

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Bill 300, are we ready to proceed?

An Honourable Member: No.

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

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed on Bill 208?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Bill 201, are we ready to proceed on Bill 201?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

Mr. Speaker: Yes, okay, we'll call Bill 201, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk, who has seven minutes remaining.

**Bill 201—The Regulatory Accountability and
Transparency Act**

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's indeed a pleasure to rise today on July the 2nd, Mr. Speaker, and I wish—I'm sure all of us had a wonderful day yesterday celebrating Canada Day with our constituents. I was in Selkirk and then I went up to the beautiful community of Grand Marais and enjoyed the—a wonderful event there with the fine people from that community.

And it's a great opportunity for us to—here today to talk about regulation. And, you know, I remember, I think, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) put it very correctly when the Leader of the Opposition, when he was apparently in government, he sat right over here next to me in this chair and he said he eliminated 3,000 pages of regulation—red tape—3,000 pages he eliminated, Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]* And members opposite are clapping—and we're still looking for those 3,000 pages. We haven't found one yet—we haven't found one—*[interjection]* Well, he says they were eliminated, but, you know, there's no record at all—there's no record at all of any of these pages have been eliminated, but apparently it's been done. But we're still waiting on that.

But, you know, what's really important, of course, is the debate about the economy—debate about trying to build a growing economy, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to remind members opposite, you know, that I know it's tough to be in opposition. I was there for a number of years. But, you know, we get from the members opposite—all we get from the members opposite is gloom and doom, gloom and doom every single day. You know, the sky is falling.

But I just want to refer to an article from the Winnipeg Free Press, the business page last Thursday, June the 20th, Mr. Speaker, where they talk about the growth of our economy here in Manitoba. The RBC bank predicts that Manitoba will see a real GDP growth of 2.7 per cent this year and 2.6 per cent next year, and this is higher than the national average. So our potential growth here of the economy is higher than the national average. In fact, we almost doubled the growth of our GDP from when we formed government to where we are now—I believe from 32, 33 billion up to over 65 billion. And that's an incredibly—accomplishment which we should embrace.

You know, but in terms of—and you get the members opposite, they, you know, they talk about, they're going to have to cut some \$600 million out of their budget. Although, like I say, sometimes I listened to my friend, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), here a number of times. He spoke in this Chamber, as I said, he spoke a lot. He said very little,

Mr. Speaker. He did not tell us how he was going to cut that \$600 million out of the budget. No, all we get from members opposite every day—I'm sure we'll be going through the petitions early—or later on as we, you know, move through the debate, and we'll see petition after petition from the members opposite calling for more spending, calling for a nursing home here, calling for a road there, calling for a bridge over there.

You know, they want to be everything to everyone. They want to be everything to everyone, Mr. Speaker, but they have absolutely no way—they have no answers as to how they're going to do this. They're going to cut \$600 million out of the budget. They're going to reduce the size of government by \$300 million and then they're going to forgo \$300 million in revenue. But they'd never given us an answer of how they're going to do that other than to lay off the military envoy. As I said, they have to lay her off 7,000 times to make up that amount, but they haven't been able to do that.

Although, I—we, you know, members on this side know, when they are in government they did lay off, you know, a thousand nurses. They did, Mr. Speaker, reduce the size of the education 'siftom.' They fired educators. They brought in Connie Curran. They, of course, brought in 'fozen'—frozen food. They tried to privatize the home-care system. Of course, you know, they did the—at the end of the day they did privatize the telephone system, these great business minds across the way, these titans of industry, captains of commerce. I watched a show the other day about David Rockefeller. Now, there was a titan of industry. Members opposite, they ain't no titans of industry.

But as I said, they, Mr. Speaker—we're trying to—as I said, it's been our policy of our government to try to eliminate red tape. We've reduced the size of the health authorities down from 11 to five. The members opposite when they were in government had 13 of them. They had two for the city of Winnipeg alone. There were 54 school divisions. We came into power, now there're 37. And now we've begun the amalgamation of a municipal—of municipal government. And I can't believe the 'opp'—members opposite, that they're standing in the way of trying to reduce red tape, standing in the way of trying to reduce the size of government. I thought that's what Conservatives stand for. I thought they stand for smaller government, less governments. We're offering that to them, but they're making every effort to stand in the way of trying to reduce the size

of government, try to reduce the burden, the tax burden, upon Manitobans, and I was shocked by that.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when we were in—when the members opposite were in government we spent 13 cents on the dollar to service the debt; now we're spending 6 cents on the dollar to service the debt. The net debt under the members opposite was over 33 per cent, net debt-to-GDP was around 33 per cent. Now it's down to 26 per cent.

Harper—the Harper government, they did—give them credit, they did lower the G—they did lower the PST. [*interjection*] Well, the member for Steinbach's (Mr. Goertzen) very excited about the Harper government. We know pretty soon he'll be out campaigning. He'll be—pretty soon he'll be out campaigning for the Harper government. The member for Steinbach, pretty soon he'll be out there defending Pamela Wallin. Pretty soon the member for Steinbach, he'll be out there promo—excuse me—standing up for Mike Duffy, Mr. Speaker. He'll be defending Mike Duffy in only a short time. We look forward to that.

* (10:10)

But anyway, the Harper government, what they did—their deficit-to-the-GDP ratio is almost three times as high as ours, Mr. Speaker, so what they have done is they're increasing debt, but we've realized here that we'd have to eliminate debt. That's why we've been reducing our debt over the number of years. So, like I said, we doubled our GDP from close to 34 to 68 billion. We—our net debt-to-GDP ratio is 0.8 per cent; Harper government's running around 3 per cent.

We have a tremendous record on trying to eliminate debt. We have a tremendous record on trying to eliminate regulation. I only hope that members opposite would take time and realize that.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good morning to you, Mr. Speaker. I want to wish everybody a belated happy Canada Day. I know many of the MLAs, including myself, were out at events on the weekend.

Had a great opportunity to be at the Canada Day celebrations at the Mennonite heritage museum in Steinbach on—yesterday and then enjoyed the festivities in Steinbach in the evening as well. And it was a great time to be with constituents and to celebrate the great country that we have and

Canada's birthday. We always—as individuals, we take birthdays to sort of mark our time in the world and to think back and to look to the future and to take stock. And certainly I think we did that as a nation yesterday and we're pleased in terms of where Canada is. Always challenges, Mr. Speaker, but looking forward to the things in the future as well.

I have to take issue with some of the comments from my friend from Selkirk. I don't know if he was partaking a little bit too much in the festivities on the weekend or why his thought process was so cloudy this morning, Mr. Speaker, but he spoke of how his government is reducing taxes, and he did it the day after—well, and he's the only one clapping over there. I'm looking for anybody who is supporting him. I'm not surprised members on this side aren't supporting him, but I'm a little surprised even the members on his own side aren't supporting him. Because he talks about reducing taxes the day after his government brought in an illegal increase to the PST, the day after his government is taking some \$300 million more collectively out of the pockets of Manitobans—to him that is reducing taxes.

And no wonder he is so out of touch when he can come into this House and talk about reducing taxes when, if he would go out to any business today and buy anything and get a receipt—almost anything—he'd see on there that the PST is now 8 per cent. And if he would have done that a couple of days ago, he would've seen—unless it was at McDonald's last week who were paying or charging in advance—but if he would've gone and got a receipt, it would've been 7 per cent. I don't know how he can see that as a reduction from 7 per cent to 8 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

He talks about how his government is trying to eliminate debt. Now, maybe he can speak and he—and there again, I look around and he's the only one clapping. It's one man clapping for himself, Mr. Speaker. Oh, I'm sorry. I think the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) was supporting him. If there was one other member in this House that I would guess would support him, it would be the member for St. Norbert because they're sort of the twins of being disconnected from Manitobans.

