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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 26, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, is there leave to proceed to Bill 212?

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to go directly to Bill 212? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 212—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Elimination of Benefits for Auto Thieves)

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Steinbach, that Bill 212, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Elimination of Benefits for Auto Thieves), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: And I'm pleased to reintroduce this Bill 212, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, which eliminates benefits for car thieves, Mr. Speaker. This bill was first introduced back in 2008 by the former member for Lac du Bonnet. It was part of our 2007 election campaign.

Back in 2008—that's three years ago now when this bill was introduced—the NDP did not see fit to

look further at this bill and refused to pass it onto committee and allow members of the public to come and have their say on this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that Winnipeg, unfortunately, is been—as—is known as the auto theft capital of Canada, and has been known, since 1999, that every year we've been known as the auto theft capital. And it's still today, even though it's been a little lower in the last couple of years, it's still today higher than any other city in Canada. In fact, in 2004 there were over 13,000 stolen vehicles according to the police report, and that was up from 8,000 in 1999.

And the type of activity that we've seen, Mr. Speaker, when you have joyriders stealing autos and smashing into innocent people, killing them, targeting joggers and chasing police cars. The level of activity that has been going on is just outrageous. In fact, in 2009, Stats Canada said we were 109 per cent higher than the national average.

Now, in 2004, the NDP had an opportunity to close the door tightly. They reduced some benefits, but they had the opportunity to actually close the door, and they didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. So, for the last six years, people that have stolen vehicles, rammed into innocent victims, have actually reaped benefits from the system, and the public is outraged at that. But the NDP were still trying to desperately hide the numbers.

After, well, Mr. Speaker, CTV did a series of articles on what was being paid out, what benefits were paying out to auto thieves, and this government charged them over \$1,500 to fulfill the freedom of information request. They have the opportunity to waive that number and give it for free, but they didn't. They didn't and they—desperately trying to keep those number under wraps.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have brought back this bill. And I know that the member, the Minister responsible for MPI, I know the things he's going to argue, saying the bill doesn't go far enough, and we haven't got this and this and that in the bill. But this is a bill that is on the table for debate today. It's a bill that's long overdue, first introduced in 2008,

introduced again. I would welcome the opportunity, if he wants to come and put some amendments towards this bill, because this bill is here. I don't see any other government bill on the Order Paper, so I don't know why they're dragging their heels on this. This bill is here; it's available. I'm open to look at amendments if the member would like to put some amendments in the bill. I think we have an opportunity right now with this bill, if there's amendments that can be made, we can pass this bill to committee. If we don't pass this bill to committee, and allow Manitobans to come and have their say, I think that that is just outrageous. I don't know why they would drag their heels on that.

Mr. Speaker, when the CTV news stories came out in March, it was discovered that some auto thieves were getting up to as much as \$60,000 in benefits. Now, we're not talking about health benefits; we're talking about the benefits paid by Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. Those are the—that's the money that all ratepayers in the province pay into in case of insurance needs. So, in effect, people that have actually been killed or hurt, innocent victims, really, part of the premiums that they've been paying have actually then been paid out to the people that actually injured or killed them, and that's just wrong.

After that, it was determined that, in a survey—I think it was in the *Winnipeg Sun*—that 94 per cent of people thought this was outrageous. So, of course, then, the NDP says, oh, well, okay, maybe we should have a look. So they've promised to bring in a bill that would totally close the door, Mr. Speaker, but we haven't seen it. We haven't seen it on the Notice Paper; we haven't seen it on the Order Paper, so we're wondering why they don't want to introduce the bill. And, as I said, there is a bill here before us. We can look at some amendments if that is the case, and we can take the opportunity that is presented to us today to move this bill to committee.

*(10:10)

Mr. Speaker, really, I just want to quote from an article that was in the newspaper, and it says: The truth is, if you burn down your garage, your insurance company won't cover it if you're convicted of arson. If you murder someone for a life insurance policy, you won't see a dime if you're convicted of homicide. Even if you quit your job without cause, you won't be eligible for employment insurance. That's how the world works. So why on earth should a convicted auto thief be eligible for MPI benefits.

Even seniors, over 65 and older, aren't eligible for income replacement benefits from MPI, even if they are employed at the time of an injury. But car thieves are. That doesn't make sense.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will listen to what others have to say on this, and perhaps we can look at some amendments to expedite this bill. And let's forward it to committee, have Manitobans come and say what they have to say. If they—if the government chooses not to put this bill to committee and not to speak on this important bill, and I think that's wrong, I think Manitobans are looking for that. The opportunity is here. Why not take advantage of that? Thank you very much.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, and it's a pleasure to speak to this bill and to correct the massive misinformation that the member from Morris has put on the record. I will talk a little bit about the history of auto theft in Manitoba. I will speak about some of the very fundamental flaws with the bill that's been put forward by the member from Morris, and I will speak a little bit about what this government is doing to take on the very serious problem of auto theft.

Now, auto theft, of course, is a problem which became an epidemic two decades ago. The government of the day, unfortunately, did nothing to stop it. This government has worked very hard, since 1999, to deal with auto theft. Every time an auto is stolen we believe it is a potentially violent crime. We know too well that there've been individuals who've been injured, who've been killed, by individuals driving stolen cars. And I've had the chance, personally, to meet with some of the families, to meet with victims.

There is no question that we need to do everything we can do to take on this very serious problem, and to continue working, even though auto theft is down by almost 80 per cent since 2004, even though it stands at the lowest rate in some two decades. We know there is more to be done. The difficulty, of course, is that the bill that's presented by the member for Morris does nothing to advance that cause.

Now, the bill itself is a carbon copy of a previous bill. I would have thought that the member for Morris, aided by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who seconded this bill, would have known that based on the strong advocacy of the Province of Manitoba, based on the work that my

predecessors have done, and that I've done working with the federal government, there is a new Criminal Code provision coming into effect. In fact, it comes into effect on Friday which, for the first time in Canada's history, will make auto theft a separate, stand-alone offence under the Criminal Code.

We think that this a positive step. We're glad that all the parties in Ottawa voted in favour of this bill. We're glad the Senate did its work to actually pass the bill through, and we're very pleased now that on Friday, for the first time, there will be a separate offence.

It strikes me, Mr. Speaker, as very, very strange, it strikes me as irresponsible, that there would now be a bill, which is introduced into this House, that does not even take into account this new theft—or this new crime of auto theft which is coming into effect on Friday. Not only does this leave the door wide open for benefits being paid to auto thieves, it knocks a hole in the wall. And for the member opposite to suggest that this bill will do anything, other than to abjectly fail to deal with this issue, well, is completely wrong.

Now, when we look at what the new bill will do—Bill S-9, which is called the tackling auto theft and trafficking in property obtained by crime—and it was passed by the Parliament of Canada on November 18, 2010, you will remember, Mr. Speaker, that I joined Public Safety Minister Vic Toews, as well as the chief of police here in the city of Winnipeg, Chief McCaskill, and we stood together to talk about this bill, and I pledged to Minister Toews that Manitoba would do everything it needed to do to move swiftly to make sure that, on the Justice side, everything was ready to go. And, as well, on the MPI side, that we would be using this bill to further strengthen the measures we're taking to combat auto theft. In fact, we've done that—*[interjection]*

And it is disappointing, I can hear the member for Steinbach chattering away. I'm sure in a few minutes he'll have the chance to stand up and say why he seconded a bill which doesn't contain the new crime of auto theft, and I'll be very interested to hear what he has to say.

Now, what I indicated several weeks ago is that we will be shutting the door tightly on benefits to convicted auto thieves. We won't be introducing a bill which appears to do something on one hand, yet, leaves the door wide open on the other side. We'll be introducing much stronger, much better legislation

that will actually deal with the problem of auto theft, because this government takes this serious issue to heart, and we've done—time after time, we've brought in new measures, we've taken new steps to make sure that fewer cars are stolen, that there is less damage, less carnage on our streets.

And I can tell you, of course, a lot about the history of auto theft. As I've indicated, it began—the epidemic in Manitoba began back in the 1990s. In fact, in one year alone, from 1992 to 1993, the number of vehicles being stolen in the province of Manitoba tripled. Sadly, the government of the day did nothing. This was the same time as they were freezing money paid out to Winnipeg and to other municipalities for policing. A decade in which they cut funding to Crown prosecutors, a time when they weren't making investments in the justice system and, unfortunately, we've all paid the price for those choices and it's only now that we're finally able to get ahead of some of these issues.

Now, I know that the member got up in the House a couple of days ago and said that there was no auto theft in Manitoba in the '90s. And I've asked my department to pull the number of car thefts in 1999, and, in fact, the member was only a little bit wrong. She was only out by 8,865 in the year 1999 alone. Her lack of understanding, I'm afraid to say, Mr. Speaker, is shocking, but it does really highlight the lack of interest the government of the day had with a very serious problem when they had the opportunity.

And it's interesting, of course, when they introduced the new MPI legislation, which introduced PIPP in 1995—*[interjection]*

And the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) who is chattering away from his seat, should note that in 1995, when the law was brought in, the government of the day provided full benefits for convicted auto thieves, full benefits. They didn't think there was any reason to reduce any benefits for anybody, whatever crime they committed. In 2004, we brought in legislation to reduce those benefits, and we've made it very clear that we will be introducing strong and effective legislation to actually shut the door on any benefits being paid out to car thieves.

Now, you should be aware, Mr. Speaker, that this isn't the only step that we've taken. We think, actually, the most useful thing that can be done with car theft is to prevent the theft from happening in the first place, preventing the loss, preventing the

damage, in many cases, preventing injuries from happening. And I'm very pleased that through a number of measures, through great co-operation by a number of different stakeholders, we brought down auto theft by almost 80 per cent in the last seven years. We know there's more work to be done, but I can tell you the number of vehicles stolen in Manitoba last year was some 60–70 per cent less than 1999, when, apparently, the member from Morris didn't know there were any cars being stolen in the province of Manitoba.

