things and other things that are so important to go along with hunting and fishing, we certainly know that does have an impact within the province of Manitoba.

Also, I want to just touch about that our leader had an opportunity to speak to the Manitoba Wildlife Federation at their AGM. They wanted to talk about Bill 217. I know the minister is very much aware of how that supper went, the banquet. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be there, but he got a standing round of applause on that particular bill, and wanted to make sure that the message was carried forward to the Assembly that the Wildlife Federation was definitely much in support of it. We certainly encourage the debate to come forward on this bill, and we look forward to hearing what the government has to say in support of this particular legislation.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the other debate and those members in this Chamber who support the bill the way it has been brought in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): First off, let me commend the Member for Lakeside for his tenacity on this particular piece of legislation. I think what he is doing is something that is worthwhile, and you will see members on this side of the House standing in support of passage of Bill 217.

We do have a number of speakers on our side of the House who want to speak today. I look forward to hearing their further advice on this particular bill. I, too, want to join with the Member for Lakeside in congratulating the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. The number of times that John Williams has spoken to me about this issue, and other issues that pertain to his membership, I've very much appreciated and very much value the input that they have.

* (10:10)

Also, I, too, want to join the Member for Lakeside in wishing Dale Garnham success in his tenureship as the new president. I know Dale from

the issues that we've dealt on through our department and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. I have a great deal of respect for the work he's done and the advice that he gives to this minister and our government in terms of hunting policy. As a matter of fact, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) points out that we do follow the advice that we get from the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. I appreciate that vote of confidence by the Member for Russell.

Mr. Speaker, another group that we have had conversations in terms of this whole area, and was partially recognized by the Member for Lakeside, is the Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association; the new president there, Pit Turenne out of Aikens Lodge; and their executive director, Ryan Suffron, who also deal with us on a good number of these types of issues.

As well, I do want to mention the work of some of the people in our Department of Conservation who understand these issues, who work very closely with lodge and outfitters and with the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, with municipalities who are interested in this as well, who've brought these issues forward at different opportunities when I've had to meet with them. The people in our department understand these issues and are working very hard to follow up on suggestions made by these groups which I think is good. I think that makes for a stronger, not just a stronger hunting contingent within our province, and not just a better offering that we can make to people coming in from outside of our province, but I've always thought this is a fundamental issue in our province. Not only in rural and northern parts of our province, but I talk to people from the city of Winnipeg and our urban centres who are involved in hunting, who are involved in trapping, who are involved in fishing, who are involved in ecotourism opportunities, in every part of Manitoba. I think we need to be doing things that support those kinds of activities.

I think what we can very clearly see, and we've seen it since World War II, Canada has urbanized on a faster pace than any other western country. That has produced a shift in the public agenda. That shift in public agenda hasn't been one that has always seen these activities in the greatest of lights. We don't want to be supporting those who are out there who would damage the environment, or who would simply go hunting or fishing for some pretty nefarious reasons. We wouldn't support, for example, commercialization of species of animals like we've seen in the past. But there are, in my view, legitimate

hunters and fishers and trappers out there who do deserve the support of us as public officials.

I want to set a little bit of the national framework, the context in which we are bringing forward this bill. First of all, I hear a lot of people talking about rights. We have to understand that that's an important discussion that needs to take place but there are limits to rights. Anybody who has a right has to understand that.

The first limit, and this is backed up by Supreme Court decisions, the Sparrow decision in particular and others, that the very first consideration is conservation—conservation and safety. I think we cannot forget that is the very first, and I think, most important premise by which we introduce anything that has to do with rights, no matter whose rights these are.

The premise is easy. If there's no moose in an area, if somebody shoots the last moose, there's no right to shoot the next one. If they catch the last fish in an area, there's no fish left to be caught to exercise rights. That is the very first premise by which we have to move forward on this, and that is backed up by our Constitution and by Supreme Court decisions flowing from challenges to our courts. I think we also need to—and we will be considering an amendment coming forward on this.

I do commend the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) for the non-derogation clause having to do with First Nations rights holders. I think that's a very good step in the bill, except, I think, we can strengthen that in a way that makes this a better bill and really makes clear some of the constitutional obligations that we already have to First Nations. We will be looking to work with the Member for Lakeside on that. It's just an enhancement of what he has there already. I think we need to give the Member for Lakeside credit for including that in this bill; that's a very important aspect to Bill 217. *[interjection]* As the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) says, maybe I shouldn't go overboard on the praise that I give to the Member for Lakeside. His ego will grow and grow, but that's okay, he's taken a rough time on some other issues and that might balance things out. So I very much appreciate working with the Member for Lakeside on this.

I think as long as we understand the national framework in which we're bringing forward this bill. I think it is a very legitimate bill. I think it is a very good bill that should be supported by all. It touches upon the heritage of so many of us, who have grown

up in rural areas, who have dads and moms and grandparents who participated in hunting and trapping and fishing activities, not so much as recreational activities, but in the case of my grandparents, who homesteaded in the Swan River Valley area, it was a way of life and, as my grandmother always told me, was a way of survival in the 1930s when times were really tough.

My grandmother talks about living in a trailer out in the bush. My grandfather built little roads out in the Swan River Valley to help open up the area to farming. She tells me this story about looking out the window of her trailer, seeing a spruce grouse and just opening the window of the trailer, pointing the gun out the window and shooting the spruce grouse and that became my grandfather's meal that night. That was the 1930s. Those were times when my grandparents didn't have a lot of money. They had always, as young people, they'd grown up in the Swan River Valley, it was a way of life for them.

I don't know of many people these days who live in a trailer and point a gun out the window and shoot a spruce grouse for supper, not many. *[interjection]* Well, there may be a few around, but you know what, there's nothing wrong with that. Especially in the 1930s when times were tough and you were—*[interjection]* Yes, don't be going out and shooting any endangered species. I don't want to give you the wrong impression.

But in the 1930s, when that was more prevalent, it was a matter of not, sometimes, knowing when you're next meal was going to hit the table, what that next meal was going to be. Mr. Speaker, that kind of a story also becomes part of the folklore in the family because if I had a dollar for every time my grandmother told me that story, I could probably cover the debt that the Tories run up in the 1990s.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words—and that's just from one story—I congratulate the Member for Lakeside for bringing this forward and look forward to supporting it down the road. Thank you.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I'm pleased to put a few words on the record on Bill 217, The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act.

This is a bill that looks to put the rights that we believe we have into legislation and enshrine it in legislation. I think it's a very good bill. I think there are a lot of good things to be said about it. We do talk, and I heard the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) talk, about conservation being a key

factor. Most of the things that we look to do with conservation are in place. There are licences and there are permits and there are limits on most hunting and fishing and trapping.

* (10:20)

The trapping industry has somewhat been under duress over the last number of years but still is a very valuable industry to quite a few Manitobans. It's a way of life for some people and it's also a source of income for some people.

I know, in the area where I live, we have—and with my background with municipalities prior to this, I never saw a municipal convention that didn't have a couple of resolutions in the book on problem beaver. When we saw the drop in some of the fur prices, we also saw an increase in the number of beaver that were out there causing problems to private and municipal property and it's critical that, in some cases, there are harvests of some of the animals that are a problem to infrastructure and private property.

Almost any species will overpopulate if absolutely left alone or populate out of balance with other species. We see it at times with the white-tailed deer populations and the cut-downs in actual hunting and harvests on them.

The economic factors that pertain and are related to this bill are a lot larger than a lot of people probably realize in this province. I'm in an area where there's quite a large population of waterfowl, with the big grass marsh not too far from my area in the pothole country to the west of me and, on my own farm, every year for the last four years, I've had three young fellows from Tennessee that come up there, and one from Atlanta, Georgia, and hunt geese and ducks for a week in that area.

I don't charge them anything. Over the years, I've taken a lot of waterfowl damage on my crops so I'm quite happy to see some harvest done on the waterfowl there. These young fellows drive all the way up from Tennessee and spend a week in the community, stay in the motel, buy their meals; it's quite an economic boom to my community, and they're not alone. Last year, in the fall of the year, I saw licence plates from Kentucky, from Oregon, quite a number from the central states, South Dakota and Iowa, and every one of them is contributing to the economies in rural Manitoba, and it's certainly much appreciated and very valuable.

I know the bill is pertaining to our own rights in this province, but it certainly goes beyond there.

When we have out-of-province hunters and fishers coming into the area it's certainly creating some economic impact.

I recently was talking to Terry Ledoux, who runs the taxidermy school in McCreary. Terry is also an outfitter and a guide. That particular area is noted for the black bear population. There are a lot of them next to the national park. I think he has about 18 tags—and those tags are, they purchase them and then they have hunters come to fill their tags and it's quite a process that they go through. He tells me all his tags are spoken for up until 2011. Even if you wanted to get a bear tag in that area, you probably couldn't get one right now. It was interesting when he told me some of the names of some of the people that come into that area to use his services. Jim Gantner, Milwaukee Brewers Hall of Fame, Robin Yeltz, Milwaukee Brewers Hall of Fame. He's had Jim Edwards, vice-president of Caterpillar Corporation for North America, Don Mahoney, the former Mr. Universe. These people travel with a lot of money in their pockets, and a small town like McCreary, which is where Terry Ledoux's taxidermy school and shop are, it creates tremendous impact for their economy and really helps them out.