But when you look at the debt, Mr. Speaker—if you actually look at the financial statements put out by this government by the Department of Finance, you see the debt has doubled—has doubled under their government. So, I don't know how he can talk about debt being reduced. In fact, the deficit every year is coming in at almost record numbers. Last

year we had a billion-dollar deficit. He's perplexed. I hope he goes and talks to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers).

His own budget in mid-April—now, mid-April might seem like a long time ago, but it wasn't really that long ago, Mr. Speaker—this budget projected a half-a-billion-dollar deficit. And this will come as a surprise to the member for Selkirk, but the deficit ultimately gets transferred to the debt. Now, that will be, I know, a revelation to the member for Selkirk, but the deficit is the amount of money that you are short this year, and then it gets put onto the debt, which is the cumulative amount which you were short for the previous years. So I hope that he can figure this out; I hope that he can understand this.

Now I hear him squawking about the federal government, Mr. Speaker, yelling about the federal government. I'm sure that if he speaks to his Member of Parliament, his Member of Parliament will set him straight in terms of what's going on in Ottawa. But hopefully he can get set straight about what's going on here in Manitoba.

Now, this bill is about accountability and transparency, and we are at a time in Manitoba where there's never been less of each—less transparency and less accountability. In fact, tonight while the committee is going to be officially called the committee on Bill 20, it should be called the committee on accountability because Manitobans are coming to that committee to try to hold the government accountable—to try to hold the government accountable for what they're doing, not only in increasing the PST but how they're increasing the PST. Now it's already been increased because they're enforcing businesses to be part of their scheme.

And I can tell you, I don't know how many businesses—it was more than I kept track of, Mr. Speaker—contacted me from my constituency last week and said what's going on? I mean, are we supposed to collect this tax, are we not supposed to collect the tax? We're getting mixed messages; the law hasn't passed and yet the Department of Finance quickly issued a statement saying that they were expected to collect the tax because—even though the law really wasn't in place, it was going to be retroactive so if you didn't collect it, you'd have to pay it when the bill finally did pass. I mean, it's an absolute disgrace, in terms of how this government is running its affairs. And businesses are confused.

I'm sure the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and other members in the government have gotten the same phone calls, they're gotten the same questions about, well, what's going on. I mean, the legislation hasn't passed so it's already an illegal tax and yet you want us to collect the money. And yet when you talk to Finance, they say, well, yes, we want you to collect the money because, yes, the law hasn't passed but eventually it's going to pass whether it's in a day, a month, a year or whenever it's going to pass. And then retroactively we're going to take the money so you might as well take it now because retroactive we're going to take it. And it sounds like some sort of, you know, Third World operation going on over there, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how they're running this—the Department of Finance.

And I'm not surprised that businesses who are often not only, you know, sometimes very linear in terms of their thought process in terms of the finances, Mr. Speaker, but they're organized. They understand that there has to be some rationale and reason in terms of how you do things; they have to meet payroll, they have to meet expenses, they have all their costs that they calculate out and they add to a certain amount of profit—a bad word for the members opposite. I say the word profit and I see, I know, shivers go up the spine of the members opposite because they don't understand what that is and why would a government—or why would a business take a profit? It's disgraceful, I know, in their view.

But those businesses run their affairs in an orderly fashion, in an orderly way. And what they're seeing what's happening with Bill 20 and the lack of accountability and transparency around it, is that it's not orderly and it doesn't make sense and it's not how they could run their business. And so of course they're concerned.

It's not just businesses, Mr. Speaker. I mean, consumers—consumers—are saying the same thing. I had a number of people on, well, it was actually on social media yesterday, people were talking about the PST increase and it's a lot of comment about the PST increase, and people saying well, maybe we should refuse to pay it because it's not even the law yet. And people were just wondering what is going on with this government, have they lost control?

And ultimately that is about transparency and that is about accountability and the government could have done a couple of different things; they

could have brought in a separate piece of legislation and repealed the referendum requirement under the balanced budget and taxpayer protection act, Mr. Speaker. They could have done that and then brought in the increase. We still wouldn't have supported the increase; we would have been opposed because we think that there are ways this government could find savings internally. But at least there would have been a process; at least there would have been a process that makes sense.

And I keep hearing the member for Selkirk, he's talking about all the savings they've had; well, where are those mystical savings? They've been running massive deficits for a number of years. The debt goes up, up and up, and he's taking about savings, Mr. Speaker. You know, he's saving a couple of dollars on one side and running up a half a billion dollar deficit on the other side. So where are those savings?

So ultimately—[interjection] Well, one of those—no, I won't get in. Mr. Speaker, we—going to save the people from Selkirk for four more years.

But, Mr. Speaker, I, you know, when you look at what this—what the government is doing in terms of how they've brought in this particular increase, it lacks transparency, it lacks accountability, the hallmarks of what we're talking about in this bill.

So I'm not surprised that the government would be opposed to this particular piece of legislation because they probably haven't even read it, they probably never got past the title. They were probably sitting around their caucus table and they said, well, there's a private member's bill. It says—it's called The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act.

And the Premier (Mr. Selinger) probably stood up and said, no, no, stop, stop, it says accountability and transparency, I don't need to hear any more of this, not even read the act because those are two words that I won't actually agree with and that I won't actually adhere to. I don't need to go any further. Don't even go to the explanatory note, don't go clause by clause. Just the fact that it's a bill that talks about transparency and accountability, we don't want to hear it any more, we want to move on from that.

And we've seen that. We've seen that through Bill 20, we've seen that in a lot of different ways with this government, not just this session but in previous sessions; they didn't want to sit at a reasonable time, they didn't want to come back

before mid-April, Mr. Speaker. We asked them to come back sooner; they didn't want to do it, they didn't want to be accountable, didn't want to be transparent here in the Legislature. So obviously they're not going to support this bill.

* (10:20)

But we hope that they'll look at the spirit of this bill and transfer that spirit into other areas, into Bill 20, into committee, Mr. Speaker, and to a variety of different things within the Legislature. And then we know that then things will be improved, that they'll be better.

Because, ultimately, I don't know what the government could be opposed to with transparency, what they could be opposed to with accountability. Those are hallmarks, Mr. Speaker, of which all governments should strive for.

So I look forward to this bill passing onto committee. I'm sure we could squeeze it into a committee schedule somewhere between now and December, Mr. Speaker, and we could see it pass before this session ends. Thank you very much.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Happy Canada Day. I was out yesterday at a wonderful event in the North End over at Elwick where there's many exciting things happening there due to Neighbourhoods Alive! coming into that area. I think that program didn't exist under the previous government so I'm very pleased that we have it now, and we're seeing some of these neighbourhoods really coming back to life.

And so they did have a happy Canada Day, with all kinds of events going on and music playing and dog shows and those explosives in the air—

An Honourable Member: Fireworks.

Ms. Wight: Fireworks—thank you. It was a great night—great night—[interjection] Thanks, Ralph—absolutely. It was very bright and cheerful in the sky in the dark. Anyway, it was a wonderful night.

So it kind of leads me to the alternate universe that I live in in this room. So I have to admit that sometimes when I'm in this room, I feel like I'm living in an alternate universe because I hear all these things coming from this side of the House, and the sky is falling and, you know, Manitoba's doing so badly. And I kind of feel like I'm going to walk out into Gotham City when I leave. I just happened to see that late at night, last night, Gotham City was on there and it was all dark. But it doesn't happen; I

walk outside and everywhere I look there's sunshine—sunshine and cranes building like never before in the province of Manitoba.

And I run sometimes from this room to my office to grab the report on whether or not Manitobans are working. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? They are working. Isn't that fabulous? They're working all over the province. They have jobs.