Now, some of the steps that were taken, of course, was having MPI as a full partner in the immobilizer program, taking the most at-risk vehicles and assisting Manitoba drivers with getting immobilizers put on. I know it was a plan that was put down by the opposition. It was a plan they didn't support. We didn't listen to them. We listened to the best science and the expertise. We've moved ahead, and now those vehicles are protected. It is virtually impossible to overcome a properly enabled immobilizer system, and that has resulted in a lot less cars being stolen and a lot less damage on our streets.

I also want to commend the Winnipeg Police Service for the work they've done as a key stakeholder in the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy. They have been tremendous at cracking down on car thieves, doing what they can to take them into custody where our Crown attorneys, of course, do the best they can to ensure that individuals who are dangerous and are at risk of stealing more cars are kept behind bars.

Now, we also have made investments not just in police in Winnipeg, but in place across the province to assist them in doing their work. We've made further investments in probation services to make sure that individuals who are released into the community—sometimes against the wishes of our Crown attorneys—are monitored as best we can. And, as well, we've made investments in Crown attorneys, and we actually created a specialized unit within Prosecutions to make sure we've individuals with expertise in prosecuting these kinds of cases.

* (10:20)

So, Mr. Speaker, we won't be supporting a bill which does not take into account a new law which comes into effect, not at some obscure future date, but Friday of this week. We will be bringing forward effective legislation which is not meant for show, but is meant to be a continuation of all the efforts that we've taken to bring down auto theft. And again,

we've taken it down by 80 per cent. We know there's more work to be done; that's why we've supported more police officers.

I know the member from Morris, the member for Steinbach and every other Conservative have voted against police officers, each and every time they've had the opportunity in this House, and, of course, Thursday was no change. They voted against a further 66 police officers, not just in the city of Winnipeg but across the province.

So I'll be interested to hear what they have to say, and I'll be especially interested to have the member for Steinbach explain why he doesn't know that there's the crime of auto theft, which comes into effect this Friday.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I want to start by commending the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) for bringing forward this bill and also the former member for Lac du Bonnet, Gerald Hawranik, who brought forward this bill in 2008, and, of course, it had a great deal of discussion even before that, a couple of years prior, in the provincial election.

There's one consistency, Mr. Speaker. Those who are listening to the debate this morning might think, well, there doesn't seem to be a consistent theme going through what the government is saying, what the opposition is saying. There is one consistency and that is, for the last number of years, this government had an opportunity to do something about allowing car thieves to get benefits through MPI and they did nothing.

When it came forward in 2007, the then-Minister of Justice, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), ran to the media and said, oh, we took care of this; auto thieves can no longer get benefits. That's what his spin was to the media. I remember that very well because the media were somewhat confused about it at the time. And when they actually read the legislation, they realized that the member for Kildonan was being a little bit not friendly with the truth, Mr. Speaker, if I might say this morning. He was saying something that wasn't actually in the legislation because it was clear in the legislation that auto thieves could get benefits and so he was proven wrong there.

And then about a year later, the member for Lac du Bonnet brought forward an actual legislation that said that auto thieves would not be able to get MPI benefits. And we heard a new spin from the then-Attorney General, the member for Kildonan, where

he said that this was typical Tory meanness. This is in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker; anybody can look it up. He said this was typical Tory meanness to try to take away taxpayers' money, to try and take away ratepayers' money, paying into MPI, from auto thieves. That was the position of the government.

And I never heard the Minister of Justice, who was elected into this House then, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) stand up and say that he disagreed with the Attorney General. He never said, oh, we don't mean that, we don't mean that it's typical Tory meanness; we mean something else. He sat silently in his seat and presumably in his caucus while the Attorney General, the member for Kildonan then, said those very words.

In fact, if you go back, and I have it on my—thanks to the wonders of technology—have it on my screen in front of me. If you go back to May 15th of last—of 2008, sorry, Mr. Speaker, it was some time ago—we had this debate in this House and on the very morning in this very Chamber about a bill that was brought forward then by the member for Lac du Bonnet. And the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who's here this morning, got—he might speak to this bill again—he got up and he stalled the legislation and said, well, we don't think it's necessary. You know, we're just going to sit on it and do nothing and for two more years now, auto thieves, because of the member for Transcona, his caucus, have gotten benefits.

The member—he was then the Minister of Science and Technology and Energy and Mines, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), I know he changes portfolios once in a while, so I don't know what he is now but he's still the member for Assiniboia. He stood up in this House. He stood up in this House and said, well, we're going to delay this legislation. We don't think that it's necessary. He stood with the member for Minto, the member for Transcona, the member for Kildonan, the Attorney General then, and believed also this was typical Tory meanness. We can't believe that the Tories are trying to take away taxpayers' funding from auto thieves. They all stood there silently and including the member for Assiniboia—and he's here this morning. Perhaps he'll stand up and say the same thing as he did two years ago but I doubt it.

I actually think there's been a bit of a conversion on the NDP's side. You know, in 2007, they said, we want taxpayers to keep getting funding and keep giving it to auto thieves. In 2008, they said, we want

taxpayers to keep giving money to auto thieves. We don't want the money to stop flowing to auto thieves.

The member from Minto had a chance then, in 2008, and the two subsequent years since then, and he did nothing. The member for Assiniboia, he's done nothing. The member for Transcona, he's done nothing. In fact, every member of that NDP caucus has had an opportunity over the last two years since the bill was introduced, and the last four years since the debate started on this issue, to do something. But they've sat silently. They've stood with the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) who said it was typical Tory meanness—typical Tory meanness—to try to take away benefits for auto thieves.

Well, I would say to them that there's a lot of Manitobans who would stand with us on that. There's a lot of Manitobans who would say, we stand with the provincial Progressive Conservatives who want to take away benefits from auto thieves, because we've seen the damage, we've seen the victims, we've heard the stories. The families have come here with tears in their eyes, who have lost loved ones, who've lost fathers, who've lost husbands, grandfathers. And they've told us the stories of the impact, and you can never get over that. We don't ever expect that those victims will ever be able to put away completely the pain that they've suffered. And compounding that pain is their money, their tax dollars, because they'd be members of—ratepayers into MPI. They're paying into—giving money to the very people who took away their loved ones. It's absurd, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* Well, here's the member for Assiniboia, he's still squawking from his seat, two years after he had an opportunity to do something, and did nothing.

And I would challenge that member, and I'll go to his constituency and we'll—maybe we'll have a forum and we can have that discussion. And he can explain to his constituents why for the last four years and two years since he had the debate, he's sat by in that Cabinet and did nothing while money flowed from the pockets of ratepayers of MPI into the pockets of auto thieves. He can explain that to his constituents. I'd be happy to have that debate.

But today, Mr. Speaker, we have a conversion, not on the road to Damascus, as sometimes it's said, but on the road to an election. There's only one reason today, as we stand here on this beautiful morning in Manitoba, why, all of a sudden, the NDP have come to realize that this is an important issue.

Well, all of a sudden—and I'm going to make a bit of a wager here. You know, I expect there'll be a government bill and all of those members, all of those NDP government members who did nothing for four years, I think will all of a sudden support the intent of the legislation brought forward by the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) and previously the member for Lac du Bonnet. And why is that? They didn't do it four years ago. They didn't do it three years ago. They didn't support the bill or bring in their own bill or amend our bill in 2008. They didn't do anything in 2009. They didn't do anything in 2010. But what is it about 2011 that, suddenly, they've woken up to this issue? Why do they suddenly care? Maybe any of the members can stand up and explain to me why they've done nothing for the last five years, but all of a sudden—all of a sudden in 2011, it means something.

Well, I think I know the answer, Mr. Speaker. Because there's an election coming. There's an election coming and suddenly—suddenly, they've decided, whoops, maybe we're on the wrong side of this position. Maybe the constituents in Assiniboia won't like what the member for Assiniboia said to—in 2008. Maybe the constituents in Kildonan, in Southdale, in Minto, in Gimli, maybe the constituents in Transcona, in Radisson, in St. Norbert, in Assiniboia, maybe those constituents are going to go, why would the NDP let our money go from MPI into auto thieves? And they all got worried. And they all ran to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), the member for Minto, and said, we've done something wrong. We shouldn't have said what we said four years ago. We're going to have to door knock, and people are going to realistically say, and reasonably say, money shouldn't have gone to the criminals in this situation. We shouldn't have given money to the criminals and forced the victims to pay the criminals. And so they went on bended knee to the Minister of Justice and said, quick, do something, because the Tories, no doubt, they're going to reintroduce the bill; they've done it before. They have a consistent position on this particular issue, and we're all over the map.

Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, they're not all over the map. They've also had a consistent position. They've stood with the criminals, while we've stood with the victims, but now, now there's going to be a great big sound, and it's going to be the sound of a great big flip-flop, when the government brings forward their bill, and they all stand up and do what they should have done years and years ago.

* (10:30)

But you know what? They may think that Manitobans are stupid. They may think Manitobans don't understand. They may think Manitobans aren't listening. Oh, but they're listening. They understand. They know that this should have been done a long time ago. They know that thousands of their tax dollars, of their MPI rates have already gone into the pockets of those auto thieves, and I doubt that the bill from the member is going to be retroactive. We'll see.

But—so there'll continue to be money that's going to flow into the pockets of those auto thieves because they did nothing for the last number of years. And so we'll see which one of their members stands up and speaks to this bill. Maybe some of them have spoke to before and they'll have a completely different position. And I would ask them, why is it that you sat silent in your caucus, in your Cabinet, for the last four years while the victims—while the victims had to watch—as car thieves, those who perpetrated the crime against them, continue to get money from MPI.