Just to expand a little bit on Terry Ledoux's taxidermy shop, he also, as I said, runs a school, and he's run it in a couple of communities in Nunavut. He's also been in the Northwest Territories with his school. There are very few taxidermy schools, and that's another bonus that comes out of the basic premise of this bill that the hunting, fishing and trapping rights are enshrined rights and should be recognized as that.

As the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) said, there's always a limit to rights, whatever rights might be there, and conservation is one of the main limiting features. I heard him refer to some of his ancestors and what they did as they were growing up. My mother grew up near the escarpment just west of McCreary and south of Laurier. She was one of 10 children, and they basically lived off wild meat when they were growing up. They needed food, needed meat. They would go out and shoot a deer or shoot an elk. That was just a very necessary part of their life. That's not so much the case any more although wild game and wild meat is certainly a part of quite a few Manitoban's diets still.

So I would urge the members opposite to support this bill. I heard them speak about a possible amendment. I don't know whether that's

materializing or not, but I would urge the members opposite to support this bill.

With those few words, I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It's my pleasure to rise this morning, and I find myself in a unique position of being in support of the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) in raising this. I know he and I have our differences on occasion, but I think we stand united today as we do with the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) in speaking in favour of the recognition and preservation of hunting, fishing and trapping in our province and as a component of our society.

Our position as government is that hunting, fishing and trapping is a vital part of our rich natural heritage. Our wildlife resources and their utilization are important to a variety of people as a part of their culture, as a source of natural food and as a means to support local economic development in rural areas. Our government recognizes this and is committed to ensuring that hunting, fishing and trapping will continue to be available to all Manitobans now and into the future.

It's my understanding that one of the basic tenets of common law is that which is not expressly forbidden in law is allowed.

* (10:30)

If you look at our legislation, there is nothing really there that, in a sense, allows for hunting. There's a lot of regulations pertaining to it and so forth, but I think it's wise of us to positively state the need for legislation in favour of hunting, fishing and trapping so that it's unequivocal that there is no doubt that we are in support of this and that we would resist any attempts to change this.

I recognize what brought this legislation on, the genesis of it, and that was a potential amendment to the Criminal Code, as I understand it, dealing with cruelty to animals. I guess there was some potential that the act of hunting or the act of trapping in itself might be perceived as a form of cruelty to animals which led to legislation in other provinces, B.C., Alberta and Ontario, and is under debate here today. I think that's a very legitimate approach.

When we debated a piece of legislation a number of years ago, legislation on panned hunting in this Chamber, I learned that at that time roughly 10 percent of the population was in favour of

hunting, roughly 10 percent was opposed to hunting, 80 percent of the population was ambivalent toward it, and we cannot take that for granted that that ambivalence will remain. We have to recognize that one side or the other, if it mobilizes and starts to advertise and lobby, can actually swing public opinion. So that was our logic behind the banning of panned hunting back in 1999.

I remember when I was first elected, the first three acts that came through the Legislature here were, of course, a ban on union and corporate donations. We had to reconstitute The Water Rights Act, which was a very important thing, and we banned panned hunting, because, while we were in favour of hunting, we recognized that the practice of penning animals and then going out and hunting them was not a very positive thing and was something that could mobilize public opinion against hunting in general, which was our logic in that sense.

We see that the green movement in Europe, for example, has managed to denigrate the practice of trapping. As we all know, trapping is a very important way of life, as is hunting and fishing to our Aboriginal people, and the fact that opponents of trapping in Europe were so successful in lobbying against trapping has had a very negative impact on our Aboriginal peoples here in Canada in the sense that fur became less and less popular.

Now, many, many years ago, of course, the trappers themselves moved toward improving this in introducing the Conibear traps, which kill instantly. So, even though we had already taken the steps to ensure that trapping was not cruel in that sense, still we suffered because we were complacent and those opposed to trapping were very successful in lobbying the forces against it.

So legislation such as this is pre-emptive in the sense that we want to assure the public that we're in favour of it.

I do want to also remind the House of a resolution that I put forward here, because I think inherent to hunting and trapping is the use of firearms and the right to bear arms, so to speak, and this is something that's been under attack as well by the federal Liberals and, I think, Liberals here in Manitoba are probably opposed to it as well. So I had to step forward. Back on June 10 of 2004, I introduced a resolution in this House and I think members will recall it, Resolution No. 3, The Gun Registry, which outlined our position very clearly.

I would like to table this document, Mr. Speaker, but I would also seek leave of the House to have the text of the resolution included in my speech. So, if I could do that.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to have the text of his resolution incorporated into part of his speech? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Nevakshonoff: I thank members of the House for that. I could have read it into the record but it's quicker this way.

Certified copy of a Resolution agreed to in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba on June 10, 2004, on motion of Mr. Nevakshonoff:

WHEREAS the federal government introduced the ill-conceived federal gun registration scheme; and

WHEREAS the firearms registry scheme will serve only to penalize law-abiding gun owners; and

WHEREAS many serious crimes are committed with illegal guns from the United States which is not adequately addressed in the federal government's registry program; and

WHEREAS the cost of this program was initially estimated at \$2 million but has since ballooned to over \$2 billion; and

WHEREAS by scrapping the registry, these funds could be diverted towards important areas such as gun smuggling prevention and support programs and policies; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba government has spoken out against the program on numerous occasions and will not prosecute registration offences under the firearms act or the Criminal Code; and

WHEREAS several provinces have asked Ottawa to suspend the registry.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the federal government to abandon the gun registry and to divert funds and energy towards other more necessary areas of crime prevention; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly direct the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly to send a copy of this resolution to the federal government.

Having the right to carry firearms, to use firearms, is very important, not just for hunting. I think of myself as a businessman and on the one side, I have a fishing lodge up in northern Manitoba. One of the problems, of course, that we experience,

is the occasional bear moving in. Bears can be very problematic. As much as we hesitate to have to remove them, sometimes that's necessary because they are a danger to the public, to our families and so forth.

But on the other side of the coin, I'm also a rural landowner, and my wife and I are starting to farm sheep. Of course, that brings up the issue of predators because wolves, coyotes, bears, again, these are all a danger to our livestock. Unless we have the free and ready use of firearms to take action and remove some of these animals when they threaten our livelihood, then that makes it all that much more difficult for us. On occasion, we need firearms to euthanize livestock and so forth, or even to harvest our own livestock for our own personal use.

I want to state unequivocally, again, our support of the use of firearms. The Liberals opposite here were suggesting that the NDP was against—or in favour of the firearms registry. I think if you look at the actual record in the Parliament, that the New Democratic Party voted against the establishment of the firearms registry, Bill C-68, with the exception of Svend Robinson, who was the only New Democrat in all of Canada that voted in favour of the firearms registry at that point in time. In reality, when it went to the Senate, I think it was, there were actually three Conservatives, or members of the Alliance, that voted in favour of the firearms registry. A number of them, I believe it was six of them, actually abstained from the vote in the Senate, which was what put it over the top in the Senate. So really, even the Conservatives at the national level were more in favour of the firearms registry than the NDP was at the time. So I think that's worthy of putting on the record.

Other things that we have done as a government I have to draw attention to as well. Sunday hunting needs to be mentioned because up until not too long ago, hunting for big game was closed to most Manitobans, which wasn't very good for local hunters or people who were in Winnipeg that wanted to hunt. You know, you have to work during the week, you drive out to the country Friday, you get to hunt Saturday and that was it. Sunday you had to, basically, sit around the camp and pack up and go home. Now, if we were allowed to hunt on Sunday, which we now are, that makes it worthwhile to actually spend the weekend and go out to the country and hunt.

I live in Poplarfield, which is King Buck Country; that's our motto. We have a huge statue of the white-tailed deer in our park and hunting is very important to the locals in that area. There are many outfitters and many relatives of people from Poplarfield, who now live in the city, who come out to hunt. It's very important to the local economy. The hotels are booked up for a couple of months in the fall starting with bird season, then going through archery, and then through elk, and then finally, white-tailed. So that's a period of the entire late summer into early winter that the restaurants are making business, that—

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

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to put a few points on the record regarding Bill 217, The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act.

* (10:40)

I want to thank the member, my colleague from Lakeside, for bringing this forward again. I know that the first time that he introduced it was back on November 25, 2008.

So this would guarantee a person's right to hunt, fish and trap in accordance with the law and, of course, that that is primarily what we want to make sure happens with this bill.