And you know what? I remember my dad talking about the Depression and what that was like and nobody working and the devastation that occurred and the fear of that—[interjection] Oh, it was in the 1990s as well, the member mentions. And I know what that was like, and we don't have that here, and I am so grateful that our economy is, in fact, doing tremendously well. So my moments hit me while I'm in here listening to all these things, and then I go out and see the facts and truth and it's like light coming on, and I'm grateful.

Because, Mr. Speaker, I know some—one of our members was speaking the other day about StatsCan reporting that the average weekly earnings in Manitoba had grown faster than the national average. Well, that's hard to believe when we hear the opposition speaking.

And that the RBC's latest provincial outlook indicates Manitoba is maintaining its cruising speed and forecasts are sustained, real GDP growth at 2.7 per cent in 2013, matching the growth in 2012. And the Royal Bank of Canada, not always—you know, not always our friend, is one of only four provinces to grow faster than the national average in 2013.

So I've certainly been out talking to people about the PST increase, and all the people I've spoken to, within a minute or two of hearing the facts, say, we have to do it. Of course no one wants that, but you have to do it. It's the responsible thing for a government to do.

And it takes a government with courage to do it, Mr. Speaker. And I'm glad that I'm on this side of a government with courage, because we need to do what is right for Manitobans, and that's what is happening here. We will be able to continue with flood mitigation work; we will be able to continue to build Manitoba.

So, I did want to also, of course, get to how that building is working with cutting our red tape. We've been busy doing that as well. So as we've been

building Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, we've been cutting red tape across the province. And our focus on that is to improve, of course, service delivery and accessibility by bundling services so they're accessible through one single call or in-person visit or just clicking on a website.

We're continuing to cut red tape for business, of course, by reducing how often the small businesses have to file sales tax. I think that the opposition voted against that. I could be wrong, but I think so. Through our government website, of course, people can also apply for child-care assistance, book a campsite at a provincial park, apply for a student loan and manage their tax accounts. You can't beat that for efficiency.

As well, I was recently one of the MLAs who got to do some public meetings on the liquor and lotteries, and that is really going to be reducing administrative spending. It's going to cut red tape. It's going to improve service for Manitobans. We're absolutely on track.

We announced that we were modernizing those liquor laws that dated back, Mr. Speaker, to the 1950s, so certainly timely that we were doing this, and some of the things that are going to be a lot easier and will really be cutting red tape is streamlining the number of liquor licences from 12 to three, and that one should make a huge difference for the businesses that are applying for that.

Removing barriers to licensing small live entertainment venues so Manitoba will become the music capital of the country in doing that. Eliminating reporting requirements for restaurants in their sales of food compared to liquor because that was a lot of work for the businesses and that's going to really cut down the red tape. Bringing liquor and gaming regulatory services under one roof creating a single inspection process, single application to serve liquor and license video lottery terminals, Mr. Speaker, and creating a single online application for liquor and raffles where families and community groups hold socials because I'm sure, as everyone knows, a lot of those little community organizations, it's very difficult for them to find the people to kind of be filling in the sort of paperwork that they need to be doing.

So that was something we heard about quite a bit as we were having those public consultations was people coming in to say we just don't have the people, you know, to be filling out all these things and making it so difficult to have a little raffle. So

they spoke. We heard. We're doing it, and that's going to be a lot easier for folks.

Scott Jocelyn, executive director of Manitoba food and restaurant association and Jim Baker, the president and CEO of the Manitoba Hotel Association were—both applauded this initiative. Mr. Jocelyn actually said it was a major milestone and that we are looking forward to assisting further in modernization of our laws to help business and enhance consumer choice in a responsible way.

We've also introduced new legislative amendments which take action to further protect tenants but reduce red tape for landlords. So I know that that is also going to make a major difference for the landlords of our province, and their—our growing economy and strong housing market along with low interest rates, motivating the landlords to reinvest and so they're going to be upgrading their businesses. The continuation of tight rental housing market demonstrates the need for changes to improve the rent regulation system to further protect tenants, but it also speaks to how much Manitoba is continuing to grow. And as I started my speech with the ultimate universe, in here you would think we're not growing, that maybe our school enrollments are dropping all over the province because we don't have any people. But, no, Mr. Speaker, it's not true. All over my area in Burrows, schools are absolutely bursting with kids coming in and we're just seeing growth everywhere and we see in the tight rental housing market exactly the same thing. It's because we have so many people moving into our province. Proposed changes, as well, are going to enable landlords to continue investing in their property while they are ensuring that the tenants are treated fairly.

We didn't see that kind of thing with the opposition. They would abandon all rent controls that protect many Manitoba families from 'skyrocketing' rents, so—and we don't want to see that. *[interjection]* Exactly. So for the landlords who are providing far more transparency in setting the annual rent guidelines, such as a prescribed formula or linking the increase of the consumer price index, so that's another way, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to be making it a little bit easier for folks. We're giving landlords new powers to evict tenants who break the law such as drug dealers because illegal activity can certainly create an unsafe living condition, and I know I've certainly spoken to people in my community where they've had that exact problem where people know that drug dealing's going on in the corners or somewhere in the area and—but there's

not too much they can do about that. So with this we're going to be helping the landlords solve that so that everyone in their communities can feel safer. That has also been a major goal of our government working for safe communities, and so I'm proud of a lot of the work that we've done in that as well.

* (10:30)

So, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to end with saying that—I don't know. I can't even get anywhere close to reading through or talking about all of the things that we've done to reduce red tape. So only in the alternate universe of this room would it be a tiny bit; it's actually huge amount of things that we've already done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Again, like my colleague and others have said talking about their Canada Day experiences yesterday, and I had the opportunity to get around Lakeside. In fact, it was quite the events at several communities. We had the Metis community who, for 13 years, has brought forward the event in Teulon and they stepped down from last year and we had a new committee and they did a fantastic job. And started off in Stony Mountain, then Teulon, Stonewall and then back to Teulon again. We watched the fireworks there last night and, of course, we tracked our way into the city once the fireworks were over.

We got to The Forks last night and I can tell you that the traffic was pretty heavy just in the foot traffic alone to get to The Forks. It was good to see all those Canadians celebrating as we watched the fireworks at The Forks last night and they were very good. Teulon was a close second. They don't have quite the budget that the Province and the City has, but they come in really close to The Forks and what they put on for fireworks. But, certainly, the committee is very proud and they should be.

I know that as I was around and about yesterday and we were talking about various issues, one of those issues, of course, was the PST increase and the more red tape that this government has brought on to hard-working Manitobans. And I know the member from Burrows said that, you know, it's a tough decision. They had to make it, no doubt about it. It was a tough decision, but it wasn't done the way that it should have been done, and I think that is really what the government's trying to dance around and what we hear from Manitobans. In fact, at committee on Thursday night we heard from several

Manitobans and the impact it was going to have on each one of them. And I can tell you, the committee was presented with some hard kidding—hard fighting words and some information that I think that all committee members were—be able to relate to. If not, then they certainly weren't paying attention. I encourage those that were not there to read Hansard and find out what Manitobans truly had to say about what the PST is going to do to those individuals and, of course, their families.

I can tell you, also, that the member from Burrows talked about holding raffles and then—that we talked about that yesterday as well, and she was saying they used a raffle to raise money for a particular function. It's too bad they don't use some of those ideas to raise their own tax dollars for elections. It seems like, you know, it's more important to ask the taxpayer for \$5,000. For hard-working Manitobans—they can't have an idea. I know raffles are against the law for—under the election law. But there's other ways to raise money. There's going out and asking the Manitobans to help their party, help them raise money, whatever they see that's going to be under the election laws and we have that ability to be able to do that. Unfortunately, the government has decided that it's easier just to ask taxpayers for another \$5,000 for every member on that side of the House. That's on top of the 50-cent dollars they already receive.