I don't think they have a principled position on this; I believe they have a political position. They've come to a political decision that they were on the wrong side of this issue, and I think that when Manitobans go to the polls, they'll look for a government with principles, not just one that does things because of politics, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 212, the MPI amendment—*[interjection]*—I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite from Steinbach had his hand on the horn of his vehicles. He was interrupting comments that I was just about to make. I'm not sure why he was doing that because this is just the start of my speech here on this particular bill brought forward by the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

Mr. Speaker, I have some information here that I'd like to share with members of this Legislative Assembly. Perhaps this will answer some of the questions that the member for Steinbach has, and I have to ask him. In 1994—and I was in this House at that time—I remember when the PIPP program came forward in this Assembly and we debated it and we brought forward many amendments to it. And I wonder why the member for Steinbach and the Conservative Party of Manitoba decided that they were going to allow—as a part of that legislative

package change—allow full benefits for auto thieves in this province. Why did the Conservative Party of Manitoba decide that they wanted to give full benefits to auto thieves?

You had from 1994 until the end of 1999 to make some changes because I can tell you, looking at the numbers that are available to any member of this House or any member of the public, auto theft started to increase—in fact it ramped up considerably in the year of 1993 when theft increased 91 per cent. So why did you not recognize at that time that auto theft was a growing problem?

And, contrary to what the member for Morris said, auto theft was rampant in Manitoba at the time that the Conservative Party of Manitoba was in government. Why did you not recognize that when you brought in your PIPP legislation in 1994, active in 1995, to significantly reduce or eliminate accident benefits for auto thieves? It would've made sense to me at that time. But you chose not to do that, and I have to question your motives now when you bring this legislation forward, when you had the chance in 1994 to do the right thing, and you chose not to do that.

Now, we have made significant changes in the way we deal with auto theft in the province of Manitoba. Our provincial government recognized that it was a problem that we had to deal with, and that's why we brought in the multipronged approach in the province of Manitoba. We brought in the WATSS program, the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy. Although it was not just strictly limited to Winnipeg, it had significant benefits for all the people of Manitoba wherever auto theft was occurring. And we put in place a program that would partner Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation with our provincial government and our police forces of Manitoba and, of course, our probation officers, to go out and monitor auto thieves. In fact, our provincial government put in the electronic bracelet program so that we could monitor auto thieves and make sure that they were where they were supposed to be according to what the judge says—

An Honourable Member: Relevance.

Mr. Reid: Relevance, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) says. Well, ankle bracelets, I guess to him, are not relevant. But it was one of the tools in the arsenal of the provincial government that would get control of the auto theft problem that was started in 1994 when the member for Morris's party decided

that they want to give full benefits to auto thieves of this province. So I have to question their motives now, why they're just suddenly on the road—they're on the way here, saying that we have to deal with this problem when it started, when they were in government in the early '90s, and they did not recognize and did not deal with at that time.

In fact, we have—[interjection]—we changed the auto theft, the way that auto thieves were treated in this province by our legislation in 2004, and we recognized at that time, very early in our mandate as a provincial government, that it was a problem that we had to deal with, and that's why we brought in the multipronged approach. We had the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy. We had the increase in our police forces of the province of Manitoba supported by our provincial budgets, of which the members of the Conservative Party voted faithfully against every, every time we brought in a budget that increased police presence in our province, that would help to deal with auto theft, and you voted against it. So how can you stand in your places here now and say, oh, we want to deal with auto theft problems and the way we treat auto thieves in this province and the benefits that they—that accrue—may have accrued to them as a result of the 1994 legislation, when you vote against every reasonable measure that this provincial government has brought in to stem the tide of auto theft in this province?

And I'm proud of our provincial government's work. We have made significant improvements in auto theft—in auto theft in our province. We have reduced it by 80 per cent; 80 per cent we have reduced auto theft in this province.

Now, I'm not saying we're perfect, because we're not. We have more work to do and we recognize that we have further steps to take, but we continue to support our police forces. We continue to support our Crown attorneys that prosecute these cases. We continue to take the steps like ankle bracelets and other measures to monitor and to deal with auto thieves in this province, and that's why we have been successful, along with the immobilizer program that collectively our Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation has funded through the benefits—or through the premiums that ratepayers pay for their auto insurance in this province. But I can tell members of this House that auto theft has reduced 80 per cent and is continuing to reduce auto theft in this province as a result of those measures, including the immobilizer program. That immobilizer program has probably been the single most successful project,

and we have other provinces of Canada asking us how we've been so successful in that.

The member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) says that Manitoba is the auto theft capital. Well, I hate to disappoint her, because that is no longer the case. That was the case when she was in government—our party was in government, but we are now no longer that title that she designated Manitoba with. It always seems to be black and you want to paint it black all the time, but our auto theft is down 80 per cent and we're continuing to decline every single month, and I see those numbers every single month. Auto theft is down in this province and continuing to decline.

In fact, between 1992, when the member—when the Conservative Party was in government in Manitoba, auto theft was around—a little over 2,000 vehicles a year in this province, and it had grown fivefold during the course of your government and you did nothing. You sat on your hands. You could see the numbers of growing auto theft in this problem and you did not take any action on it. In fact, you rewarded auto thieves by including them in the full PIPP program benefits. So I have to ask why you would do that when you saw a growing problem through the 1990s.

Now, we have made partnership arrangements with our police forces around the province, and I know Portage la Prairie is one of the communities that is affected, as are other communities in this province, by auto theft. And we have—auto theft is down in Portage la Prairie, I'm happy to report, and we have taken steps to make sure that it comes down in every part of our province and especially within the city of Winnipeg where there had been a problem through the 1990s and our government recognized that we had to deal with it and we took the steps necessary to reduce auto theft.

Now, this Conservative Party, of course, could have done that but chose not to. Why do you vote against police officers that our provincial budgets bring in, 66 in this provincial budget that was just passed last week? You voted against those police officers, the very officers that go into our communities to protect us from all kinds of crime, including auto theft, but you vote against those police officers every budget. Why do you do that? I've never heard one of you stand up and say, well, we don't need more police officers in the province of Manitoba, but you vote against it, so your actions belie your statements. I think you need to reconsider

the position you have taken with respect to the stand that our provincial government has taken to reducing auto theft in this province and to recognize the good work we have done, including the sixth rebate that Manitobans are going to receive from their public insurance corporation, sixth rebate in 11 years. That never happened under the Conservative Party.

* (10:40)

So, we have taken the steps to reduce auto theft in this province. We have improved benefits to the—for the ratepayers, for the MPI ratepayers of this province, and we have now the best insurance program and the lowest rates in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud of the work Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation has done to work with our provincial government to reduce auto theft in this province. And I only wish for a minute that members 'oppite' would recognize, at least for once, that there is good things happening to reduce auto theft and crime generally in this province, and the work that our Crown corporations and our provincial government has done to make that happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for my opportunity to speak to this bill.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand today and speak to this well-thought-out and well-crafted bill that's been brought forward by the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) and has previously been in the House under the member for Lac du Bonnet, Mr. Gerald Hawranik.

There was a reason that it was brought forward before. It was talked about, as we have heard today—it was talked about before the election in 2007. It was something that was well known at the time. It was well known in 2008 that there was an issue, that members in 2008, across the floor, had an opportunity to look at this bill, to bring amendments forward on this bill. They had plenty of opportunity to address the issue. It seems like the member from Minto had the facts and the statistics to indicate that there was an issue. But unfortunately he did nothing. He did absolutely nothing with this. He sat and waited until today to talk about what he might do in the future.

We had the member from Transcona that stood up in this House today and says to everyone in the House that it's someone else's fault; it's not our problem, it wasn't our problem, it was someone else's problem. For 11 years he's known that there was a

problem. He admitted that today here in the House and, unfortunately, hasn't addressed it. He had an opportunity in 2008 to address this issue, Mr. Speaker. It was well crafted in 2008; it's a well-crafted bill today. Does it need amendments? I haven't heard anything coming from that side of the House, so obviously it must be satisfactory.

Unfortunately, he indicates that he's not going to support it. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's something wrong then, if the—if he doesn't have an amendment to it. And it's been here and he knows that there's a problem. Then I would suggest that they aren't really serious about bringing something forward in the future. We know that this is wrong. The people of Manitoba know this is wrong. As we walk down the streets, it doesn't matter which constituency we happen to be in, or whether we're in the country, we hear it every day: you're paying auto thieves? You're paying them how much? You're paying people \$40,000 and still paying them? They stole the car. They had no insurance.

And so then we've seen from the member from Kildonan, when he referred to the people on this side, the members on this side of the House, as being mean, mean-thinking Conservatives. And he went on to say that the benefits, if they weren't paid by MPI, would be paid by the health-care system or by the welfare system, and referred to the auto thieves as victims.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they made a conscious choice when they stole that car. They made a conscious choice to go out and play. And if it ended up in an accident and killing someone else, that person that was killed didn't have an opportunity. He didn't have an opportunity to get out of the way or he would have. This was someone's mother or father or brother or sister. But why should the person that made the conscious decision to commit a crime be rewarded for that? Why should he get something like \$41,000 a year—or \$41,000 in benefits to date, and still getting them? That's not right. There's no place else in Canada that you would have that same type of treatment.

The member from Minto, with his legal background, should know that. He should have been jumping on this the first opportunity that he had to take the position that he has today. He should have jumped on this opportunity and said, look, the Conservatives were right in 2007; they were right in 2008. And we should have done this in 2009. Why, even 2010. But no. No, he held it just like they held

the \$14.4 million for the police service. He held it underneath his desk until it was election year—until it was an election year, then I can stand up in the House and say, we believe, we believe that we can do better. But we could believe that they could do better too, and we're here to show them that we're here to help them do better.