But I've been listening intently to the points made by the Member for Interlake, and I'm not sure whether he was listening to the point that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) was making, but it appeared to me that the Member for Interlake indicated that they were quite prepared to pass this resolution—or this bill, rather, Bill 217. So I'm not sure whether they have been communicating with each other or not. Again, I'm just in a little bit of a quandary in wondering whether they would like to pass this bill today or not.

But a few points that I want to put on the record is to, also, to indicate that it is good to know that there is support from both sides.

I want to refer back to 1996, and, Mr. Speaker, that was a cold winter with a lot of snow. A part of what we're looking at here today came into play during that time when I had constituents of mine, who are hunters, and they were out just looking around in the area. This was in the December-January part of the year and it was not hunting

season. But they were asking for special privileges and permission to go and hunt deer. In fact, what was taking place was because of the severe winter, the cold, the snow, that the deer could not find food that they needed, and so these deer were starving. So they were asking for provisions made within the law to make exceptions that would allow them to go and hunt and then, in fact, they were going to go and prepare the meat and bring it to Winnipeg Harvest.

I remember being a part of this whole process in trying to get permission for these gentlemen to do that. Again, it was out of the goodness of their heart. Number 1, they didn't like to see deer out there starving and going through that agony. Number 2, they felt that if they could, in fact, go and harvest the meat from these animals, give it to Winnipeg Harvest—the area where there was great need—that this was solving two purposes.

So, anyway, Mr. Speaker, we went through the process to try and get special permission. This did not take place because all kinds of advocacy groups were out there stating that they didn't want the poor Bambis harmed in any way—which I understand. I mean, none of us want to see animals out there suffer, but the point that we made was that starvation, freezing was worse than going out there and, in fact, hunting these animals and then preparing the meat.

So, long story short, at the end of the day nothing did happen. I know that that year there was an extreme number of deer that died of starvation and freezing as a result of this. So the balance of nature doesn't—well, it continues to work, I guess. It worked in this case as well. We just felt that there was a better way of proceeding and to help balance the nature and move ahead.

So that was one experience that I have had with trying to enact some of the provisions that are out there, and I think that, in part, this bill would speak to that which would allow that to take place.

Mr. Speaker, I also know that there are other circumstances where a bill like this would be beneficial to people who are out there looking for opportunities to, in fact, harvest and to go hunting, fishing and trapping.

Now, the other part of it, the fishing part—and that's probably what I would rather do, is go fishing than go hunting. Although, I do have to relay the experience that I did have going hunting. A number of years ago, a good friend of mine who's a hunter,

and I had the opportunity to go with him to hunt moose, and this was up in northern Manitoba. We went way north. But I do have to tell you that after four days of—it was cold out there rather—going through the forest and looking for this moose that was out there. On the fourth day, we actually did find it, the one that we had been stalking for four days and, as I was about to try and put this moose down, someone else got him, and I said, that's the end of my hunting experiences. So four days of walking and definitely enjoying the trails out there, but that was my one experience. After that, I decided that the simplest way for me to put meat on the table would be to go to my feedlot, and if I needed to chase an animal around I could that. But that was one way of being able to put food on the table for my family.

So I think we could all relate some experiences that we have had. I know that not everyone out here is a hunter or a fisherman, but we've all had experiences. I want to come back to the Bill 217. Certainly, again, it's good to hear that we have support from both sides. I would like to see us pass this bill today so that we can move ahead. I think it's a good bill and I know the minister has said he would like to put an amendment on there, but the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) has indicated that he's quite satisfied with this bill. So I think that maybe what we need to do is just put to a test, a vote here in the House, and to see if it would pass, because we do have a lot of people who are supporting this bill.

So with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record. Thank you.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I'm putting a few words on the record regarding Bill 217, brought forward by the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act.

This proposed bill certainly speaks to the northern region of our province, and since I am an MLA for a northern riding, it certainly speaks to a lot of people in my riding. In fact, hunting, fishing and trapping touches virtually all people in northern Manitoba, particularly Aboriginal people. I guess if there is a weakness—or not even a weakness, but something that we have to tweak, I guess—would be that portion relating to Aboriginal people, that their hunting, fishing and trapping rights are respected. I'm not saying that the Member for Lakeside is against that, but it's not very clear in the bill itself.

As I've said, Mr. Speaker, I come from northern Manitoba. When I came to northern Manitoba in 1972, I came from Saskatchewan. I thought I was a pretty good fisherman and hunter and, I suppose, trapper, and learned very quickly that I wasn't. I became part of the school trapline. The school actually had a trapline, 60 square miles of it, and I was the leader, the alleged leader. A lot of our students were Aboriginal students from the north and they were part of this trappers' club, and I was going to teach them how to trap. Well, it didn't take me long to realize they were teaching me how to trap. But we had some really good times. I got very much involved in the hunting, trapping and fishing culture of northern Manitoba. I remember, in 1973, the local fish and game league, I won the trophy for the largest moose in the region and also the largest jackfish. I'm still proud of those trophies. The only two I ever won, actually, when it comes to hunting and fishing.

The trappers' club was a great success and, particularly, it was a success because it wasn't just trapping, it was also fishing. We had a lake called Election Lake, where we taught students how to catch fish and the fish was used at the school. So we actually used what we caught.

Also, I guess I should mention that, in regions of my constituency, particularly the far north, Brochet, Lac Brochet, Tadoule, but also Lynn Lake, to some extent, South Indian Lake, and so on, people rely an awful lot on caribou. Mr. Speaker, it was particularly disconcerting, a number of years ago, when I got a call from Jimmy Clipping, in Tadoule Lake, saying, because of the gun registry legislation, they were unable to buy ammunition and do their annual hunt, their communal hunt. So we had to go through a lot of red tape and so on, to finally work around or work through the loopholes in that gun registration, which later on became quite a boondoggle, to be able to get the people of Tadoule Lake the necessary ammunition so they could carry on the hunting tradition they had been carrying on for many, many decades, if not centuries.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I was part of the trapline and Frontier Collegiate Institute for 20-some years. I think it was a wonderful way to teach students, to take them outdoors. I was watching a program yesterday that pointed out that, if students get a lot of exercise, they seem to be much more keen on learning, and academically, they improve. It seemed to bear fruit, as well, in what we were doing in Frontier Collegiate in those days. We had snowmobiles. We had equipment. We had traps,

canoes, and so on. In fact, we even had a trappers' cabin. We would take the students there on the weekend and they would stay at the cabin. So those were wonderful educational experiences, and they fitted right in with the north, and they were transitional experiences, which would take some of our students who came from very isolated areas, actually, may have been raised on a trapline, and integrated, to some degree, into southern culture. So it was a logical place to be operating, at a school which also had a trapline. Also I should say that the students are allowed to keep whatever they made on the trapline. I remember one year the student total was well over \$10,000 and this was 20 years ago, I'm sure, so that was a lot of money then.

*(10:50)

I should point out there were a number of really wonderful people who helped the students and helped me with regard to trapping, fishing and hunting, but basically trapping. I'd like to mention Cameron McLean because he happens to be in town. Cameron is being treated for cancer right now, but he was very instrumental in helping us with the commercial—I guess it wasn't really commercial fishing, but fishing for the school.

He was the person that you would go to if you needed the nets fixed or if you needed to catch the fish. He was very helpful for the students. Another one was a lady called Mrs. Bucholz. She was the only lady trapper in northern Manitoba and very often she would talk to some of our students or demonstrate to some of our students how to properly prepare pelts, how to skin a beaver or a mink or whatever. She was a wonderful lady and actually had a dog team. She would go out to her trapline with a dog team. She was very useful for us. She's now deceased, unfortunately, but she was a wonderful lady that helped us a lot.

Another person that I should mention is King Trapper, Roger Carriere who, incidentally, is also related to the Member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead). Roger Carriere is an icon in the north. He is always in our hearts, King Trapper. He was the best by far of all king trappers and, in 1967, he actually was part of the centennial project with a group of canoers—or with a large canoe, I guess a centennial canoe they took from, I think it was Rocky Mountain House all the way down to Montreal.

So King Trapper used to come to our school and demonstrate to our students not only responsible wildlife management, but how to set humane traps

and so on. That's another thing I should point out. We used to start with leg hold traps and then moved on to the Conibear, which were much more humane. But Roger Carriere was just a wonderful educator. In fact he even has a segment on Sesame Street. He was one of those great educators that helped us a lot.

Another person I should mention was Phillip Bachnik who is now retired in The Pas. Phil Bachnik was a prospector, a trapper and a fisherman, basically a prospector and he lived on Neso Lake. He would invite entire groups of our students over, students that belonged to the trappers club, and he would show them again how to set a trap properly, how to skin an animal properly to make sure we could get maximum value for the fur and so on.

So those are some of the wonderful people we work with that helped us take our students from the subsistence culture they came from into the next level. Many of those students, of course, are now highly educated and playing major roles in southern Manitoba. Some of them, of course, stayed with their traditional way of life and live in northern Manitoba where many of them are leaders today.