So it's unfortunate the government has used some of those initiatives on their own to raise their own money in a way that would be meaningful for their own party. We feel that—in fact, we just found out in committee not that long ago that the NDP party has already received their cheque. They got the money, they cashed it and they're trying to figure out a way to rebate the money back to the Province. They haven't quite got that out—back to them yet, but I understand they're going to send a couple of thousand dollars back to the Province. So it's unfortunate that, you know, the government has decided to take the money—and I know many of us on this side have asked the government time and time again to refuse to take it. It's a tax on Manitobans that, on top of the \$184 million that they brought in last year in the budget, was quite sufficient. And whenever we've talked about transparency, you know, and accountability, this is what it's all about: being accountable to the hard-working Manitobans that elect us, who we are supposed to represent and bring their forward—their commitments, their ideas, their wishes and have that

debate in this House. And it seems to me that we're having a bit of a hard time impressing upon the government what that commitment really means. And we've heard now from just a few Manitobans—I believe it's less than 30 that presented at committee on Thursday night, even though the government has decided to go ahead and bring, in fact, the increase today on hard-working Manitobans. It's unfortunate that the government has decided to do just that.

We would like to have seen the rest of the committee members at least heard before the government made up its mind in order to hear what hard-working Manitobans, in fact, have to say. There might have been one; there might have been two; there might have been three people in that committee that the government felt that they're bang-on—they're bang-on. Obviously the 30 that presented on Thursday night didn't convince the government to hold back on bringing forward the PST. In fact, I know the member from Steinbach talked about confusion about whether to collect it, whether not to collect it, whether they're breaking the law, whether there's going to be costs brought against them as penalties for not collecting, or for those that did collect it, now they're going to have to refund that money if the government changes its mind.

I know there was a test run on one of the businesses in town that was doing a preliminary set-up for the PST increase. Well, unfortunately, there was a glitch in the computer and they charged the extra 14 per cent on the PST, again, through no fault of their own—just trying to get ready. They have tried to make that right with their customers and refund as many as they could. Unfortunately, they haven't been able to make contact with all those Manitobans, but you know what? Fourteen per cent on top of the existing PST is a substantial amount of money, so we want to encourage those businesses that are collecting the PST. We know it's more red tape for them, and of course they have to be transparent. They have to balance their books. They have to be very clear with the fact that whenever they collect this money that it's remitted back to the province, but they want to do it in a way that is definitely sustainable for their business and not have any infractions brought against their government—or against their business, because we know very clearly that each one of those Manitobans does, in fact, want to have an honourable business in this province.

And, of course, you know the good business bureau, of course, and of course the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—I understand they're on the list

to present tonight—which represents a large number of those businesses. We certainly hope that the government listens with an open mind in order to hear what those businesses they represent have to say. And I know they're doing extensive research into red tape and what other provinces are doing and what other things that make Manitobans competitive on the world market and, of course, the Canadian market as a whole.

And whenever businesses are to that point where they're trying to make a decision whether or not to have a business in Manitoba, do we think, well, are we going to be competitive? We're going to be able to sustain the growth and the red tape and the transparency within the parameters outlined by this government.

And I know that we, on this side of the House, have made several suggestions to the government in regards to making sure that all Manitobans have an opportunity for their opportunity to be heard, for their businesses to be represented, whether it be through the Canadian Taxpayers Federation or others that they belong to, whether it be the chamber of commerce. We have a number of companies and businesses that have made it very clear they're not happy. They're not happy with the transparency, the red tape, that all Manitobans are having to go through. They want to be able to say to the government: Look, we put you there; we want you to be able to listen to us; we want to be able to have our voice heard.

And, as a result of that, we come back to what we were originally talking about here at the very beginning, and that's trying to cut the red tape and trying to get rid of the bureaucracy that makes business competitive on a market within Canada. And, of course, we also are very proud of the fact of CentrePort, where we brought in the resolution to amend the bill on a duty-free zone—trade zone. And, thank goodness, the government hasn't decided to attack that yet because it's very important that Manitoba be competitive. We bring these goods in; we make certain modifications to them in some cases—some not, but it's great to have that opportunity to create those jobs, create the wealth within the province of Manitoba.

* (10:40)

We know we have some few other issues that we're going to have to address in regards to making CentrePort certainly sustainable in the long term. We know there's been a large amount of money that's

been invested not only by the provincial government but also the federal government.

We can do one thing for sure, and that's by all members of this House making sure that we eliminate the red tape, eliminate whatever roadblocks we have in order to ensure Manitobans do have a voice and do have a say in this government and what we have to say.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I rise today and, like the other members before me, speak on the great Canada Day we had up in Flin Flon, and we, too, had fireworks. I'm sure maybe the explosions weren't as big or fancy as my partner from Burrows's, but they were great. I helped out at the canoe races, and just getting back to my constituency just showed why this job representing them is so important, and also not just how great Canada is, but how great our province is. So it was a great day. It was a great day to be there with my family and to come back here. It's great to be put on the record.

And I think it's important, sitting here—I know I've been sitting here for a couple of years, but, you know, it's hard sitting here day after day and hear the negativism from the opposition party, the doom and gloom, and I look at Manitoba and I see the building of the MTC centre, the football stadium. You know, driving to the airport is one of the most efficient airports in Canada. There's building all through Winnipeg, so I'm proud to see Manitoba growing. Unemployment is low. We've got great projects in hydro coming up. We're looking at Lalor, one of the largest mines ever in Manitoba, moving on. So I'm very proud of that.

I'm also a little confused because there's a little difference between red tape and regulations. I know the opposition would like to get rid of unions, would like to get rid of the regulations in workplace health and safety, and I think that's, you know, very important to the workers of Manitoba that they have a government that's going to stand with them against many of the possibilities that could happen in non-unionized workplaces. I know that they would like to—with hydro, the workers in hydro, they want de-unionization, and that's kind of scary because, like I say, we don't want to go back to the '30s. There's a lot of work that's been done to—for workplace health and safety, and we want to move in that regard.

Rent controls: There was, in the last election, one of the constituents, a Conservative constituent, said that they'd like to get rid of rent controls. Well,

you know, just think of how that would impact the people that can't afford prices for staying, and so, you know, we got to be careful there that, yes, we'll get rid of red tape.

We'll look at the opportunities of doing that, but we got to make sure that the regulations are in place whether it's for the environment, which I think is very important. Coming from the north, environment is very important, and we want to make sure that those regulations are looked at and make sure they're followed for the future generations of Manitobans and Canadians. So that's really important.

I know there's talk of oil fracking in Manitoba and shipping oil up to Churchill. That all sounds positive, but we got to make darn sure that regulations are in place for something bad that might happen, could be an oil spill, could be whatever. So we got to make sure that we go slowly at this and make sure that things are protected. So it's not like we want to get rid of regulations. We want to make sure that they're there for people to follow, and so that all Manitobans benefit, whether it's in rent controls, whether it's environment, whether it's workplace health and safety. So that is important.

I also want to go on record about the budget, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm very proud of our government having the guts to be responsible, and saying, you know what? After the flood of the century, or the last flood, we're not going to sit back and pretend it didn't happen. It did happen. We did go in debt. And not only will we compensate and help people that were in that flood, we'll also protect them for any future floods, so we spent another billion dollars.

So I'm very proud that our government stands up. When I look to the west, my family in Calgary and all that, and I look at, you know, how we acted and they reacted, and I'm very proud that my government is the one that acted and continues to act, seeing that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was in Reston this past weekend. I mean, we're right on top of things. We go and we see and we help, and I'm very proud of the Premier for doing that.