So, if the member opposite was very, very concerned and sincere about doing anything to stop the car thieves from getting benefits, he would stand up today, or he would say to his colleagues, hey, we need to bake a—we need to make an amendment to this. This is a good bill. But, no, they will sit there with smug look on their face. They will criticize, but they are on record being opposed—opposed—to stopping the car thieves from getting benefits. From 2008 they all had an opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

So today, Mr. Speaker, I challenge—I challenge—the members opposite to come up with some amendments that they think are necessary to make this into the perfect bill that he talks about, that he may well be bringing forward, that he probably won't. He's only talked about a lot of things. He talked about being a leader once too, but he quit halfway.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I just want to challenge the members opposite to stand up with an amendment that we would be prepared to look at.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in the Chamber today to speak about Bill 212.

And let me start by talking about some comments made by the member from Steinbach, who talked about consistency. Well, let's put some consistency in perspective with respect to the members opposite. The members opposite consistently say outrageous things, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I was really surprised to hear last week, or two weeks ago, that auto theft didn't happen when they were in government, Mr. Speaker, that—I think that—that's—*[interjection]*—and they seem to still think that. That is just outrageous beyond words. They still seem to think that is the case by their applause.

Mr. Speaker, you know, and members opposite, I remember the critic—oh, oh, oh, here's another

one—[*interjection*] I just heard it, thank you very much. The member from Springfield, he should have watched the History channel the other day because they had a great documentary about Hells Angels and how the Hells Angels were working to form a chapter here in Winnipeg during the 1990s when members opposite were in government. They should watch the History channel and maybe learn a valuable lesson because I appreciate that channel for what they put out there for people understand what's happening in our world and why things happened in our world. Members opposite ignored the gang activity and did nothing to address it.

And, then, what else? Oh, yes, as a teacher—as a teacher, Mr. Speaker, I remember the day in this Chamber when the member from Charleswood got up and said, there was no bullying in schools when we were in office—[*interjection*] Oh, and again, again, they're applauding because they still believe that. This is absolutely outrageous because the modus operandi of members opposite are—happens to be: ignore it. If there's a problem ignore it and you're not responsible for it.

Well, that's not the way it works on this side of the House. On this side of the House, we recognize there's a problem and we try to deal with that problem. We work with stakeholders in the community to deal with that problem; we work with teachers in the classroom to deal with that problem; we work with the police in our community to deal with that problem; and that's our consistency, Mr. Speaker. Where they are consistently saying outrageous things, we're consistently working with people in the community to address problems in our society, and that's why I'm glad we're on this side of the House and members opposite are on that side of the House. That's why they're going to stay on that side of the House because they don't deal with problems; they ignore it and they blame subsequent governments for their lack of action when they were in government.

So let's talk about being consistent. Let's talk about it. We have consistently worked on an auto theft strategy since we came into office. Now, one of the things I hear the members saying about this particular bill—they seem to forget their history. You know, maybe not just watch History channel, but look in *Hansard* and look at what they did when they were in office, Mr. Speaker, because the members opposite brought in rules in 1995, and those rules allowed for the full benefits to be paid to auto thieves.

So we changed their rules in 2004, reducing the payments and benefits to convicted auto thieves. And we're going further, Mr. Speaker, but, as I said, we consistently work with partners, and we'll be working with MPI to address this very serious issue.

* (10:50)

Now, I know members opposite don't want benefits to be paid to auto thieves, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite don't even want benefits to be paid to Manitobans who pay their MPI because they don't want—they'd rather see benefits of the rebate cheques that are coming up pretty soon, they'd rather see that go to private industry and stakeholders across the country, instead of that money coming back into Manitobans' pockets. So there's—[*interjection*]

Son? He just called me son. The avuncular member from Emerson has called me son. Well, thank you very much—[*interjection*] I won't go there; I won't go there.

But, Mr. Speaker, getting back to consistency, we have consistently worked—we have consistently worked—towards addressing the problem of auto theft, unlike members opposite who said, oh, there was no auto theft when we were in office.

We recognized the problem. We recognized the problem because—let's see some statistics here: 1993, actual and attempted thefts more than doubled, increasing 165 per cent over 1992: 2,489 in 1992; 6,587 in 1993. Those are statistics; those are actual auto thefts and attempted thefts.

But members opposite—oh, no; there was no auto theft when we were in office. Perhaps they considered people to be vehicularly challenged. I don't know how they want to phrase that but, Mr. Speaker, obviously they had some pretty rose-coloured glasses that they were looking through to suggest—to have the audacity to suggest that there was no auto theft in—when they were in office.

They escalated through the 1990s; they escalated from 1991 to 1999, more than tripled, increasing 258 per cent. And it went from 2,473 in '91 to 8,865 in 1999.

Now if they were so concerned about benefits for auto thieves, why did they actually introduce the MPI person injury prevention plan, or PIPP in 1995 where auto thieves received full benefits? Well, I guess that's because they had those rose-coloured glasses on, and they actually didn't think auto theft

was a problem in the 1990s—[interjection] That's right.

Now in 1995, Winnipeg was the auto theft capital of Canada and it increased by 218 per cent between '91 and '95. That's the Centre for Justice Statistics. Now, in 2004, we took action and we changed the members opposites' law, bringing in legislation to allow for reduced payments and benefits for convicted auto thieves. And they had been entitled to full benefits prior to that. And now, we're going to address those issues by bringing forward a better piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Better?

Mr. Bjornson: Better and stronger.

You know, Mr. Speaker, members opposite will not give any credit where credit's due, and I understand that. In a parliamentary democracy where you're the opposition, you have to oppose everything by design.

So members opposite, if you want to talk about consistency, have consistently opposed budgets that introduced more police officers and resources for the police. They've consistently introduced or—and voted against budgets that meant there would be more prosecutors working on behalf of Manitobans. They consistently opposed budgets that meant there'd be more special resource officers in our school, Mr. Speaker, and special resource officers are those who can make the community connections to our students in our schools, so that they have a better relationship with the police officers. And it also has a better presence in our schools for police officers.

But they consistently vote against budgets that will enhance police services, that will provide supports to the police services, that provide supports to prosecutors and the special resource officers. And they consistently vote against programs that support our learning institutions and funding to education in the province of Manitoba, which is where education has been given the opportunity to provide the basic knowledge and tools that citizens need to become participants in society. And, of course, they consistently would underfund our education system.

So if you want to talk about consistency, the members opposite have a lot to be held to account for because they consistently do the things that they do.

Now what's also consistent here is that our efforts have resulted in the lowest auto theft in

18 years, down nearly 80 per cent since 2004. And we've been consistently recognized for our efforts on auto theft: the 2010 Vehicle Theft Award of Merit by the International Association of Chiefs of Police; the 2010 IACP/Motorola Webber Seavey Award for Quality in Law Enforcement; the—a finalist for the 2009 center for problem-orienting—oriented policing Goldstein Award.

So if you look at all of these—all these third-party validators, if you will, Mr. Speaker, people recognize the efforts that we have made. In fact, Manitobans recognize the efforts that we have made to reduce auto theft. And they have consistently said so through these award programs.

Members opposite consistently got up and spoke against the immobilizer program, Mr. Speaker. They consistently said that it was a ill-advised system. And I heard one of the members opposite just saying how he wasn't in support of the ankle bracelets, which I thought was rather interesting because that's a little inconsistent from members opposite.

An Honourable Member: What else is new?

Mr. Bjornson: But, yes, we're getting quite accustomed to members opposite being inconsistent and desperate in this year. They mentioned a particular event coming up in October, and we see more desperation coming out of members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

But, you know, the accolades that the program has received, we're not resting there. We're providing funding for the Winnipeg Police Service helicopter which Mr. McCaskill—Chief McCaskill said was invaluable for car chases. In fact, driving in this morning I heard on the radio some talk about how invaluable that tool has been for the Winnipeg Police Service and the number of calls that they've been responding to and the number of arrests that have been made as a result of that.

But, again, members opposite consistently stand up in this Chamber and consistently vote against all the budget measures that we're putting in place to support our front lines and support the police and support prosecutors in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. So if the member from Steinbach wants to talk about consistency, we can talk about that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I'd like to put a few words on record regarding the Bill 212 from the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

I know she has the best of motive; I'm positive of that. This bill is aimed at eliminating benefits for auto thieves. We're not sure if that's going to accomplish that, Mr. Speaker. There is a serious degree of concern about it, as the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) has pointed out.

And, I guess, if I listened carefully to the speakers on our side, at any rate, they're saying, why was it that from 1992—or—yeah, 1992 to 1993 there was this massive increase of auto theft? It was real, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't imagined; 165 per cent increase, from 2,500 auto thefts in 1992 to 6,500 auto thefts in 1993. This was a surge—a real surge—a real surge. Now, I know members opposite don't believe in surges. I know that Count Ignatieff doesn't believe in surges. I know that our own Crown Prince Harper doesn't believe in surges. So it's easy to say these surges never occur; there was no auto theft, there is no surge now.

But strap on your helmets, Mr. Speaker, maybe there is an orange tide coming. Now, I thought I was being a bit prophetic last time, and honest about saying it: By the time the New Democratic Party forms government, it could be my grandchildren's day. But I may have to update that prediction. However, I've been disappointed so many times in the past, I really don't want to update it.

Nobody wants auto theft, Mr. Speaker. We all know the horror stories. We've seen how, you know, very often young people, possibly belonging to gangs, steal a car and they go for joyrides, and they hurt people. They're—it's not just a dollar loss; it's a blood loss sometimes. It's a very significant loss and it hurts all of us, so we certainly don't want that. But we've done some good things.

I was watching a program the other day—I think it might have been *Power & Politics* with Evan Solomon, I don't remember exactly, I was half asleep—but I was watching the talking heads and, you know, and I nod a little bit, I watch again and the talking heads were talking about crime. And one of them was saying, well, you know, there's all kinds of crime suppression strategies across this country, and some were successful and some were more successful and some less. But they singled out Winnipeg as having really done a fantastic job on auto theft suppression. So I thought that was rather interesting; I mean, they could have picked a thousand examples and they picked Winnipeg. So I know, Mr. Speaker, we must be doing something right.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General has said that there are some fundamental flaws in this bill, and, well, we also know that—what is it, this Friday a federal law comes into effect that could change the whole picture. So perhaps the bill that the member from Morris is introducing is a tad premature or a tad—I wouldn't say irrelevant, but—*[interjection]* All right, for you I'll reword—premature; perhaps it needs a little bit more thinking, a little bit more tweaking.