I'm very much aware, Mr. Speaker, of the importance of hunting, fishing and trapping and our heritage. Certainly Canada itself is built on the fur trade so our whole history is connected to the fur trade. I should also point out, as the Member for Interlake did, that our government has done some very interesting things. He has mentioned the expansion of Sunday hunting. The Province passed a regulation March 6, 2009 that extends Sunday hunting for deer, moose, elk, caribou, bear, wolf and coyote across the entire province. Hunting was expanded to big game hunting areas in northern Manitoba GH 13A, 18A, 18B, 18C, 19, 19A and 19B.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we extended the grey wolf hunting season considerably. I should also point out that Manitoba, among all the provinces, has the lowest trapping fees. I should also point out that we have done some very interesting things with regard to being flexible to help out hunters and to help out fishermen, but hunters particularly, including improvements to hunting options for a variety of people and also for hunting options for resident youths. For example, a shared bag limit allows resident youth hunters to hunt under the direct supervision of a licensed adult supervisor. There are special youth hunting licences for deer, for game birds and wild turkeys. Those are also available.

Mr. Speaker, I should also point out that we have been expanding a network of protected areas. I don't think I have to mention, they're well known. I know other speakers want to get in on this. I want to just mention that we have banned logging in the parks in 79 out of 80 parks. It does affect some of my loggers, incidentally, in the Grass River Park, but I know we're working very hard to find them alternate wood supply outside the park, but it is just another way of protecting wildness areas.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank you very much.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a few brief words on the record with respect to Bill 217. I commend the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) for bringing forward this bill. I think it's an important bill that's worthy of consideration and worthy to be voted on and passed in this Legislature. Whether it gets passed today or whether it gets passed at a later point, it is worthy to be passed.

I want to put a few brief words on the record with respect to the fact that fishing, hunting and trapping is really part of our Manitoba history. My grandfather came to Manitoba in 1905, and when he came to settle in Manitoba, he settled on a 160-acre farm that had more stones on it than it had farmland and good, arable land, just east of Whitemouth, about four miles east of Whitemouth.

During that time, he was required to clear 10 acres of land within that year. When he came in the spring, he was required to clear 10 acres of land within that year and prepare the land for planting a crop the following year and construct a home, all in that same year.

In any event, he did that. He was able to keep that homestead property, and because it had so many stones on that property, he was essentially forced hunt, fish and trap on an almost year-round basis for food, as many other pioneers did within the province during that period of time.

So, I think it's important that we do recognize this bill as an important part of our history. It's been passed in other provinces. I would invite members, in particular, to go to Rennie, Manitoba, which is in my constituency, in the constituency of Lac du Bonnet, and visit the Trappers Museum, the Manitoba Trappers Museum that is in Rennie. Pick up a brochure and on the front of that brochure happens to be a picture of my uncle, Victor

Hawranik, who owned a trapline on Meditation Lake, where now, I understand, Tim Hortons is going to be building a children's camp. He had that trapline for about 40 years, Mr. Speaker. In fact, he died on that trapline in the early 1970s while he was trapping. My father, also, was an avid trapper, as well, and he owned traplines at Crowduck Lake, which is also in the constituency, in the Whiteshell Provincial Park.

But my uncle Victor was a full-time trapper, which is almost unheard of in southern Manitoba in many respects. That's what he did for a living, and he was proud of that. As a result of that, in the Manitoba Trappers Museum, they had his picture on the front page of the brochure and still have it, including his trapper's cabin on Meditation Lake. As well, when you approach Rennie, you'll see signs on Highway 44 telling everyone where the museum is, and his picture is on that sign, as well.

I just wanted to put those few comments on the record, just in honour of my uncle. I know we dearly miss him, and my dad often talked about him after he passed away. Thank you.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to take part in the debate today on this piece of legislation, The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. As many members in this Chamber have mentioned, hunting and fishing have been part of their families' heritage and traditions for years, as it is with mine. I was hunting with my father and my brother since I was a young boy. In fact, I bought my licence last year, and I went out hunting geese. Our family lives, we live just west of Selkirk in what's commonly known as the Oak Hammock Marsh area, and we lived there all our lives. We would often go out into the marsh, hunt ducks and geese, and not always successful.

Like last year, I guess I told you I went out last year and, as they say, I had a great shoot. Did you get anything? No, I did not, Mr. Speaker, but I had a great shoot, as they say. I enjoyed just being outside in the late fall, as I know many hunters do. It's not always about going out and bagging an animal. It's often going out just to enjoy the beautiful air and the beautiful scenery that we have here in Manitoba in the late fall.

Members mention the issue of trapping, and that is what drew my ancestors to Manitoba close to this area, Mr. Speaker, close to 200 hundred years ago. They were Hudson Bay men, and they followed employment from the Orkney Islands and the

Shetland Islands in the northern part of Scotland. They followed the—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Selkirk will have eight minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

The hour being 11 a.m., we will now move on to Resolutions, and we will deal with Resolution No. 3, Manitoba's Growing Debt is a Worrisome Liability.

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): House business first.

Mr. Speaker: On House business first? Okay.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered on the next sitting Thursday, is the resolution on Lack of a Long-term Plan for Manitoba's Economic Growth, sponsored by the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen).

Mr. Speaker: Okay, in accordance with our rule 31(9), it's been announced that the private member's resolution that will be considered on the next sitting Thursday is the resolution on Lack of a Long-term Plan for Manitoba's Economic Growth, sponsored by the honourable Member for Carman.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 3—Manitoba's Growing Debt is a Worrisome Liability

Mr. Speaker: Okay, now we will move on to resolutions.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik),

WHEREAS Manitoba's provincial debt is growing at a dangerous pace, which places an unfair burden on future generations; and

WHEREAS provinces to the west of Manitoba have reduced provincial debt in the last 10 years while Manitoba's debt has grown; and

WHEREAS in the last year, Manitoba's debt has grown by more than 10 percent or over \$1 billion; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is reducing the amount of debt it is legally bound to repay annually; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's provincial debt per capita is more than eight times higher than the debt per capita of the residents of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan combined; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's growing provincial debt will have a negative impact on the province's economy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to acknowledge that Manitoba requires an effective plan for debt repayment that it abides by each year with the ultimate goal of achieving debt-free status.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), seconded by the honourable Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik),

WHEREAS Manitoba—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a number of comments on the record with respect to this resolution. As we all, I think, acknowledge in this Chamber, debt is something that not only we should avoid as individuals, we should also avoid debt in our corporations and businesses and, of course, the same holds true for government.

We should all be striving in this province, personally, corporate-wise, business-wise and as a provincial Legislature, to reduce debt and not to increase debt, particularly since we all know that interest rates are low. First of all, at this point, they're low, but when they increase, if you have debt, of course, that just takes away from providing services and programs to members of our province.

So, debt certainly is a worrisome liability, particularly when it increases, and it has increased, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest to some of the responses made by the Finance Minister over the last couple of weeks in question period when asked about our increasing debt. I know the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) asked a question a number of times with respect to the debt in this province and how it's increasing and so on, and one of his statements really shocked, I believe, members

in this House when he indicated that the net debt of the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan combined is less than the net debt in Manitoba. I noted the Finance Minister's response to that question. He seemed to not acknowledge that that was the case, and a couple of days later, in question period, he seemed to indicate that that was not correct.

I think the Finance Minister should stand corrected with respect to his indicating that the statement was incorrect because what he did was he mixed up net debt with total debt. He pointed to the fact that British Columbia has a total debt of more than \$20 billion, similar to Manitoba's, and then he proceeded to add zero for Alberta and add the net debt for Saskatchewan, and said, well, you add all those three figures and it's higher than Manitoba's net debt.

He wasn't comparing apples to apples, Mr. Speaker, he wasn't comparing oranges to oranges. He was comparing our net debt as compared to the total debt of British Columbia and the net debt of both Alberta and Saskatchewan. That's the kind of thing that's been happening regularly in this Legislature in terms of responses to questions, particularly relating to debt and the fact that it seems expedient to the minister and to the government to confuse the issue rather than clarify the issue for all Manitobans.

When you look at the net debt of Alberta, which is zero, you look at the net debt of British Columbia, and you add the net debt of Saskatchewan, it clearly is less than the net debt here in Manitoba. I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) sometimes points to the net debt-to-GDP ratio and indicates it's declining, but this year in the budget, it actually increased.

What the Minister of Finance hasn't indicated in this Legislature is, first of all, even if debt were to remain the same from 1999 all the way to 2009, let's say it was \$11 billion in 1999 and stayed at \$11 billion in 2009. When you use the net debt-to-GDP ratio, the reality is, that ratio will decline even though debt has not declined, Mr. Speaker. The reason being is the GDP of the province simply goes up with inflation. Even if the net debt went up by about 2 percent a year, the reality is the net debt-to-GDP ratio would not increase.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So that's the confusing part, and that's why the Minister of Finance and this government continue to

rely on net debt-to-GDP ratio because it knows that it can increase the net debt in this province by at least 2 percent a year, and inflation itself would allow the net debt-to-GDP ratio not to increase. That in itself, Mr. Acting Speaker, is really, in my view, misleading Manitobans, and it really is worrisome because our debt is increasing, our interest costs are increasing, and we should be concerned about that.