Also, flooding—I know the opposite members here was saying the flood's over—the flood's over, you know, forget about it. Well, you know, there's still flooding going on, and up in Le Pas and Wanless, these are some of the places—*[interjection]*—and Dauphin—some of the places that haven't flooded before.

So we're a government that looks at what the people need in Manitoba. We're not just a government of some people. We're the party—we're the government of all people in Manitoba, north, south, east, west, and I am proud to say that we look at every section of Manitoba. We're not just looking at certain areas of Manitoba. We're looking at how everyone can benefit, whether it's the roads up north, okay, or flooding down south in southern and southwestern Manitoba, so—or fires in southeastern Manitoba. So our government looks at everything and says, you know what? This is what government's for, it's being responsible to the people of Manitoba. And I'm proud to say that we're making these choices.

Is it a tough ride? Darn rights. I mean, raising the 1 per cent was very tough. And, you know, the opposition stands up—you lied. Guys, when things happen in the environment, in the world, you got to react or act to them. I mean, when they bring up that, I was always think back to the selling of MTS—good example of a lie. Why did they do it? Was it just to fill their own pockets? I don't know. And that's what scares me, because I want leaders that are going to represent Manitoba and lead Manitoba. I don't want them breaking up Manitoba. I don't want them selling Hydro, you know, and I don't want them raising hydro rates to the market level—how this would affect all Manitobans.

We have—and it's been said here many times, that hydro is our oil and we've got to look at it. We've got to look at the clean energy that people are looking for and we got to look at the opportunities in the north for First Nations, for anybody that's involved in hydro. We've got to make sure that Manitobans realize the benefits, and the future of Manitoba is our hydro and we can work with that.

Diversifying—yes, let's diversify our economy. We have gone through many recessions based on, probably, the 'diversication' that we already have, but let's even diversify even more. Maybe we can refine more oil in Manitoba and ship it up through Churchill or ship it past Manitoba. Maybe we can build a lot of the things for hydro. I mean, there's a lot of opportunities in Manitoba right now, and I thank the leadership, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the ministers, for looking at those opportunities and making sure that all Manitobans benefit.

And I also have to say, on record, that after being part of this team—and there's two teams here—but all of us, we all have the interests of Manitobans.

And I'm proud to say that we've made some choices, some tough choices here, and I'm proud of those choices. I know the opposition would do something different, like cutting 1 per cent, laying off teachers, laying off nurses and cutting, cutting, cutting; let's not build anything, let's go into a—I guess you could say, a cone of silence when it comes to other Canadian provinces.

So, having said all this, I'd just like to say thank you for the opportunity, and I think we're in—going in the right direction, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It's my pleasure to speak to the responsible Bill 201, brought forward by the member from Emerson and seconded by the former member from Morris, Mrs. Taillieu, Mr. Speaker.

* (10:50)

And it brings to my mind—before I get going, when we're talking about responsible and accountable actions and respect for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, brings to mind that the Premier has—so far has been afraid to call a by-election in Morris. And it may be that he's, you know, concerned about the policies that he's brought in and his own budget, that he hasn't got a—you know, that three-legged stool's had a couple of legs chopped out from underneath it and he may not have a chance of winning that one. And I think that's probably more to the fact that—not worried about that so much as the showing.

But I want to say that, Mr. Speaker, one only has to listen to some of the rhetoric that we've heard this morning in the House in regards to the government's thoughts on accountability when it comes to red tape. They don't care about red tape. The more the better, as far as they're concerned. They don't understand that it drives businesses away from Manitoba. And, of course, they don't even know that their lack of support in those areas has hurt things like low-rental housing. Even their policy on that of not changing it from the \$285 in 15 years is leaving even the—those impoverished Manitobans to suffer under this NDP government. And then they go and add a PST on top of that, which I get into in a few moments.

Now, the Premier might have had a premonition on the weekend. I know he was out in Reston yesterday, as my leader was there on Saturday, member from Fort Whyte, and we toured Reston and the RM of Albert. We toured the town of Virden's situation. There's over a hundred basements flooded

in Virden, some 70 in the town of Reston. There may be houses that need to be completely demolished in Reston before this is over, Mr. Speaker. There are—the RM of Albert, I believe, has three roads that are open, that aren't flooded out or have culverts washed out. The RM of Wallace's many roads—I spoke to the reeve there yesterday—many roads there that are washed out as well.

Some of the smaller communities have received 10 to 12 inches of rain as well over the last—you know, in four days, from a week ago Friday night until 'Wedn'—Tuesday—Wednesday morning. Other RMs such as—well, I'll name them all: Albert, Cameron, Edward, Wallace, Pipestone; those 'comm'—those RMs are all in a—have declared a state of disaster, as well as the towns of Reston and Virden.

And so, Mr. Speaker, these are certainly concerns. And we are hoping that the Premier (Mr. Selinger)—I know in his discussions with Reeve Tycoles and the tour that we had with Reeve Tycoles as well as Councillor Randy Henuset from the RM of Pipestone—we hope that they are able to come to some, I guess, settlement in regards to how to proceed.

And I hope it's much quicker than what's been done with the people that have been flooded around Lake Manitoba. Two years hence, there's over—still over 600 claims that haven't been respected, Mr. Speaker, that haven't been dealt with, and this is a great concern to those people's lives. It's a stress on the uncertainty of where they're going to be with their families and whether they should continue to expand their operations or try to even get back on their feet. Can they—should they be putting the money that they have left into these operations when they're not sure if they're going to get any help and they're counting on it?

And, of course, Fred Neil comes to my mind in—the dairy farmer from Hartney who's had to sell off close to \$600,000 worth of his own dairy quota to stay afloat. Pardon the bad choice of words, Mr. Speaker. This is a terrible situation where the government has one—a one-off, one dairy farm in all of Manitoba's history that hasn't been dealt with properly in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say as well that respect is what some of this is about. We've got the PST increase. You know, the member from—one of the members just spoke here and indicated that the liquor control—or the liquor and restaurant owners

association of Manitoba was in favour of the amalgamation, of the bill that they brought forward.

Well, I can tell you that the restaurant owners association are livid in regards to the taxes that this government has increased on their industry, and it's helping to put them out of business, Mr. Speaker. It makes it very hard for them to remain in business and compete with other provinces. Not only did they broaden the tax out, had the nerve a month before the budget to increase the tax on liquor, beer and wine, but then they go along and raise the whole PST from 7 to 8.

That is disrespectful to industry, it's disrespectful to citizens—private citizens in this province, and it certainly doesn't help. And when you're 60 per cent higher taxed than your neighbours to the west in—just in Saskatchewan, it just shows a lack of regard for your fellow citizens. I don't think they grasp the idea that if you could help business, it will help bring people to Manitoba.

A prime example of that is the oil industry in Manitoba. Of course, how can you expect that there going to be any respect for the oil industry when the minister thinks it comes from mines, Mr. Speaker, that we're oil mining in Manitoba, when the member from Flin Flon just spoke about the mining industry?

Well, they're upset with regards to the red tape and the lack of respect that's being paid to them. They were, at one point—some seven, eight, 10 years ago—doing very well, but they have been, I guess, reduced in their abilities to succeed in this province and they're certainly not anywhere near the kind of investment going back in to mining in this province that there should be or that there could be.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard that there was a tough decisions had to be made quote. And I've heard it from other members in the House today—or in, not today but in—over the past amount of time since they brought the PST in, in the budget. Just like they did with the forced amalgamation of municipalities last fall, dropped it in the Throne Speech, no consultation with anyone, same with the PST coming through the budget.