I agree with the intent and the motive, it's all positive, but we've already done so many good things, Mr. Speaker, that it's—I think we should spend a little time looking at our own record and the fabulous stuff that we're doing.

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Flin Flon will have six minutes remaining.

The hour now being 11:00 a.m., we'll move on to resolutions and we'll deal with Resolution No. 5, Provincial Parks, and it's in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley.

RESOLUTION

Res. 5—Provincial Parks

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): WHEREAS the provincial government is partnering with businesses and communities to fuel economic growth that capitalizes on the advantages of our natural environment. *[interjection]* Oh, sorry, minor detail. You'd almost think I'd done this before. Okay, all right. Thank you, sorry about that, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), the motion before us. *[interjection]* Oh, then read it? Okay.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert, that:

WHEREAS the provincial government is partnering with businesses and communities to fuel economic growth that capitalizes on the advantages of our natural environment; and

WHEREAS ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism market; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has created eight new provincial parks and has designated 1.87 million hectares as parks, provincial

forests, wildlife management zones or ecological reserves since 1999; and

WHEREAS in November 2010, the provincial government established two new wilderness parks, Nueltin Lake and Colvin Lake, which total nearly 610,000 hectares; and

WHEREAS the designation of the Nueltin Lake and Colvin Lake provincial parks, the percentage of Manitoba lands under permanent protection rises to 9.9 per cent; and

WHEREAS the Nueltin Lake and Colvin Lake parks store an estimated 126 million tonnes of carbon, the equivalent to the emissions of 2.5 million cars in 10 years; and

WHEREAS the parks include numerous freshwater lakes as well as diverse wildlife including the barren ground caribou herds, moose, black bear, wolverine, wolf, lynx, fox, river otter, weasel and mink; and

WHEREAS the rights of Aboriginal people to access the areas for hunting, trapping, fishing and other traditional pursuits will continue to be respected, as part of Manitoba's ongoing commitment to work with the First Nations who benefit from the land; and

WHEREAS the protection of this pristine, northern-transition forest habitat, with a total area 10 times larger than Winnipeg, preserves our wilderness heritage for future generations.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Manitoba Legislative Assembly commend the provincial government for making the protection of our natural areas a priority and for continuing to be a leader in the effort to protect the environment.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Wolseley, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert:

WHEREAS the provincial government—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense and accept the resolution as printed? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is partnering with businesses and communities to fuel economic growth that capitalizes on the advantages of our natural environment; and

WHEREAS ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism market; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has created eight new provincial parks and has designated 1.87 million hectares as parks, provincial forests, wildlife management zones or ecological reserves since 1999; and

WHEREAS in November 2010, the Provincial Government established two new wilderness parks, Nueltin Lake and Colvin Lake, which total nearly 610,000 hectares; and

WHEREAS with the designation of the Nueltin Lake and Colvin Lake Provincial Parks, the percentage of Manitoba lands under permanent protection rises to 9.9 per cent; and

WHEREAS the Nueltin Lake and Colvin Lake parks store an estimated 126 million tonnes of carbon, the equivalent to the emissions of 2.5 million cars in 10 years; and

WHEREAS the parks include numerous freshwater lakes as well as diverse wildlife including the barren ground caribou herds, moose, black bear, wolverine, wolf, lynx, fox, river otter, weasel and mink; and

WHEREAS the rights of Aboriginal people to access the areas for hunting, trapping, fishing and other traditional pursuits will continue to be respected, as part of Manitoba's ongoing commitment to work with the First Nations who benefit from the land; and

WHEREAS the protection of this pristine, northern transition-forest habitat, with a total area 10 times larger than Winnipeg, preserves our wilderness heritage for future generations.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Manitoba Legislative Assembly commend the Provincial Government for making the protection of our natural areas a priority and for continuing to be a leader in the effort to protect the environment.

Mr. Altemeyer: It is my sincere honour to have a chance to address our Legislative Assembly here and all my MLA colleagues. This is an issue which I would think all of us would be in agreement upon, that our provincial park system is second to none and has improved dramatically in recent years thanks to the partnerships that our government has worked on. That really does lie at the heart of our provincial park system.

Local people, be they First Nations or local residents, need to be consulted and involved and engaged whenever there is a proposal brought forward to change how the local landscape is going to be used and is going to be designated. That, I

would argue, Mr. Speaker, is a fundamental difference between how our government has approached the expansion of our provincial park jewels in this province compared to how our predecessors engaged in this issue.

There was far less consultation and really partnership involved. It was a much more top-down, heavy-handed approach, and I can assure you that my professors at the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Manitoba instructed all of us that when we are working on natural resource issues, such as the creation of a new park, if the local people are not supportive of it, in all likelihood it will remain as a park in name only. It might look nice and green on a map when you print it, but that doesn't mean that the park is going to be as successful as it could have been, or as it should have been, if a different approach had been used on the front end. And sometimes that means, Mr. Speaker, that we end up keeping our lands on protected status for additional amounts of time so that negotiations can continue, until everyone is in agreement that we are ready to move forward.

And significant amounts of work went into the creation of our two most recent wilderness parks, Nueltin Lake and Colvin Lake. It really is quite impressive, Mr. Speaker, that with these two additions, we are adding 610,000 hectares to the provincial park system in Manitoba.

And the amount of protected land that our government alone has managed to set aside for planet Earth and for future generations to enjoy is now closing in on 2 million hectares. We are at 1.87 million hectares that has been added to protective lands since 1999, and not all of these are provincial parks. Some of these are—enjoy even further protections such as ecological reserves, which are, in fact, set aside just for their own sake and human activity is indeed not even allowed.

And we can see the enormous popularity of our provincial parks. We are now exceeding over 540,000 visitors, approaching the—that mark, to the provincial parks every single year, and that number will, of course, continue to increase in the years ahead. And as our population grows, and as our—as more and more of our citizens adopt an ecological frame of mind and a deeper understanding and concern for the planet, we are not going to just want, we are going to absolutely need more places where we can connect directly with the planet in ways that is not always possible in the middle of a big city.

And the further expansion of our parks system will help us to do that and ongoing work is happening there.

Just to give you some further information, Mr. Speaker, and for my fellow colleagues across the way to consider when they rise to speak to this worthwhile motion, since 1999 when our government came to office, in fact, nine new provincial parks have been designated under our watch. These include the Caribou River, the Pembina Valley, Criddle/Vane, the Trappist Monastery, the Manigotagan River, Duff Roblin, Colvin Lake, Nueltin Lake, which I've mentioned today, and also Birch Island.

One of the other very interesting initiatives that we managed to successfully complete, Mr. Speaker, and something that resonates particularly with my constituents in Wolseley—anyone who goes knocking on doors for whatever cause in Wolseley, you will see no small number of bumper stickers on the mailboxes saying, stop logging in provincial parks. That was a common theme and a campaign in our neighbourhood, in our part of the province, for many, many years when the members opposite were in power. Absolutely nothing was accomplished there.

And I was very proud, just a few years ago, Mr. Speaker, when our province managed to ban logging—commercial logging—in all but one of our parks; 83 out of 84 provincial parks are now free from industrial logging. It's a very impressive accomplishment, not easily achieved, but a very worthwhile one and something I remember discussing back when I was a graduate student at the Natural Resources Institute, the University of Manitoba. There was a designate from the then-provincial government who came out and tried to explain to us, you know, how it was that it was okay that there would be logging in a provincial park. And didn't that sort of defeat the purpose of a provincial park and the words from our classroom, anyways, was that, well, you may as well just separate out all the parks that are being commercially logged and not even call that a park anymore. It would be honest at least. The members opposite could have been honest to just say as much—that, you know, that part of the park, it was just logged commercially; it's not a park anymore and the actual provincial park is a lot smaller than what it looks like on the map. They didn't do that.

* (11:10)

We came to office and we worked very hard, Mr. Speaker, to remove industrial logging from all but one of our parks here in Manitoba.

The—I'm sure many members here have had the pleasure of heading out to our various provincial parks, perhaps during the winter, more often during the summer. The one that I manage to frequent, of course, is—most often is the one closest—one of the one's closest to Winnipeg, and that's Birds Hill. All of Wolseley will empty in a few months when the annual Winnipeg Folk Festival takes place, and it is a healthy reminder that parks are used for many, many different things and, certainly, that annual celebration would not be the wonderful family experience that it is for tens of thousands of residents, both from Manitoba and internationally, were it not in the setting of that beautiful provincial park, just a short journey beyond the Perimeter Highway.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many fine points to make on our provincial parks. I'm sure there're members opposite who would like to join me in mentioning many of them, but I believe I will close off my remarks there in order to give them time to reflect on the beauty of our part of the planet here in Manitoba, and on the great work that our government has done to work with First Nations in particular, and other partners to further expand our park system here in Manitoba.

I hope everyone supports this resolution, and I thank you for your time this morning.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege for me to be able to rise and put a few words in regards to the member for Wolseley's private member's resolution that he has brought forward today in the House dealing with provincial parks, because we all know, regardless of which side of the House we're on, the importance of provincial parks and, as well, making sure that we're protecting the environment and the wildlife that participates or lives in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, we can agree on the importance of establishing provincial parks, whether the goal is to conserve these ecosystems to protect our cultural and heritage resources or to protect outdoor recreational and educational opportunities, which there are many opportunities to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we're all proud that we have probably got at least one provincial park in our jurisdictions. And I'm particularly proud of the fact

that we've got the Turtle Mountain in-park down in my area, got a little park at Oak Lake Beach as well, and provincial parks. But I think it's an opportunity here to—and I thank the member from Wolseley for bringing this forward, because it's an opportunity for us to look at both the ecotourism related to our provincial systems as well as learning about the history and culture of our region as well.