Now, we've had a 10-year period within which interest rates have been very low. I remember though, in the early 1980s, when interest rates were 19 percent, 20 percent and 21 percent. I did mortgages for farmers and businesses and individuals who had mortgages of 19 percent interest rates, 20 percent interest rates. Canada Savings Bonds, in the early 1980s, were paying 18 percent interest every year.

So those kinds of years can return. Simply because in the last 10 years we've had declining interest rates from 1999 all the way to date, doesn't mean it's going to stay that way. And if interest rates go up, general consumer interest rates go up to 10 percent, you can bet the government's not going to be getting interest rates from banks on their borrowings for 4 percent, 5 percent or 6 percent or even 3 percent. It's going to go up to 7 percent or 8 percent.

The other concern I've got with the debt, Mr. Acting Speaker, is the fact that it appears as though the government continues to want to rely on the net-debt figures versus the total-debt numbers. That is of grave concern to me because the interest that is paid, the debt-servicing costs that are paid by the Province and by the taxpayer, are actually on the total debt of the Province. It isn't on the net debt. That is a huge concern, because while the net debt is some \$11 billion here in the province, the total debt of the Province is somewhere near \$22 billion, double that, which includes, of course, the debt of Manitoba Hydro and so on.

So, when we're talking about debt, Manitobans should be concerned about the fact that our total debt has been climbing. Our total debt is the number on which interest rates are calculated. The total debt, the interest we pay on that total debt, is what Manitobans are responsible for. Now, whether they're responsible as ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro, or whether they're responsible as income tax payers of Manitoba to pay down the operating debt, the net debt of the Province, shouldn't be of concern. We're all one taxpayer, one ratepayer. It doesn't matter whether

Manitoba Hydro is paying it or not. We're paying it through our rates in Manitoba Hydro. Clearly, that should be of concern to Manitobans. I know it's a concern to me, and it's a concern to my constituents.

* (11:10)

We have to control our debt at a time when we're going into a recession and, make no mistake about it, Mr. Acting Speaker, we are going into recession just like the rest of Canada. We may be a little delayed, but when we have debt increasing at a time when we're going into a recession, when we have a possibility of inflation and higher interest rates coming up in the next year or two, that should be of huge concern to Manitobans. It should be of concern to the Finance Minister of this province, because it affects our ability to pay and our ability to offer services and programs to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

With that, Mr. Speaker, I see that I am out of time at this point—I think I've got a few seconds left—I look forward to hearing the response of the Finance Minister to what I've had to say.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Sorry, I cut into you, sorry. Do you want to speak?

I'd like to first thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) for allowing me to speak before he has because of another issue outside the Chamber. So thank you very, very much. I appreciate that.

I'd like to respond to a few things that the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) had to say about this issue.

First, I am pleased that this Minister of Finance has taken huge steps to make the budget open, transparent and contain all the items that were off budget when the Conservatives were in government. Simple things like the pension liability, we're talking billions of dollars that were never accounted for. The members opposite may say that they believed in open budgeting, but this was a liability that was in about the \$2-billion scale and was going to move to an \$8-billion liability or cost on the government books.

So I'm pleased that this Minister of Finance took the very responsible step of taking the pension liability, showing it on the books, getting a simple process by which to pay the liability down, and address it. I'm pleased because of that because, as a former financial planner, I understood that this

liability was going to continue to grow. There was no plan by the Conservative government to deal with it, and that it would've continued to grow and been a huge burden on the taxpayer.

So I'm very pleased that, not only this Minister of Finance has taken the responsible step of (a) putting the debt on the books, because a liability is a debt; (b) coming up with a plan to pay for it; and (c) actually paying the pension liability for current employees. Those are responsible steps that not only all employees and all teachers should be applauding but the opposition should be applauding. It was the responsible thing to do not only for the employees but all taxpayers in the province of Manitoba.

The other thing that was interesting is the former members often talk about not having debt on the books. I thought it was passing strange that Centra Gas, a Crown utility purchased by the Conservatives, never had the debt for Centra Gas on the books. This was an investment. They talked about it being an investment. They talked about it being an economic investment and they never put it on the books.

So they bought an asset and never put the liability of the cost of the asset on books. I know, as a person who has owned businesses, I don't have difficulties with buying an asset, but when you buy an asset you should put the cost of that asset on the books and then amortize or pay for it.

I am pleased that this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) again took the responsible action to take that liability, put it on the books and amortize it or pay it off over time.

I am also pleased that under the Lotteries the members opposite, the Conservatives, had gone through and expanded the lotteries, the two casinos. Again, it was an expansion of an asset. But, again, it was not on the books, there was no payment plan for this expense, and this Minister of Finance took the wonderful, responsible action to put it on the books and amortize it.

Again, under this Minister of Finance, who is also responsible for Hydro, he has gone through and worked with First Nations, et cetera, to expand our Hydro capacity, build dams, and, again, this is an investment. You buy a dam, you build it, it costs you lots of money, but then what happens is you can create the opportunity for third parties, in this case states, to pay for their electricity and pay for this asset over time.

So that's wonderful because we're expanding the economy, we're bringing new investments to the province, we're bringing assets. The dams are an asset. I know the Conservatives and the Liberals called Limestone Lemonstone. I know that both the Liberals and the Conservatives talked about it being a waste of money. But that's brought hundreds of millions of dollars of profit to Hydro and to the province, and that's a positive thing.

There is a difference. I know the members opposite don't understand the importance of putting things on the books, liabilities as debt on the books. This Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has done it, and that's why Manitoba has earned six credit improvements since 2002. Moody's Investors Service, Dominion Bond Rating Service and Standard & Poor's have upgraded the credit rating of this province. Why they've done that is because we were being transparent. We put the debt, the liabilities as debt—we have a schedule to pay down the debt and it's public and transparent, and that's very, very appropriate. That hadn't been done under previous governments. I'm pleased that it's been done here.

Costs of servicing the debt are down by 50 percent from 1999. Only 6 cents of every dollar in revenue in 2009-2010 are being used to service the debt. That's down from 13.2 percent in 1999-2000, and we continue to pay down the debt.

So, not only are we dealing with a pension obligation, not only are we dealing with the servicing of the debt and paying down the debt over time, we're continuing to do that in a responsible manner. So since 1999, debt-to-GDP as a percentage has decreased more than 25 percent. In 1999, the debt-to-GDP was 31.5 percent and it's gone down to 23 percent this year. So that's very, very important.

The other part of it is, is this Minister of Hydro has been extremely responsible because what he's done is the debt-to-GDP rate—or debt-to-income rate for Hydro was mid-80s under the Conservatives. I'm pleased it's continued to go down and is approaching mid-70s and going down even further. That's really important because the debt-to-income ratio for Hydro continues to decrease.

So we have actually been investing. We've been investing in roads which is a good long-term investment. We've been investing in Hydro which is a good long-term investment. We've been investing

in housing and other tangible assets, and these tangible assets are used.

Now to put it into perspective, most of us do not buy a house cash. Most of us buy a house or a business and we then pay it off over a period of time. That's the process by which most people build assets. That's what this government is doing. We're borrowing money, we're investing in Hydro assets, roads, buildings, schools and hospitals and, over time, we pay off that. The advantage of a government is if you're putting money in tangible assets and, especially in Hydro, which is having a good return on investment. That is a legitimate investment; it makes sense economically, politically and it makes sense as far as creation of jobs. We believe in that, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has an enviable reputation of doing 10 balanced budgets in a row. I believe that this Minister of Finance has done a great job in creating investments in Hydro while decreasing the debt of Hydro. I believe that this Minister of Finance has a wonderful record of investing in business and creating a great business environment and creation of jobs. The health capital has been supported by this side of the House. The road budget has been increased by three times and has been supported by this side of the House. The housing budget has been increased dramatically and has been supported by this side of the House. The investments in Hydro, the dams, the transmission lines, et cetera, have been supported by this side of the House.

* (11:20)

I know the members opposite have voted against Limestone, have voted against investments in Hydro, have voted against investments in health, have voted against investments in highways and bridges, have voted against investments in business. That's what the members opposite have voted against.