It's a pattern that this government is building, just run out of ideas so we'll throw something up in the air and we'll do it right now, no consultation. And it's hurting them, it's hurting their backbenchers, it's hurting citizens in Manitoba, it's hurting this province, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think some of this stuff even got discussed in caucus before they brought some of these things into the House and now they're paying the price for not even listening to their own members, and I know they're not, Mr. Speaker, because several of them came to committee the other night and discussed that.

And I've met many of them on the streets in Virden over the last few days, particularly yesterday at Canada Day celebrations in Elkhorn and Virden, great entertainment there last night. I commend the folks that put together the—always have a great pancake breakfast in Elkhorn followed by a great parade from the heritage museum that we have there, Mr. Speaker, of the antique collection of cars and tractors and other floats and community businesses that were in it. It was over an hour long in the small community of Elkhorn yesterday, a great parade, one of the best in southwest Manitoba from any community. And Virden had a show and shine rally yesterday afternoon with wonderful entertainment in the park, Victoria Park, there yesterday afternoon as well.

Jimmy Moffatt, some 96-year-old Second World War veteran, volunteered a flag that he's received from Parliament Hill that was flown over the Parliament buildings, and he voluntarily presented that to the community last year so that it could be raised on such occasions and fly over this park. And he is to be commended, he and his family to be commended for the work they put into that. That's showing respect, Mr. Speaker.

But this government doesn't show respect in regards to the processes that it's going through. And I say that because, you know, Mr. Speaker, with all of the regulations that we have, if the government didn't think they were harming it they should pay attention to some of the reports that have come out. The Prosperity Restricted by Red Tape report from CFIB that has come out, shows that there's about \$945 million annually in red tape costs to doing business in Manitoba; that was before the PST went up.

It shows that the—we've had three consecutive months of falling—of declines, Mr. Speaker, in small business confidence; three months in a row since the government brought out the PST announcements. That's going in the wrong direction, and I don't care whose books you're looking at, when people don't have any confidence or are losing confidence in

being here then I think the government needs to pay attention as to where these businesses are going.

You know, there's many businesses in Manitoba that still have a storefront here, Mr. Speaker, but their head offices are not located in Manitoba any longer. They're located in provinces to the west where their personal taxes for their management staff are lower, for their corporate taxes are lower as well and where the PST, in the case of Alberta they don't have one and in Saskatchewan it's 5 per cent versus our 8.

Twenty two per cent of businesses said that they had, you know, that the burden of regulation, if they'd have known it was going to be this heavy in Manitoba they wouldn't have located here in the first place.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's all kinds of examples that can be used to chastise this government for the lack of accountability in regards to red tape. And I look forward to the members being more accountable on the government side.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Yesterday was Canada Day and I was reminded of one thing that we're going—we would see a lot less of under the Conservatives and that is actually cutting of ribbons, opening ribbons.

As I walked to our new rec centre, where we've provided over \$5 million of support to celebrate Canada Day; as I walk by the UCN campus, an \$82-million investment in northern Manitoba where the ribbon cutting will be coming up soon, I'm reminded of just how many things were opening in this province, so when members opposite say they're against red tape what they're really against is the tape that opens many of those wonderful facilities, Mr. Speaker, that's their vision for Manitoba.

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation will have nine minutes remaining.

The hour being 11 a.m., time for private member's resolution, and the resolution we have before us this morning is the one sponsored by the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and the title of the resolution is the Western Power Grid.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 20—Western Power Grid

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that

WHEREAS the Manitoba Hydro is the key strategic asset for the Province of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the premier of our neighbour Saskatchewan publicly announced interest in working toward agreements to buy the clean, renewable hydro power that Manitoba generates and will be generating in the north; and

WHEREAS to share this power Manitoba needs to continue to develop the hydro potential through investments in critical infrastructure like the Keeyask and Conawapa generating stations, and the Bipole III transmission line; and

WHEREAS a western power grid has the potential to provide competitively clean energy, increase the security and reliability of energy supply, enhance trade, co-operation, energy market development and help meet climate change targets; and

WHEREAS commitment and leadership from both the federal and the provincial governments is required to move forward on a cross-border infrastructure project such as the western power grid; and

WHEREAS now is the time to seize this opportunity to engage in nation building by co-operating with Saskatchewan and Manitoba's other western neighbours; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Electricity Association has advised that the best way forward for Manitoba Hydro is through building connections in regional markets; and

WHEREAS the official opposition has shown no support in moving forward on this important project, part of a long history of failing to invest in Manitoba Hydro.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue developing hydro resource—Manitoba Hydro resources and ability to share Manitoba's power; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to

call on the federal government to support the development of a western power grid.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Elmwood, seconded by the honourable member for Selkirk:

WHEREAS Manitoba Hydro is a key—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

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

WHEREAS Manitoba Hydro is a key strategic asset for the Province of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Premier of our neighbour Saskatchewan publicly announced interest in working toward agreements to buy the clean, renewable Hydro power that Manitoba generates and will be generating in the North; and

WHEREAS to share this power Manitoba needs to continue to develop the Hydro potential through investments in critical infrastructure like the Keeyask and Conawapa generating stations and the Bipole III transmission line; and

WHEREAS a Western power grid has the potential to provide competitively clean energy, increase the security and reliability of energy supply, enhance trade, co-operation, energy market development and help meet climate change targets; and

WHEREAS commitment and leadership from both federal and provincial governments is required to move forward on a cross-border infrastructure project such as a Western power grid; and

WHEREAS now is the time to seize this opportunity to engage in nation building by cooperating with Saskatchewan and Manitoba's other Western neighbours; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Electricity Association has advised that the best way forward for Manitoba Hydro is through building connections in regional markets; and

WHEREAS the Official Opposition has shown no support in moving forward on this important project, part of a long history of failing to invest in Manitoba Hydro.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial

Government to continue developing Manitoba Hydro resources and ability to share Manitoba's power; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all Members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to call on the Federal Government to support the development of a Western power grid.

Mr. Maloway: These are, indeed, exciting times for the province of Manitoba, in fact, the country as a whole, because as members will know, that one of the fundamental reasons why Canada became a country in the first place was the Prime Minister of the day, Sir John A. Macdonald, had a national dream. And that national dream was to unite the country from east to west rather than a north to south alignment with the United States, and in order to do that he had to fight against the tide at the time and built a national railway to help build the country.

And I think that in today's environment a—the national dream is a east-west national power grid. And, you know, I've criticized the federal government in the past for not showing enough initiative and drive in this particular—on this particular file. But I will tell you that as far back as 2006 the Prime Minister did have a press conference in which he announced, I believe, it was \$586 million given to the Ontario government to Premier McGuinty to, in fact, embark on an east-west power grid. And to their surprise and dismay, according to the national government, McGuinty used the \$586 million for wind and solar power, much of what I see when I go down there, Mr. Speaker, and not for what its intended purpose was.

So—but the fact of the matter is that the federal government, you know, I think, anyway, I think the local members of Parliament in this province should be showing a little more leadership in—on this file, which they have not been.

And then—and now I look to the opposition in the Legislature here to join in with the Prime Minister who has been on the file since 2006, join in with the Manitoba government that's been on this file forever. Whenever the NDP is in power, this has been an all-consuming mission of the NDP back to the Schreyer days, and, as I've indicated before—and I know that it certainly bears repeating to members of the opposition who seem to be tone-deaf, Mr. Speaker—the fact of the matter is that, when I look down the list of the 14 power dams in Manitoba right now, the 5,217 megawatts in operation right

now, I have to look a long way before I see one that was started or completed by a Conservative government. As a matter of fact, it was the 1960s, the Grand Rapids power station done by Duff Roblin, you know, and how many years of Conservative governments have we gone through since then and not one Conservative government has developed one power project.