But our Progressive Conservatives are especially proud of our track record on setting aside land for parks, Mr. Speaker, and that goes back to 1990 when there was only .6 per cent of Manitoba's landscape being protected. The Progressive Conservatives saw the pressing need to set aside more areas for protection from certain types of development, and I know during the '90s they were committed to establishing a network of protected areas with the launch of the Protected Areas Initiative brought forward by the Progressive Conservative government at the time. And under that leadership, Manitoba became the first jurisdiction in Canada to commit to World Wildlife Fund, Canada's Endangered Spaces Campaign. And by 1999 that—under the stewardship of the Progressive Conservatives, more than 5.4 million hectares, or 8.3 per cent of Manitoba's landscape had received protected status. That's quite a significant area of progress over that nine year period, from 1990 to 1999.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that's why I'm somewhat aghast at the fact that since 1999 it's only risen to 9.9 per cent, a very small increase under the tenure of this government considering the length of time that they've been here. And it's oft—you know, and, of course, as the member just stated they oft repeat the claim that it is their government that's interested in protecting the environment for future generations. Well, obviously, the record shows otherwise, and it was a Progressive Conservative government that has done more to enhance provincial parks in Manitoba than any previous government in the history of this province.

Indeed, this resolution presents us with an opportunity to look, really, at the NDP track record on environmental protection of—and it's not so stellar, Mr. Speaker, as the member from Wolseley and his colleagues might suggest. The Manitoba Wildlands just finished a study here in February that put together a very thorough report that examined the environmental promises that Manitoba's NDP made to their organization in the election campaigns in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, since 1999 and the '03 and '07 elections, the NDP have made 105 promises, kept 13, worked on 18 and a whopping 70 of them have had nothing done to them. That's two-thirds of the promises that they've made since 1999 when they came into power, on this area, have been broken. So, sounds like hallway medicine. That's not a very good record when it comes to fulfilling environmental promises, many of which were repeated over and over again by this government.

Mr. Speaker, I'd say that they've missed the mark when it comes to fulfilling their environmental commitments, and I'll give you an example. When it comes to water quantity and quality, they haven't delivered on the promises that they made. Challenges still arise on Lake Winnipeg, to engage in, you know, in the regards to the algae blooms and swimming advisories that mar the experience of visitors to provincial parks.

And what have they done to fix this, Mr. Speaker? Well, they've ordered the City of Winnipeg to engage in a costly process to update its waste-water treatment plants—systems, in order to remove nitrogen, phosphorous and ammonia. Well, 63 top scientists told them that the key to controlling algae growth in the lakes is to remove phosphorous, and that the removal of nitrogen could, in fact, make the algae problem even worse. And the NDP refused to budge off of this nitrogen removal requirement, one that could ultimately make the health of the lake even worse. And we believe that this decision must be based on sound science and should be revisited.

And, of course, I think the city has come to common sense on this and is looking at reviewing this again, as well, Mr. Speaker, from what we've heard earlier in the spring, and I commend them for taking a second, sober look at this in regards to how we can improve. What we all want is a cleaner Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, again on water quality, there's still 64—as of just last week—there were 64 communities in Manitoba with water systems with—under boil water advisories or a drinking water avoidance advisory. Thirty semi-public water systems were on the same, and 15 area-wide private wells were under the same boil water advisory or a drinking water avoidance advisory. This doesn't show a very good track record in regards to the NDP's track record.

Mr. Speaker, the summer of '09, one of my colleagues brought forth questions in question period and discussions, and we've asked them in Estimates

before, around the Dorothy Lake situation, with a lagoon in that area that—where sewage overflowed in that vicinity and ran into the public beaches in the Whiteshell area. It's quite astonishing that the government hasn't done anything to really address some of the other areas, like Otter Lake. The NDP government is responsible for managing these resources in our parks, and it's astonishing that they would not have monitored this more closely and been more on top of it.

So, I guess in saying, as well, Mr. Speaker, that one of the broken promises is that they haven't brought in the environmental auditor that they talked about in the 1999 campaign. They also promised that they would enact a sustainable practices act and they've never moved on this.

And, Mr. Speaker, I was the Environment critic when I was first elected in 1999, and I watched them dismantle that whole process. It was the Conservative government that enacted The Sustainable Development Act to help ensure that ensuring the continued growth of the economy is balanced with the protection of the environment and natural resources. And, of course, that's what we want. We want a sustained economy and a sustained environment in this province. And our side of the House had done a lot of work in that area through the '90s and will continue in the future.

In 1999 election, the NDP said that they would develop an action plan for the network of protected areas, but work on this has been slow; it was repromised in '03.

* (11:20)

Mr. Speaker, I know that time is limited in regards to what we can say and regards to the motion or the resolution brought forward by the member from Wolseley, but I'd say that during the 1999 and, again, in '03 campaigns and, again, in '07, another commitment that remains unfulfilled is the NDP promise to achieve adequate representation of Manitoba's natural diversity through networks of protected areas. They promised to complete a scientific inventory of Manitoba's forests for future forestry licensing considerations, and that's never been achieved either.

The NDP promised, in 1999, that they'd work with the federal government to get a more national—more new national parks created in Manitoba, but, Mr. Speaker, since 1996, when a Progressive Conservative government was in office,

no new national parks have been created in Manitoba.

During the '03 campaign, they promised to maintain protection standards for all existing protected areas. And they've even missed the boat in regards to three particular sites; they've removed them, Mr. Speaker: East Paint Lake, Hudwin Lake and Long Point, with no substitutions in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, they promised to work with the federal government in those areas. They promised to work with First Nations towards establishment of new protected areas around Hudson's Bay, you know, for—but they have taken six years to just get a paper out on the issue. Two protected areas were put in in 2010, and eight have been acted—haven't been acted on at all in more than 10 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess I'd say that they haven't met their enshrined Kyoto targets that they had for 2007, and that they'd meet them by 2012. But a reality check shows that their greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba are actually going up as opposed to going down.

Mr. Speaker, to note that the—it's important to note that the NDP's climate change and emissions reduction has no penalty for government missing these targets. And that the premier, former Premier Doer, who said that if they weren't, and I quote from the *Winnipeg Sun* of April 12th, 2008: If we don't achieve it, I suggest the ultimate penalty in 2011 will be defeating the government. I believe the public will hold us accountable. End quote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the former premier, who has obviously committed to meeting this goal—

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

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to be able to have this opportunity, first of all, to compliment the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) on bringing forward this motion. The motion in itself is noteworthy and admirable, but it also, of course, creates the opportunity for us to have a bit of a debate about provincial parks.

I thank the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for his contribution to the debate, although I may have something to say about the odd observation that he made about the government. And, particularly, Mr. Speaker, I

noticed that he was quoting extensively from the Manitoba Wildlands report, which I've had an opportunity to review myself. And the one thing that members of the House might find interesting about what the member for Arthur-Virden had to say with respect to the Manitoba Wildlands report is what he didn't quote that was in the Manitoba Wildlands report, because one of the things that the Manitoba Wildlands complimented the government on in their report was a major piece of environmental policy that the honourable member and his party happened to be against.

Because, if you would read the Manitoba Wildlands report for yourself, I would say to honourable members, and you'll find in there criticisms of the government, some of which I think are unfair; others call attention to things that are yet to be done, fair enough. But the one thing that they do is they compliment the government for having kept the promise to not build the bipole down the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Now, isn't it odd, Mr. Speaker, that the member would get up and go on at great lengths about Manitoba Wildlands and how this is information that we should all take into account and take to heart. But the one thing that he leaves out is the fact that the Manitoba Wildlands actually agrees with the government when it comes to a major policy debate going on in the province at this particular moment. Because—if it seemed to me that one of the great environmental attributes of this government is the fact that we recognize, unlike the honourable member, the fact that on the east side of Lake Winnipeg we have this huge piece of pristine boreal forest.

If you look at a map of the boreal forest, Mr. Speaker, stretching all the way from Alaska down to Ontario, you'll see—and if you look at these maps that are, I presume they're satellite maps—the most intense, the most pristine piece of boreal forest that there is in the world is on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. And our position, for a variety of reasons that I won't have the time to go into, but one of them is environmental, is that that boreal forest should not be disturbed in the way that a hydro transmission line would obviously disturb it. That would create not only environmental problems but attract the attention of others who are concerned about the environment, put hydro exports at risk. The story goes on and on about why we shouldn't build that bipole down the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

I heard the honourable—an honourable member across the way say something about, why are you building a road? Well, here is one of the most ridiculous arguments that the honourable members on the other side have to offer. The fact of the matter is these roads are not in any way comparable to a hydro transmission line. It's not a great big road that's going from north south straight through the boreal forest; these are roads that are already in existence, Mr. Speaker, as winter roads. Where they cross lakes, they'll have to go around the lake. These are roads that connect communities and these are roads that will not put in danger in any way the nomination of the area for a UNESCO World Heritage Site. They're not environmentally comparable to the damage that would be done through a hydro transmission line.

So this is, you know, obviously, Mr. Speaker, just a kind of a—frankly, just a kind of a cheap argument that the honourable members on the other side make. But very interesting to note, I think, that the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) didn't muster the whatever it takes to mention that Manitoba Wildlands, whom he extensively quoted, agrees with the government when it comes to bipole.