This side of the House believes that you need to invest. This side of the House understands how you take out a mortgage and pay it off over time. This side of the House knows that, and I've bought businesses before, and buying a business, you buy the business, you pay it off, you have a stream of revenue that does that. We believe in that.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has done an absolutely admirable job. You know, you don't have to take it from me. You can take it from Moody's Investor

Services, the Dominion Bond Rating Service, Standard & Poor's, and many other areas that have said that this Minister of Finance has done a great job. I have faith in this Minister of Finance. I believe he's done an admirable job. I believe that we have made the investments necessary, that people of Manitoba believe, and we've done that very responsibly. I appreciate the Minister of Finance allowing me to speak first because—

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

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I appreciated the comments of the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines. I do accept the fact that he was a financial planner in a previous life. I give him full respect for that, but I do know that this individual who was a financial planner in a previous life would not have suggested that his clients saddle themselves with a debt load that was unaffordable and that they could not debt service. I would assume that the same minister, as a financial planner, would not like the same thing to happen with either corporations or with government.

We are living in a time right now that none of us has ever experienced before. It's a time that we look at the danger of debt. It's there all around us. All you have to do is look at the American economy right now and what happened with the danger of debt, with corporations such as Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, with corporations, the banking industry, Mr. Speaker, with the subprime mortgage lending that went on in the U.S., is what's caused, to a great deal, the concerns in the economy that we have today. What happened there is that there was too much debt. There were individuals who were given money by the banking financial institutions because it was there, and it was what their job was, to put debt onto the shoulders of these individuals, and these individuals took the debt. When banks are giving away credit, then there are people who are, in fact, going to take advantage of that credit. And they did. The problem was that there was no plan to repay that debt.

Everyone knows, even a university student who takes student loans knows, that that debt has to be paid back. We know that people who enter into mortgages in this country, they know that debt has to be paid back. We know that corporations, when they enter into debt from financial institutions, it has to be paid back.

The government is no different. That debt has to be paid back. Governments now are finding themselves in a very difficult situation. I am certainly happy that I don't have to pay the debt of the U.S. that they are now acquiring through this fiscal downturn. I certainly am not pleased, as a resident of this province, that I'm going to be saddled with the debt that this Finance Minister has seen fit to saddle the province of Manitoba with.

Now, we know that there are other examples here in the province of Manitoba, right here, where corporations have got themselves into some trouble, by mergers, by acquisitions, and the way they do that is to acquire more debt. We have one corporation right here in Manitoba, called CanWest Global, who is having some serious problems with their debt loads at the present time. As a matter of fact, it's to the point now where the bondholders, the people who actually hold the debt, are saying enough is enough, we don't believe that you have the ability to pay us back what we have lent you therefore we're going to have to try to find some other method, another way of being able to get our investment back.

It's also true with GM and Chrysler. They're in trouble for a number of reasons but one of the main reasons is that they've acquired too much debt. They cannot service that debt and they cannot continue to operate as a corporation.

The reason I mention those examples, Mr. Speaker, is because that can happen to governments. It has happened to governments. As a matter of fact, Saskatchewan, not that many years ago, was in a very serious debt position, to the point where I remember some people saying that even Saskatchewan, the province of, may well have to claim bankruptcy. Now it doesn't happen because we've got federal governments that certainly can come to their aid. We have, as governments, the ability to be able to generate revenue through taxation, but the fact is that they were in a very serious debt position. They aren't now; they worked their way through it.

As a matter of fact in Saskatchewan right now, they've reduced their net debt as well as their gross debt. They've reduced it, and they're becoming certainly self-sufficient, as has Alberta, and that was a philosophical decision that Alberta made. At one point in time the leader of the Alberta Conservative Party, Ralph Klein said, I want to be the first province in this country to be debt free. That was a

policy decision that he had made, and he lived up to that policy decision. Quite frankly, it was the best decision that could happen for Alberta, because right now with difficult financial times, they now have the ability to be much more flexible, much more flexible because they don't have the debt service to pay off all of the debt that they have. They certainly have deficits, but they also have the savings to offset those deficits. We could get into the definition of deficits and balanced budgets, but that's not the purpose of this particular resolution. It's to say let's put a plan together for our debt.

British Columbia—I know the minister's going to stand up and say British Columbia has got \$27 billion worth of taxpayer-supported debt, but, in fact, Mr. Speaker, if you look at their budget that they tabled on February of 2009, the provincial government direct operating debt, not the debt that's being acquired by health care, not the debt that's being acquired by universities and not the debt that's being acquired by other Crown corporations. The actual provincial government direct operating debt is \$6.8 billion. The net debt here in the province of Manitoba is \$11.8 billion. So there is a difference. Saskatchewan's around \$4.8 billion, but let's not even make comparisons. Let's just simply say, let's do what's right for the province of Manitoba.

What's right, in my opinion, for the province of Manitoba, is to live within our means and have a plan to pay down debt. Families do that. You take a mortgage for a home and that's good. That's not a bad thing. You live in a home, you take a mortgage, you know what you can pay on a monthly basis to service that debt and pay it down. Pay it down with principal and pay it down with interest. You can do that. That's what people do, and that's what the Province should do. There's good debt—make no mistake about that, but what you do is you have a plan. There was a plan. Manitoba had a plan.

There was a plan in a previous piece of legislation that had a repayment schedule that we were going to pay back our debt, but even that plan changed. It used to be that there had to be \$110 million payback on debt on an annual basis. Now we find in this budget that's been tabled that that's been reduced to \$20 million. Well, \$20 million on an \$11.8 billion debt doesn't go very far, Mr. Speaker. It could take centuries for this debt to be retired. Now the Finance Minister is going to stand up and say, but our debt-to-GDP ratio is 23 percent and that's good. Well, it was less than that last year.

It's heading in the wrong direction first of all. It's now, instead of 22.7 I think it was, it's now 23. We're heading in the wrong direction with debt-to-GDP but, again, that's only a benchmark. Is that the right benchmark? Alberta has zero percent debt-to-GDP. Mr. Speaker, is that the place we should be? Québec is substantially higher than us. I think they're 55 percent debt-to-GDP. That's wrong too, and they found that it's wrong. So what we should be doing in Manitoba is putting in a Manitoba solution, a Manitoba response to the issues that we have right now. But that's not the case, Mr. Speaker. In fact, there is no plan with respect to the retirement of debt here in the province of Manitoba, and it's wrong. In fact, we are heading in the wrong direction.

The Canada West Foundation has raised those concerns about the high and growing debt-to-GDP ratio that we have here in Manitoba. So there are others that have identified the fact that we are not becoming competitive, that we are losing any competitive edge we might have. The Finance Minister simply says, the interest rates, we can borrow money cheap so we'll keep on borrowing. Well, I lived through the '90s, and I can tell you interest rates do fluctuate. At the present time we are at the lowest interest rates ever in the history of this country. If you think it's going to stay like that for the next five to 10 years out, I would suggest you're looking at the wrong crystal ball. So anything that we now acquire in debt is going to saddle future generations with a cost that they will not be able to afford. Right now in the province of Manitoba, in our own budget documents, we spend to debt service \$1,246,000,000. \$1,200,000,000 goes to debt servicing.

* (11:30)

Now, the Public Utilities Board, the Science Minister said, Manitoba Hydro is great; it's absolutely wonderful. Well, the PUB said they're getting so much debt right now, they had to have a higher increase put forward that the PUB had forced on them as opposed to what they were asking for because they can't afford their debt.

Manitoba has to stand up and say, we need a plan, get rid of our debt, be more self-sufficient, be more self-supporting, and then, Mr. Speaker, we'll have an economic future in this province. Thank you very much.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the volumes of misinformation that have been put on the record

by my colleagues opposite. I'll just get completely focussed on that.

Now, the member starts by talking about, you have to have a plan to pay down the debt. I agree with that. I think you have to have a plan to pay down the debt. You also have to have a plan to pay down the pension liability. They had 11 years to do that. They let it grow from 1.9 million to 3 billion. It's okay for pensioners, for people that work in the public service and teachers not to have a pension plan, that's okay, but you've got to pay down the general purpose debt. That's their approach. They had an ideological focus on paying down debt and destroying public pension plans. That's what the member's all about and he's too afraid to admit it.

We have a balanced approach. Not only are we paying down the general purpose debt, we're also paying down the pension liability. We're also funding the pension liability. We changed the balanced budget legislation in our first year in office in order to do that, and the members opposite were opposed to it. They were opposed to it because of their narrow ideological fervour.

Now, what about the general purpose debt? The member says there's no plan to pay down the \$11 billion of net debt. I first of all want to acknowledge this may be a major breakthrough we have here: the member opposite admits that net debt is the proper measure of what the debt is in Manitoba, the net debt being what you owe net of your liquid assets available to pay it down as required. We have many sinking funds in this province that provide for liquidity, and in case the member opposite didn't know it, liquidity is king right now. Having cash in the bank is where it's at.

The member would like to borrow money to pay down the debt. It's called the debt Ponzi scheme advocated by the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), the debt Ponzi scheme. Let's borrow money so we can pay down the debt. Flow it in and out for some fictional objective that doesn't accomplish anything for the public good. What accomplishes something for the public good is a disciplined approach to managing the growth of wealth inside of Manitoba.