We have Limestone—Limestone—developed by the NDP. Limestone's a very interesting example of Conservative, you know, Conservative business geniuses at work. You know, they mothballed it. They shut down the whole province so there was no construction here at all when Sterling Lyon came in, in 1977, and we had the Liberal leader at the time, Ms. Carstairs, calling the project lemonstone, and it was Howard Pawley and the NDP that came to power in 1981 who completed that project. And we're pleased to let the Conservatives know that this Limestone generating station has made a profit for the people of Manitoba of \$6 billion since it was started, and, you know, we could go point by point through here, the other stations—generating stations that Manitoba's built: Long Spruce, Kettle Rapids, Kelsey, and, you know, the Conservatives have not been a part of it. As a matter of fact, they have been the drag. They have been trying to slow it down. It's like having an anchor on your—on you as you're trying to get the project done.

So, you know, hope is eternal in—on this side of the House, and we hope that someday that maybe the Conservatives will, and they could start today, Mr. Speaker, by getting onside with this resolution. These members spend many, many hours talking about Brad Wall; they are in love with Brad Wall and many on our side of the House think that maybe, you know, maybe they would—maybe they should just move to Saskatchewan. You know, there's no point being miserable in life. You know, like any psychiatrist will tell you or psychologist will tell you that, you know, if things aren't going well in your life and you're feeling miserable every day, that, you know, that's not the way to live. You only have one life to live. So if the members would feel so much better, you know, living in Saskatchewan, well, then, you know, they should maybe take that to heart.

But, Mr. Speaker, Brad Wall comes from a province—and there are many jurisdictions, provinces and states who have all their, you know, economic advantages, but many of them do not have the economic advantage that we have in hydro potential. Saskatchewan does not have hydro potential like

Manitoba. Saskatchewan has other advantages. Saskatchewan has more oil than we have. Saskatchewan has potash that we don't have. Saskatchewan has uranium supplies that we don't have. But, when it comes to a very important commodity like power, Manitoba has the power, and even the Premier Brad Wall, their hero, the opposition's hero Brad Wall, is so excited and so interested in Manitoba power that he is looking at signing imminently an agreement to purchase Manitoba power, and that is what I hope will be the beginning of more sales to Saskatchewan, sales to Alberta, sales to BC. You know, the—and when we have these sales in place, that will justify it.

* (11:10)

The members, you know, are all over the place on Hydro. They jump everyday on little stories about rate increases and any bad news story, they jump on it and try to rev it up and try to confuse the issue and, basically, run down Manitoba and run down Manitoba Hydro. But the fact of the matter is that Manitoba Hydro is a gem and people outside the province recognize it as such as well and, so, when you have Brad Wall coming to Manitoba, Brad Wall wanting to sign agreements to buy power, which will justify building transmission lines into Saskatchewan, then that is good, that is good, for the economy of Manitoba but it's also good for the economy of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan knows that it needs that clean power. Why in the world would Saskatchewan proceed with a \$15-billion project to build gas-fired plants and nuclear plants and coal plants, why would they do that when they can get clean, electric power and, Mr. Speaker, more importantly, that's there at a predictable price? When we look at gas, gas prices can be low one day and can be high the next day. You ask any home owner in Winnipeg who's seen their gas rates go up and go down and up and down, like a yo-yo, over the last number of years. And just because gas prices are low today does not mean they're going to be low next year or the year afterward.

When power utilities sign agreements, they want to sign multi-year agreements. They want to know what their power's going to cost 10, 20 years from now. And with gas, they don't know what their power costs are going to be a week from now or six months from now or a year from now. So, people are—utilities are prepared to sign for hydro deals for the pricing reliability that they get. They're also

prepared to sign because they have to be worried about greenhouse gases and they are not going to achieve their targets by developing coal. I don't care how you—how clean they say the coal is, it's not. And there—they know they're going to have greenhouse gases and pollution problems with gas-fired plants. So hydro is the logical alternative for these utilities and we have to work hard to—

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

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, and happy Canada Day to all Manitobans and Canadians; unfortunately, Manitoba wasn't quite so happy. The PST, which was rammed down the throats of Manitobans after the NDP party went door to door and lied about the fact that they would not raise any taxes, including the PST, and then did, it came into effect yesterday. How unfortunate for Manitoba.

Now today we have a private member's resolution put forward by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), and it's very telling because this is the same member who, back in 1981, when Sterling Lyon, the then-premier, Conservative premier, was running for re-election, promised, the first politician ever to actually raise this issue, and actually to run on it, promised a western power grid.

Now, he and a few other dinosaurs from his caucus, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) amongst others, were individuals who ran against it and they called it foolish, they called it nonsense and they called it ridiculous and they said it wouldn't pay for itself and they trash-talked the western power grid that was put forward by Conservatives, contrary to the princess-like fairy tales put on the record by the member for Elmwood who wants to rewrite history like one of these historical revisionists and put all kinds of misinformation on the record.

It was Sterling Lyon, and the premier of the day, who ran on a western power grid and it was shot down, it was fought against by the NDP. In fact, they, unfortunately, won that election. Otherwise, we would have exactly what the member for Elmwood is proposing that we support today. If they hadn't have won, and which would have been far better for Manitoba, we would today have a western power grid. We wouldn't need this pithy resolution put forward by the member for Elmwood.

Now, the Sterling Lyon member of the NDP caucus, the voice of the reasoned and reasonable Sterling Lyon government within the NDP, actually

went to Ottawa, and he must have had an epiphany. Because we sent the little socialist to Ottawa and he saw what was going on there and he grew up on the knee of real politics and came back, because he was defeated—came back.

And now we have the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), if you can believe it, praising Sterling Lyon; he's praising Stephen Harper and the federal government and he's praising Brad Wall, a Conservative government, Saskatchewan. You got to wonder what's next. I mean, this is what the Kildonan member would—the NDP member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) would call the Tea Party member from Elmwood. He's now endorsed every Conservative government, almost, in the country. It is just surprising. The only thing is, he's 30-some years too late. He should have been standing up to his party, to Howard Pawley, back in nineteen nine—1981. And he should've told Howard Pawley, what a train wreck you are—which history proves Howard Pawley was—what an absolute disaster, to fight against the western power grid, which would help Manitoba, which would move our hydro east-west. Instead, under this member's watch, it was trashed.

Now we understand; we understand that the NDP member, the Tea Party member from Elmwood, is having buyer's remorse from the 1981 campaign. We understand that. Now he's doing the *mea culpa*. He's doing the *mea culpa* up—I apologize to the Legislature, the NDP was so wrong in 1981, how could we have gotten it so wrong on the western power grid, something that was proposed over 30 years ago.

But what I find even more surprising—he's had a few elections. More than a few, and, all of a sudden, now that there's an imminent federal election again, the member for Elmwood wants to be seen as an elder statesman in the province. He wants to be seen hugging the Tories. He wants to be seen as hugging Liberals. He's downplaying his rabid socialist roots that he used to have. Now he wants to—maybe—maybe, Mr. Speaker, he's got an eye on federal politics again—maybe. In fact, you know what, I think he spends more time in Transcona than almost any other politician. It's just amazing.

But, you know what, this pithy resolution, which is a disgrace—if this was serious, if the Tea Party member for Elmwood was serious about this, the trumpeter and herald of the Sterling Lyon government, if he was serious, he wouldn't have put those nasty, derogatory comments about the

opposition. It should have been a—very straight-up, that this Chamber supports the Sterling Lyon assertion that a western power grid is good for Manitoba. Because, Mr. Speaker, it is; it is a good thing. That's why we ran on it some 30 years ago in 1981.

And this pithy piece of legislation, this PMR, is a disgrace, because it should have been something that we could have brought the House together on. Instead, he trash talks and puts falsehoods on the record in his PMR. So, absolutely, we would not support something like this. We want to see a western power grid that is good for Manitoba, that is good for Saskatchewan, that's good for Alberta, that's good for British Columbia. We should be going east-west.