I also noticed, when he talked about the position of the Province with respect to phosphorus and nitrogen and the disagreement that we have with the City of Winnipeg as to what it would be appropriate to take out of Winnipeg's waste water before it goes into Lake Winnipeg, that he never mentioned ammonia. It's not just a question of phosphorus and nitrogen; it's a question of phosphorus and ammonia and nitrogen, and what we want the City of Winnipeg to do is to remove pneumonia through a particular process called BNR, biological nutrient removal. We want the whole process to be that process, BNR, biological nutrient removal, and if you do it that way you'll be doing it better both with respect to phosphorus and ammonia, and the extra cost that would be associated with removing nitrogen would be a lot less than what honourable members—and for that matter, the City of Winnipeg—are making it out to be. But they don't want to go there, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to go there because they want to pretend that the debate is actually about nitrogen when the debate is actually about the added expense of doing phosphorus and ammonia in this state-of-the-art technology called BNR.

If we were to have a kind of an honest disagreement, they might want to argue about why we want to spend that extra little bit that would—that

it would cost to remove nitrogen. We could have that debate. But we can't have that debate because, in the same way with the bipole, they never like to actually argue about the facts. They don't want to argue about just the extra money that it costs to build the bipole down the west side; no, they want to throw in the converter station and all kinds of other things to puff up the numbers. Same thing when it comes to phosphorus and ammonia and nitrogen: Let's not talk about nitrogen, no, let's throw in ammonia and not even talk about it but throw the numbers into the whole estimate, Mr. Speaker. So it's very hard to have an intelligent public debate when you've got an opposition that keeps distorting the debate by not acknowledging what all is at stake and not acknowledging what all goes into the numbers.

I see the honourable member smiling over there. Yes, if I was him I wouldn't be able to keep a straight face either, if I had taken that kind of position with respect to these matters.

And then, of course, then the real joke is to have—is to be lectured from the other side of the House about Kyoto. I mean, these are the people that belong to a party that thinks Kyoto is a socialist plot, Mr. Speaker. They think Kyoto is a socialist plot. That's what the leader of their national party—*[interjection]* Now, maybe the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) doesn't—maybe he doesn't agree with the person who said that, because, actually, he chose to leave the federal Parliament rather than be part of a party that was led by the person who said that Kyoto was a socialist plot, and if that's the case, then, you know, I commend him for being sort of one of the more intelligent Conservatives—and it's not all that hard—but, you know, one of the more intelligent Conservatives on that side when it's with respect to the environment.

* (11:30)

But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, to be lectured by members on the other side about Kyoto is just—well, it's—I'm trying to think of a polite word, because it's only my respect for this institution and my reluctance to use unparliamentary language that leaves me speechless at the moment. But I think at the very least you could say that it was rich. It's rich to be lectured about Kyoto from a party that has never actually accepted the science of climate change. Interesting, you know, they say, well, we've got to have the best scientists, you know. We've got scientists saying this, scientists saying that. The whole world, the whole global scientific community

is saying that we've got a problem with climate change and global warming, and members opposite, particularly their federal counterparts, want to act as if it isn't a problem at all. So I just thought I had to say that.

Then the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), who I see is obviously mesmerized by what I have to say, is—he talked about the Dorothy Lake lagoon and the fact that the government hasn't done anything. I guess it hasn't come to his attention that we're building a brand new truck-haul lagoon in the north Whiteshell. I mean, very interesting that the member could actually—could speak about this particular issue without acknowledging this major development in terms of our capacity to deal with waste water and waste in the north Whiteshell.

So, Mr. Speaker, I had a whole bunch of other things in mind to say, but some things deserve rebuttal. And so, having responded to what the member for Arthur-Virden had to say, I'm not sure I have any more time left but I will say this, that I'm very proud, as the Minister of Conservation, that in the short time that I've been the minister, we have created three new provincial parks, Nuelin and Colvin Lake and Birch Island Provincial Park. And, of course, the two other parks were created just in December of 2010, Kaskatamagan and Kaskatamagan Sipi, and that was actually created after I became the Minister of Conservation too, so we've had five provincial parks that have been created in that short time—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to put a few words on the record regarding the private member's resolution brought forward by the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) regarding provincial parks.

Everyone in this House, I'm sure, can agree on the importance of establishing provincial parks, whether the goal is to conserve ecosystems, to protect our cultural and heritage resources, or to provide outdoor recreation and educational opportunities. There are opportunities for both ecotourism related to our provincial parks, whether it be backcountry paddling, watching wildlife or birds, seeing northern lights, learning more about Manitoba's unique history and culture.

And speaking of wildlife and birds, I would like to bring forth the—after the next election, should I be so fortunate as to represent the new constituency of

Midland, it will include the Pembina Valley Park, which was established in 1999 through the good work of the landowner, Mr. Henry Martens; the former minister, Glen Cummings; and also the member for Pembina who did a great deal of work in helping to get this park established.

And I—it's not only fitting that we talk about Pembina Valley Park, as it relates to this current resolution, but also there was the very interesting article in the Manitou local paper—it's called the *Western Canadian*—just this past week about birds and counting of birds, and it's on the flight path—the Pembina Valley Park is on the flight path for a great number of hawks, eagles, turkey vultures and many other birds of prey. And this—it's a very interesting article about the number of birds that use that particular pathway because of the air currents and on their northern migration. And there is some rather astounding numbers of birds that they've been counting on there. This—and I would invite all members to take a trip out west of Morden, south of No. 3 Highway down to visit Pembina Valley Park. There is—currently there is no camping—overnight camping there, but it's a wonderful place for hiking, for observing nature and to take in the beautiful Pembina Valley.

This current resolution that we're dealing with here today, I noticed with interest one of the whereas statements in the resolution, it states: WHEREAS the Nuelin Lake and Colvin Lake parks store an estimated 126 million tonnes of carbon, the equivalent emissions of 2.5 million cars in 10 years.

I don't think that designating those parks has increased the carbon storage. Carbon storage is everywhere, and it's there regardless of whether this is actually designated as a park or not. So I think it's a bit of a stretch for the government to claim that they can now storing an extra 126 million tonnes of carbon when, in fact, it is ongoing there.

The—this resolution certainly doesn't speak to the ongoing challenges that Lake Winnipeg is facing. No help from this government at all that, under their watch, the algal blooms and swimming advisories certainly are affecting our provincial parks and private beaches along the lake. The NDP has known about this for their entire tenure in government, and they have done nothing about it. In fact, the situation has become worse as it takes place, and the member from Elmwood giving us a lecture on nitrogen and ammonia and costs—the extra costs involved—and correct me if I'm wrong, but it was somewhere

around the neighbourhood of \$350 million extra that the City of Winnipeg is having to spend treating nitrogen.

Nitrogen and ammonia are—or ammonia is actually a source of nitrogen and so to intersperse and say it's different, perhaps the member from Elmwood needs to take his chemistry lesson. Come and talk to my farmers; they can certainly advise him on nitrogen and phosphorus and potash and other nutrients that the soil contains and the crops use.

The—it's also rich that this resolution tries to give credence to the provincial government for their work on provincial parks when we know that they're—they have a very poor track record of protecting the water in our provincial parks. We know about the sewage that overflowed in the lagoon in Dorothy Lake and also the overflowing lagoon that—this time into the Otter Lake, and while they may be building a new lagoon now, why is it that we had this overflow in the first place? Could you not see that there was a problem coming here that's—you know on lagoons, you know that the amount of inflow and you know the amount that a sewage lagoon can handle and certainly to have it overflow into the environment, into the Whiteshell water system was certainly not something that should have happened, and the government should have been on top of this long before it happened.

We also know that with their Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act, that they—they're not even going to come close to meeting their targets and as Gary Doer said, they should not be voted back in and should be voted out of office if they can't meet those targets. And, obviously, he was right on that one, and they—they're not even close to meeting them.

But, perhaps, the glaring aspect of this claiming—resolution claiming to be so environmentally friendly and the bipole west-side line is certainly an example of how this government does not understand Manitoba, Manitoba's environment, when they're going to run a line that's close to 500 kilometres longer, they're going to go through more forest, through more boreal forest than what is involved in the east side, on the left side. They're going through marshlands; they're going across a great deal of intensive farmland, and there is no better stewards of the environment than our farmers today.

* (11:40)

And this concern about American lobbyists stopping the east-side line, apparently this government has no concern for the landowners in southern Manitoba—that they say, we don't care what you say. This is—they don't listen to our landowners when they talk about food production and the environmental effect that this line, this long, protracted west-side line, will take. The extra emissions the—that will because of line losses on here, we could reduce the emission by 40,000 cars just by going down the east side rather than the west side.

But apparently that doesn't resonate at all with this government. They have no concern at all for what the practical side of this—the environmental side of this. They talk about their—and we all support having more roads, more access for the east-side reserves, and that's very important.

But a road is far more—has a high—a far higher environmental effect on the environment than a bipole line will. It's not just the widths of the clear—the clearing that you need for this, and a road is actually—gives a big—a larger clearing than a hydro line. But it's the effect of people travelling on that road, the effect on the environment, the access that people will have because of that. While they need access to move supplies in and out, you're also creating an environmental impact just from people travelling those roads. And if you don't think about that, just drive down any of our rural highways here and look at the litter that's on the side of the roads, and that's the effect of people on there. You won't have litter on the side of a bipole line because there will not be people accessing that, and that's just something that's very unfortunate.

This government has no respect at all for the environment in this province. And while the resolution does have its good points, we're certainly not about to praise the government for forming another provincial park.

Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I would also like to thank the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) for this excellent resolution. We know that the member for Wolseley has a lot of environmentalists in his constituency and that he also cares about the environment. I'm a little bit jealous of the member for Wolseley because, in the past, I had two constituents who had raised environmental issues with me and then they moved out of the constituency. Fortunately, one other person moved

in. So I have one person who raises environmental issues with me in Burrows and I wish there were a lot more.

Because I think we're doing good things when it comes to the environment and I'm proud of the government's record, particularly on the creation of parks. For example, we have created eight new provincial parks since we formed government and we've designated 1.87 million hectares as parks, provincial forests, wildlife management zones or ecological reserves since 1999.