We came out of the '90s with a deficit of infrastructure. Public schools were falling apart. Universities were falling apart. Water and sewer systems were not being looked after. Roads were not being paved. That's the legacy of the Member for

Brandon West and his colleague from Lac du Bonnet. I can't ignore him because he made the first speech this morning, and I know he's trying to escape the Chamber right now, but he has to be accountable for the deficit liability—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, I think he was just about—I'm still here. I walk around the Chamber. I walk around the Chamber. I do all kinds of things. I happen to be the Opposition House Leader, and I ask the Minister of Finance to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Finance, on the same point of order.

Mr. Selinger: I'd like to thank the member for his commitment to staying in the Chamber, and with that in mind, I would not want to in any way impugn his integrity.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, I'll remind honourable members that the mention of members that are out of the Chamber, we do not allow that. The presence or absence of members, we do not allow that, so members should be very, very careful.

* * *

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take your advice as good advice.

Now, moving along, what we have done is we have reduced the net debt in Manitoba, which we now acknowledge for the first time is the proper measure, from 32 percent to about 23 percent, about a third. That's been very significant. We put a plan in place for the general purpose debt, and we put a plan in place for the pension liability and we've been paying it down. We've been actually funding it for the first time since 1961.

When it comes to the pension, the first thing we did is we put some of the 96 million that we were setting aside every year towards the pension liability. Secondly, all new employees that came into government service, we started paying the employer's portion of their pension and now, we actually pay every year, in the budget, all the employer's commitments, that being the government of Manitoba, for the pension plans for teachers and civil servants. That's never been done in the last 50 years.

The member opposite always just conveniently ignores that and that's just unbelievable and irresponsible, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. The other thing the member opposite completely ignores is that every bit of infrastructure that we finance has an amortization schedule attached to it. The asset has to be paid off through an amortization schedule over its useful life. In other words, if you build a new facility and it's going to be functional for 40 years, by the time that 40 years is up it's paid off. It's exactly the same concept as buying a mortgage on your house. You take out a mortgage, you pay it down over time, and people that have mortgages, by the way, also have balanced budgets. They balance their budget every year as they pay down the mortgage. That's exactly what we're doing in Manitoba.

So we have a disciplined approach which allows us to build assets inside the province, and, by the way, the growth in our assets, the net book value of our assets, has grown far more rapidly than the net debt in the province. We are overall better off. The net book value of our assets, as a portion of our economy, has grown by 18 percent. The net debt has reduced by 15 percent as a portion of the economy. So the amount of money that we're carrying on the books as debt is shrinking as a portion of the economy. The wealth that we have created is growing as a portion of the economy, but members opposite have always put a zero value on public assets because they want to sell it off. They want to privatize them. If something is valued at zero, no problem selling it, but, you know, all the assets we have in Manitoba have a real net book value and the members have always enjoyed selling them off cheap to their friends.

Now, the argument about future generations, the members opposite argue that we're leaving a legacy of debt to future generations. If we build a school, we're leaving them a facility to educate their children in, and by the time that school has used up its useful life and it's an expired asset the debt for that will be paid off. It makes sense to invest in schools, universities and environmental initiatives for clean water and sewer because those things help have a better educated population. Those things help maintain the environment. Those things help increase our economic prosperity. Educated people tend to be more creative. They tend to be more innovative.

There's about a 75 percent correlation between educating your population and economic growth, and you have to educate your population in proper facilities, which is why we're rebuilding the colleges

and universities and public schools all across this province. That has resulted in growth in Manitoba being among the top three in the country. Our economic growth has been among the top three in the country, so the member is in denial.

He's in denial over wealth growing faster than our net debt. He's in denial that there's a pension liability that had to be addressed. He's in denial that there's an amortization schedule in place for all of our assets which pays itself off through the discipline of the amortization schedule as we go forward and allows those assets to be brought into public use now. These public goods make a difference in quality of life right now, and that's what government is here for, Mr. Speaker. It's becoming more recognized that everyday that without having government that puts priority on developing the people and resources of the province that we're overall poor, we live in greater poverty.

Now, what about the carrying costs? The carrying costs of our debt are 6 cents on the dollar. They were 13.2 cents on the dollar when we came into office. They have declined by over 50 percent. The member opposite says that that's a bad thing—*[interjection]* The member seems to think that interest rates should be ignored. The whole point of the central bank lowering interest rates is to stimulate investment.

In case the member hasn't noticed, we're in a global recession. In a global recession there's a lack of effective demand, and since the time of the Great Depression a lack of effective demand is dealt with by government providing stimulative spending. In Manitoba, that stimulative spending is going into long-term assets that grow the wealth of the people of Manitoba, and the member is opposed to that, and I understand that. Bennett was opposed to that in the 1930s, as well, and everybody wound up driving around in Bennett buggies being pulled by horses because they couldn't afford a vehicle.

President Hoover was the same in the United States and everybody was living in Hooverville, and men were riding the rails because government balanced the books at the expense of unemployment rates of 30 percent—*[interjection]*

Two minutes? I'll wind up.

* (11:40)

So, Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. We have a plan to build the wealth of the province. We have a plan to stimulate the economy, and we have a

discipline that, when we put the money on the table, we will retire the debts that have been incurred to stimulate the economy over the useful life of the assets, and we will protect the pensions of teachers and civil servants. All of those things were ignored during the '90s. They didn't want to look after those assets because they didn't value anything that was in the public domain. The only thing they valued was how much money they could put in the pockets of their friends, and that's why we wound up having growing inequality.

An example of the growing inequality during the '90s: homes in the inner city, in the North End, were declining in value. Homes in the south end were growing in value. Just in housing assets alone, we saw growth in inequality. They didn't move on minimum wage but once every four years, and then they would do a lousy quarter before every election. So people were getting poorer. They did nothing about that. Meanwhile, stock transactions and stock options and selling off public assets like Manitoba Hydro—below the value of those assets, because they valued them very poorly—allowed a small group of people to become wealthy while the great majority became poor. John Kenneth Galbraith said, it's private affluence and public squalor. That's the policy of the members opposite.

Our policy is the opposite of that. Public affluence, private affluence, and more wealth for the people of Manitoba with a well-managed fiscal and economic plan. That's what we're about, and you're going to vote against it again.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't against the rules to mention a member's name, I might say that the Minister of Finance was regretting the possible arrival of the Borotsik buggy.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members should know that mentioning names in the House is not allowed, and addressing other members in the House is by constituencies or ministers by their portfolio.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, because I noticed it happens a lot in this Chamber, and now that I know that there is actually that rule, I'll observe it from here on in.

Mr. Speaker, we're talking about debt and before I respond to some of the things that have been said, both positively, in terms of the Minister of Finance, and negatively, in terms of the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), I would recommend to members that if they want to have an informed and

longer reflection on the nature of debt in a deeper sense than it's often talked about in this place, they might look at Margaret Atwood's Massey Lectures on debt, which have now been published in the form of a book called *Payback: Debt and The Shadow Side of Wealth*. I'm sure that we would all do well to read the reflections of Margaret Atwood on the nature of debt, historically, metaphorically, in terms of literature, et cetera, and what that might have to say to us about our current situation where we—we're still looking. As a civilization, or as a global economy, wanting to come out of the recession—and the Minister of Finance referenced this—that, in spite of whatever concerns we all might have, each in our own particular way about debt, we are actually looking to debt, the creation of more debt to save us from our current economic woes.

All the time, we hear the federal minister of Finance, and others, talking about what we need. We need the banks to loan more money to people. What are they doing when they're loaning money to people in order to get the economy out of the recession? They're creating more debt. So there's a deeper thing to reflect on here, Mr. Speaker, and that is, of course, the way in which our whole economy depends on debt. Although I must say, the Member for Brandon West did, to his credit, cite the creation of debt and, particularly certain kinds of debt, in terms of the sub-prime mortgage debts, et cetera, but that's part of the problem that we're now facing, that that happened in the private sector.

Because it's so often the case, Mr. Speaker, my experience with the Conservatives is that they're preoccupied, they're obsessed with public debt, but very, very seldom talk about the problem of private debt. For instance, I can recall many, many occasions, in another Chamber, in another place, in another incarnation, where we asked—and I now see that perhaps, perhaps, the current federal Minister of Finance might be thinking about doing something about this, but we've asked for years in the federal House of Commons, the NDP, for some regulation of credit card interest rates. I mean if people are concerned about debt and they're concerned about private debt, it seems to me they ought to be concerned about the exorbitant interest rates that are now, and have been, for many years now, being charged to Canadians who find themselves in a position where they have to depend on their credit cards to get them from one month to another. So I just cite that as one of the things that I wanted to put on the record.

You know, the Finance Minister did a great job of outlining how responsible the fiscal strategy of the provincial government is. I don't want to repeat everything that he said, but I think one of things that I would like to say is if the New Democrats were as Tories always want to portray them, we might as well have lived up to that sort of tax-and-spend caricature that the right always has of the left in this country because it doesn't really matter; the Conservatives never change their narrative, doesn't matter what you do. You can be as responsible as you like, they're going to get up and say the same thing over and over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker, like a broken record.

The Minister of Finance talked about Tories being in denial. It occurred to me that we might invent a new disorder. Everything these days is attributed to some sort of disorder. So it would seem to me that the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) and his colleagues, perhaps we could call it right-wing denial disorder, RWDD.

They're in denial about the nature of the fiscal strategy of the provincial government. They're in denial about the fact that it has been widely praised. They're in denial about the fact that the people who they might normally look to for support in critiquing the NDP are actually in praise of the Minister of Finance's budget. We never hear that from them, Mr. Speaker, because they're just not prepared to change their ways no matter what the facts. They're not going to let the facts get in the way of their narrative, their ideological argument. They just keep on and on.

One of the things that they do, Mr. Speaker, and I noticed this. I had a whole speech I was going to give, but just listening to the Member for Brandon West just, you know, we can't let some of these things go unresponded to. He mentions Saskatchewan and the fact that Saskatchewan had this debt that they had to deal with, and that they finally dealt with it. Now, if you listen to the Member for Brandon West, you'd think this was some sort of politically neutral story, when, in fact, the fact of the matter is is that the Conservatives in Saskatchewan under Grant Devine, when they took over from Allan Blakeney who had balanced budgets for year after year, it was the Conservatives that drove the Saskatchewan economy into the tank. It was the Conservatives that created that deficit, and it was the NDP under Roy Romanow that had to deal with that deficit. But if you listen to the Member for

Brandon West, you would never have known that that was the case.

Is it just my hearing, Mr. Speaker, or did anybody hear the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) refer to the fact that the deficit he was talking about in Saskatchewan was created by a Conservative government? This is the story over and over and over again: right-wing politicians making a living moaning about public debt, public deficits while they never, ever talk about the social deficit, the environmental deficit, all the other deficits that can be created if you're dealing with the fiscal deficit in an inappropriate way. Never hear that from them.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Blaikie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it was John Diefenbaker that said, you know, you can always tell when you throw a stone into a pack of dogs, you've hit something if they start to yelp. And I hear a lot of noise coming from the other side of the Chamber, you know.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just thought that it was interesting to see the way the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) told the story because the real story is that it's often right-wing parties that take over from left-wing governments or centre-left governments or centre governments, and then go on to create deficits that they sometimes use because there's a way in which Conservatives like debt. They like debt because they can use it to cover their ideological agenda to cut, in the public sector, things that they would like to cut in any event.

* (11:50)

They don't have the courage to stand up and say: we don't like that program, we don't like it for philosophical reasons. They don't want to say that, Mr. Speaker, so they like to use the debt as a cover to cut particular programs. I'm certain that that's the kind of agenda that we would see if, God forbid, we ever had a Conservative government here in the province of Manitoba.

Look at the debt that Reagan created. Look at the debt that Bush created, which now President Obama has to deal with. It goes on and on, and yet the NDP actually has a record in this country of, you might call it, fiscal rectitude of producing balanced budgets and being very concerned about what kind of situation we do leave future generations.

But we're not just concerned about the fiscal situation. We're concerned about the social and the environmental situation, and that's why it's important to continue making the kinds of investments that this government is making and which we've announced in the budget. It is a balanced approach.

It's not the never-ending narrative about debt without any sort of concern about the other kinds of deficits that we need to be concerned about, that we get from the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) and his colleagues. I appreciate that the Minister of Finance is able to deliver the kind of budget that he has, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to put a few words on the record in regard to this resolution.

I think the debt is, indeed, a very serious issue. I've always argued that during an economic cycle, typically, I am a Keynesian theorist in the sense that I believe that when government is experienced or the economy is doing relatively well, there is a responsibility on government's part to put aside and to manage the monies, the additional revenues that are coming in, and that is something—Mr. Speaker, that is a responsibility of the government.

In addition, as the economy starts to get to the other end of the business cycle, where you start to head towards a recession, there is a need for stimulus. There is a need for government to be able to borrow money.

I thought maybe what I would do is I would take this opportunity, not only to highlight that, but also to highlight what I believe this government has really failed on. We have to remember, back in 1999, and health care is the best example that I could actually provide, Mr. Speaker, in health care back in 1999 the government spent \$2 billion a year. Today we spend in excess of \$4 billion.

Now people will be aware that I talk a lot about what's happening at Seven Oaks Hospital and the cutbacks to emergency services. So, on the one hand, we have a government during economic good times doubling the expenditure on health care, while at the same time it's cutting back on emergency services in our health-care institutions.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would've argued that during those good times that there is a responsibility for government to build upon its reserves to ensure that what money is being spent is being spent in a fair

fashion where we will see a maximum amount of service to our constituents, to Manitobans.

Health care highlights more than any other department where this government has really let down the public as a whole. All you really need to do is take and get a better understanding of how and where it is spending health-care dollars.

Mr. Speaker, the health-care bureaucracy has exploded. If that same money that was used to feed that health-care bureaucracy was used to provide more bedside care, and possibly more money to be set aside so when the economy does go down, that we wouldn't have the same requirements to have to borrow. Manitoba would be better today. I would argue that we would have full emergency services at Seven Oaks hospital and other community hospitals now, such as Victoria and Concordia, that are looking at cutting back on services, not to mention many of the rural hospitals that are cutting back on services.

Had we fed our money on services that would've meant something to people, as opposed to a health care bureaucracy—that didn't exist in the '90s, Mr. Speaker, and that's the sad thing. How much money do we spend on the health care bureaucracy today? The Winnipeg regional health and the other health care authorities?

Now, I look to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), and I would suggest—*[interjection]* I can't say it, it's unparliamentary.

Mr. Speaker, I look to the Minister of Finance, and I say, well, how much do we spend on health care bureaucracy? This is a question that I do get. Often. My best guess is it's somewhere between \$150 million to \$250 million a year. Imagine what we could've done with that kind of money. Even if we would've left it all in health care, Seven Oaks, Concordia, Victoria, all these other services and many rural community hospitals, all these services could have been that much better. The bedside care. Not only that, we could've even possibly had extra that could have been set aside to assist in future health care growth, when the economy isn't doing as well as it is today.

So, it's more than, well, we're in a certain position of the cycle, so we need to spend more money. There's a responsibility of the government, through the entire business cycle, to behave in an appropriate fashion. It's not appropriate to say, well,

we have a problem here, just throw money at the problem in hopes that it'll fix the problem.

Remember the problem of '99? The problem of '99 was, because it was the big campaign issue, we will get rid of hallway medicine, and how did they attempt to do that, Mr. Speaker, is they just emptied the pockets. They threw so much money into health care. Did it stop hallway medicine? No. Hallway medicine is still there today. The greatest benefactor by this government's abuse of expenditures has been our health care bureaucracy.

Mr. Speaker, until the government starts realizing that there's better ways, there are smarter ways, of spending the tax dollars, they're going to be putting Manitobans, and future Manitobans, into a compromised position where we're going to have to borrow more money than we would've or should've had to had the money been spent in a more prudent fashion.

I hope, like I believe all members of this Legislature, that we are not going to see a prolonged recession in the province of Manitoba. I don't want any Manitoban to have to be on an unemployment line. I believe the best social program that exists, Mr. Speaker, is a job. We all benefit, and I hope that the government and opposition, combined, will be able to ensure that Manitoba's economy will do well into the future.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to see a vote on the resolution.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's indeed a pleasure to put a few words on the record on this resolution. I want to thank the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) for bringing it forward. I know the Member for Lac du Bonnet is a very hardworking Opposition House Leader, Mr. Speaker, and I have to admit that, though I disagree with him on certain things, I will never question his commitment to his job here in this Chamber.

It was interesting to listen to the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie), of course, when he spoke about the fact that, when you look at history, you'll see the centre-right governments add far more to the debt, to the deficit, than the centre-left. We see that here in Manitoba, for example, when the Pawley government left office, they left a \$58-million surplus to the Filmon government, who quickly turned that into a deficit by borrowing \$200 million— or creating a fiscal stabilization fund. The Member for Inkster will remember this. Then they ran up a series of deficits, Mr. Speaker, record deficits in the history of the province. Well, of course, we all remember in 1992-93, they ran up a deficit of \$766 million, the largest in the history of the province—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Selkirk will have nine minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 23, 2009

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Hawranik	1002
		Dewar	1002
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS			
Second Readings—Public Bills		Resolutions	
Bill 217—The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act		Res. 3—Manitoba's Growing Debt is a Worrisome Liability	
Eichler	993	Hawranik	1003
Struthers	994	Rondeau	1005
Briese	995	Borotsik	1007
Nevakshonoff	997	Selinger	1008
Dyck	999	Blaikie	1011
Jennissen	1000	Lamoureux	1013
		Dewar	1014

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

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