And more recently, we announced in November 2010 that the provincial government was establishing two new wilderness parks, Nueltin Lake and Colvin Lake, which total nearly 610,000 hectares. And with the designation of those two new provincial parks, the percentage of Manitoba lands under permanent protection rises to 9.9 per cent. So we have a very good record when it comes to creating parks, and these two latest ones are wilderness areas. And it was very interesting to read about the particulars of those. Probably a lot of us aren't going to get to see them because, from the description, it sounds like they're quite far north. But that's good; we need to be protecting places all over Manitoba.

When I was thinking about speaking on this bill, it occurred to me that I've actually visited quite a number of provincial parks in Manitoba. And we have many, many, many beautiful parks in Manitoba and we should really be encouraging all of our constituents and all our friends and neighbours to visit as many provincial parks as we possibly can.

I've been to a number of parks. I've camped in Whiteshell Provincial Park at Falcon Lake, Hecla Island provincial park, Spruce Woods Provincial Park, Madge Lake provincial park, Duck Mountain Provincial Park. And with some of those, I went with our son Nathan, our daughter Tanissa and my wife Carol. But the one that I remember in particular is Madge Lake because my wife announced that, that was it, she was free, free at last. She was no longer going to go camping with us. If I wanted to go camping with the kids on my own, that was fine with her; have fun, she said. And we did. I continued to go camping with my son and daughter and had a wonderful time. It's a very good way to see the natural beauty of Manitoba.

Of course, another fine way is to take the train to Churchill, which my wife and I did. And you actually get to see all the biome regions of Manitoba

by doing that, and part of Saskatchewan as well, so that you go all the way from the prairies to the tundra. And it is indeed a vast and beautiful park, and it's good that we have done so many progressive things, not only in establishing new parks but banning logging, for example. We've banned logging in 83 out of 84 parks, which brings me to speak about the Tory record which is not all that good if we wanted to contrast our record and the opposition's record.

Not only would they bring back logging [*interjection*]-and I hear someone opposite talking about chain saws. That's what the opposition party would do; they would bring back chain saws to provincial parks. They would bring back logging in provincial parks, even though it's been banned. And that kind of sums up, you know, the Tory attitude towards the environment. They want to turn the clock backwards and instead of raising the bar in terms of environmental protection, what Tories want to do is lower the bar, which is most unfortunate. And I think they're basically out of tune on the environment and what the public thinks about the environment.

For example, one of their members said it isn't their priority to campaign on the environment because it isn't an issue, quote, they're going to win an election on. And who said that? Well, the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) said that-the person who was just speaking ahead of me. And why would that be? Well, I think if you're going to run on the environment, you'd have to have good policies and a good record in government. So why would you run on the environment if you don't have a great environmental record? Or if you don't have progressive policies on the environment, you're not going to get elected on that kind of platform. So, of course, the member for Carman would say we're not going to run on the environment because we're not going to win the election on it.

And there is kind of a consistent, internal logic there that I understand. And I think probably in the next provincial election he's going to be muzzled and his leader is going to be keeping a close eye on him and making sure that he's on script on everything, not just the environment and the things that they're not going to win on. I think he's going to be very positive in the next election, talking about the things that they will win on. He doesn't really want to go there when it comes to the environment, and I can understand why.

Since 2006 Manitoba's invested more than \$40 million in park infrastructure compared to approximately \$7.5 million during the last half of the '90s. So our budget for parks has gone way up compared to what it was under the previous government.

I believe the official opposition are offside with Manitobans on the need to take aggressive action on climate change, and they voted against our Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act. And as the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) pointed out, they don't really accept the science on climate change and global warming. So, of course, that's another reason why they wouldn't want to talk about it. They even compared the Kyoto Accord, signed by Canada and 188 countries, to a boondoggle and opposed our green energy projects such as wind power.

Now when it comes to wind power, I think they're probably out of step with their constituents because their constituents in southern Manitoba, in the St. Joseph area and the St. Leon area, they like wind power. And economically it's a great boon to their rural municipalities and to individual landowners as well as providing a new, clean source of energy.

* (11:50)

Members on the opposition side of the House are even against Hydro's energy efficiency programs that have made Manitoba the most energy efficient province in the country, earning us an A+ from the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance. And we know that we've got a very high rate of geothermal installations in Canada. I think close to a third of all the installations in Canada are in Manitoba. We have insulation programs like BUILD, which is a wonderful program. Their office is on Dufferin Avenue in the North End, and they are providing employment and training for people, many of whom had no employment in the past and no training. And they're giving them skills and making it possible for them to enter the paid workforce after they leave BUILD. And at the same time, they're saving homeowners and Manitoba Housing a lot of money, because they're insulating basements, they're insulating pipes, they're putting in new hot water heaters, they're putting in high-efficiency furnaces. So it's a win-win for everybody, because it means that Manitoba Hydro is saving energy which they can then export for profit, it means that the homeowners are saving money, it means that

Manitoba Housing is saving money, which means the taxpayers are saving money. And BUILD is just one of many, many energy retrofit and energy conservation programs which I think the opposition should be supporting.

I think energy conservation is a worthy goal. We know that because of our energy conservation measures, we've actually saved the equivalent of building a new dam. And I think any time that you can do that, that's a good thing, because new dams are very expensive. And I think energy efficiency is just a very good idea, and I'm sorry that the opposition doesn't support it.

But we'll be interested to see if they support this resolution today, the excellent resolution from the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), and once again I commend him for introducing this resolution.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I'm pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record about the private member's resolution brought forward by the member from Wolseley in regard to provincial parks.

Everyone in this House certainly agrees on the importance of provincial parks and protected areas for various reasons, whether it be to protect sensitive areas or enhance the public ability to enjoy those natural areas. But, you know, I noticed in some of the member for Arthur-Virden's (Mr. Maguire) remarks, and I'm going to make some of the same comments for—to—for emphasis on them.

The NDP environmental promises survey from the Manitoba Wildlands doesn't paint a very good picture for this government, a government that's been in power for almost 12 years, made environmental promises in '99, again in 2003, again in 2007 and on many occasions in between. Total promises, 105; fulfilled, 13; partially fulfilled, 18; unfulfilled, 70. That's a failure rate of 67 per cent. It's an abysmal record for environmental protection under this government in the last 10 years.

You know, back in the '90s that they like to refer to so often—you can compare what the Filmon government did and accomplished in the '90s to what this government has done on protection of protected areas. In 1990, there were 354,000 hectares of protected area in this province, either through parks or other various protection methods. In—by '99, nine years later, 5.4 million hectares. That was 8.6 per cent of the area of the province was under some form of protection. In 2011, after 11 years of NDP government, that 8.6 per cent went to 9.9 per cent, an

increase of 1.3 per cent. Let me rephrase that: To start with, in 1990, it was .6 per cent; at the end of the Filmon government, it was 8.6 per cent. After 11 years of NDP, it was 9.9, an increase of only 1.3 per cent in 11 years. This is a government that claims—claims—to be interested in protecting the environment. They make a lot of political partisan statements and they take very little action.

You know, in 2003 we had the BSE case, the famous BSE case in Canada, and subsequent devastation of our livestock industry, our cattle industry in this province for the next eight or nine years. I remember—probably—just shortly after I got elected, in Estimates, saying to the minister that if we didn't do something in this province to protect permanent cover on the ranchlands in this province, I said a million acres will be broke up and tried to put into crop and that takes away a million acres of carbon sink, and the minister—who is now the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk)—minister at the time, said she hoped that wasn't the case. That was her response. Not that we're going to do anything to maybe help this—keep this situation from happening, you could do something to assist these livestock producers to keep that land in permanent cover. It would have been a good time to have a carbon credit on that land. A carbon credit might have enabled these farmers to maintain that in permanent cover. Within two years of me making that statement to the minister, there was over a million acres of that land, that permanent cover torn up. And it will take 10 years to get it all seeded down again.

You know, we've been told, or I've been told and I've read the science on it, that when land is grazed or cut for hay, it is a better carbon sink than left without anything on it, left fallow, left with no hay cut, no cattle on it. And yet I see a Crown lands policy in this province that's aimed in a different direction. Whenever agricultural Crown land comes up for renewal of leases, it now has to go before a committee of government to see if any other departments have an interest in it. In my view, agricultural Crown land should remain agricultural Crown land; cattle should be there to graze. It helps the economy, but it also creates more carbon sink.

Actively growing grass and hay lands take in more carbon than hay lands that are left untouched.

They've talked a lot—the NDP government have talked a lot about protecting Lake Winnipeg. We continue to see an abysmal record on Lake Winnipeg. The numbers continue to go up. The algae blooms are increasing every year. They've done a couple of small things that were more for political reasons than anything to do with actually creating any protection for Lake Winnipeg, but they make the noises that they're protecting the lake and it sells well to the public without actually making any impact on improving the lake. And, once again, this was mentioned. We said this in committee hearings. We said to them, do something that actually—actually—results in some protection of Lake Winnipeg. You know, the last time I checked there were 64 boil water orders in this province, a number of other types of orders there too, but there were 64 boil water orders. And, you know, every one of those boil water orders is human cost. There's not a single boil water order in this province that is livestock related, and yet this government, this NDP government, will go out and blame the livestock industry for the pollution of the waterways in this province when it's actually always, on the boil water orders, human contamination.

You know, there's a couple of other areas where I see basically an abject failure from this NDP government—the Lake Dauphin pickerel walleye fishery, where there should be a full closure placed on the spawning season on those pickerel. It's a very short period of time. Some years, as last year, it's about a five- or six-day period and the spawn's over. A closure would protect those spawning fish and keep that situation under control. We've heard in the last few days about the moose population in some of our provincial parks. Once again, why is there reluctance to do a closure to protect such a valuable—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have one minute remaining, and the hour now being 12 noon we will recess and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 26, 2011

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