Fact, we were at a conference on Friday, and, you know, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, this conference on Friday was legislators from across the Midwest. It was open to every MLA in this Chamber. They could all come, had a nice breakfast, had great speakers talking about energy needs, talking about power lines. And you know who wasn't at that meeting? The Tea Party member from Elmwood. He wasn't there. But today—today, he wants to be the energy MLA of this Chamber. He should have been there. In fact, under his watch, as never before, the lines are going north-south, and nothing—nothing—east-west.

* (11:20)

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if this was so important, why wasn't it put forward as a government bill by the NDP member for Kildonan? If this is so important to the NDP, which it's not, then why isn't it that the government is putting it forward? Instead, they have the Tea Party member for Elmwood putting up the resolution, who wants to run federally anyway. He's barely going to warm his seat in this Chamber and he's going to be gone again. Why doesn't the minister—why doesn't the NDP member for Kildonan put this forward?

Because—I know why. He's also ashamed for the fact that he trash-talked it back in '81. Where we would have it running right now, we would be making billions of dollars. Instead, he now has to have a backbencher, someone who's basically here for a very short time, put forward the resolution because the NDP member for Kildonan is too ashamed to admit that he also was wrong when he trash-talked it back in 1981.

So I would say to each and every one of them, to the dinosaurs in the NDP who stomped through this province and trash-talked all kinds of good projects—now they 'realouse'—realize how terribly wrong they were to go against the western power grid, because today we would've had it.

And I would say to the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), maybe he should find a time machine, go back in time and fight against the Howard Pawley party of the day that so disastrously trashed that power grid, Mr. Speaker, and that's a shame for this province. We could've had that power grid over 30 years ago. We could've been making billions of dollars upon billions of dollars. Instead the mothball party of the NDP mothballed that project and killed it. They killed it, including the now member—the NDP member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the now-Minister of Manitoba Hydro. We need no lessons. We need no fairy tales.

I'm just pleased that the Tea Party member from Elmwood has now gotten up and has said he agrees with the Conservative Sterling Lyon government. He agrees with the Stephen Harper federal Conservative government and what they're doing and, above all, he has stood here and praised the Conservative Brad Wall government of Saskatchewan because he recognizes that all the good ideas and what's right and good seems to come from the right. I welcome him on board and I wish him well in all his future federal endeavours, but this piece of resolution is unfortunate in that it should've been a—statesmanlike and it should not have trashed the opposition, and perhaps then he would've gotten some more support for it. How unfortunate.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, all I can say in comparing the speech from the member for Elmwood and that for St. Paul is to quote Napoleon Bonaparte, and that is from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, we are all Canadians and one of the dreams that we have in this country, notwithstanding the personal, vicious little attempts at attacks by the member for St. Paul, we're all Canadians. And what's important in this country is that we work together. What's important is that the provinces work together, and we have an opportunity with an east-west grid to do something, as the member for Elmwood said, which is to unite and aid the rest of the country.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to go to Alberta today and talk to either the Premier or the Minister

responsible for Energy, they would tell you that they need about 10,000 megawatts of power in order to go forward. And they want and are trying to get access to Manitoba Hydro not just because of the dependability and the clean nature of it, but because the options for them are to go coal or nuclear.

And if you want to talk about Tea Party, Mr. Speaker, the Tea Party represents, sort of, the dinosaur, nuclear, let's go back and hide in the little shell and let's just sit in Manitoba and not do anything. That's the Tea Party and that's the party they represent.

The member talked about the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan; there is no Conservative Party in Saskatchewan. They're all in jail. They changed their name to the Saskatchewan Party. Wake up. When did you know that? Wake up. Mr. Speaker, they went to jail because they were found to be—and they had to change the name of the party.

I'm proud of what Brad Wall said, Mr. Speaker, but let's talk bigger. Let's not talk small-mindedness. Let's not take shots at each other. Let's talk about a vision—a vision—that would see alternatives to our hydro.

Now, Mr. Speaker, right now we can make and will make on our American contracts anywhere up to \$30 billion if we go ahead with Conawapa and Keeyask and build those lines. In addition, we could also export power, not just to the west but to the east. Think about the advantages, not just in terms of cost where we make money on the exports. You know, members opposite often talk about the 3.5 cents that we get on the spot market, which is a small percentage of the hydro that we export. We make more than double that, much more than double that on our long-term contracts. They'd never say that because it would go against their—it would go against their—

An Honourable Member: Show us the contracts.

Mr. Chomiak: It's in the chart—it's in the chart. You've got the chart. The member knows that.

It goes against their ideology, which is not to build hydro and to import natural gas and other fossil fuels. I understand that. If you're a coal-based party, if you're based on that ideology, you stay on that ideology, Mr. Speaker. But we could work together to have a grid. The federal government, I think, is understanding of that. They provided a loan to provide hydroelectricity transmission in the east to allow the Muskrat Falls project to go forward.

And all the political parties, whether they were NDP, whether they were Liberal, or whether they are Conservatives, supported that. The only people that don't support that are Tea Party supporters, which members opposite are clearly—are clearly representative of, Mr. Speaker because they should be standing right up and saying an east-west grid would not only provide all of that advantage but further, and perhaps even more important, it would provide an alternative route for electricity.

Mr. Speaker, when we went through the blackout in the east, we didn't have the capacity to help provide those economies and those industries with power during their period of time. We had no alternative transmission capacity. There is an alternative transmission capacity; we would have alternative transmission capacity if we were to have an east-west linking grid. And, you know, that day will come and that will happen.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a dream; it's been a dream since the NDP government formed power in 1969. It's been a very difficult process to go through. We don't have to go back and talk about the failures or the successes, but we can go forward. We can stop the belittling of each other; we can stop the process of trying to rewrite history. What we can do is we can build a vision, something I think that we can build a hope and we can build vision so that we could provide that power.

Mr. Speaker, right now natural gas, which seems to be everyone's favourite alternative, is according to the US estimate, 30 per cent increase—30 per cent increase. And no company will give you long-term sale for natural gas.

Now I have an independent adviser who provides me with advice on energy issues. He's from the United States; he's got a long time in the industry. He says to me, you are so fortunate in Manitoba that you have the hydro capacity. He said, look at natural gas; no one will give you a long-term contract for natural gas. Why won't they give a long-term contract for natural gas? They used to give 10 years, 20 years, 15 years long-term contracts. They won't because of the price, Mr. Speaker. They won't give you a price on long term of natural gas.

Think about it. There's a reason that you're not getting a long-term price on natural gas. That's because the price is going to go up; everyone knows that. Even the oil companies know that; even the oil companies recommend that we have alternatives like hydro.

Even the World Energy Forum said that hydro ought to be increased by at least 10 to 30 per cent, and we have the opportunity to do that. Saskatchewan doesn't; Alberta doesn't; Ontario isn't able to; Québec can't. Why wouldn't the three hydro major electric provinces provide that alternative? Even if it's a portion of the total renewable energy, Mr. Speaker, it would help us all. And the ability to transmit power back and forth would be of benefit, not just in cost but in terms of reliability.

As it is now, Mr. Speaker, right now when we export power to the United States during their peak periods, which is the summer time because of air conditioning, they then return power back to us in terms of some of their clean wind power back to us at our peak periods, which is the winter time. That makes sense. We can and should do the same to eastern and western parts of this country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the big bugaboos is cost; there is a high-end cost. But transmission which has been built in this country—most transmission is 60, 70 years old; it has to be renewed anyway. You all—not only have the capacity to renew the transmission but you can provide smart grid. In other words, you can do so much more on the grid that you could do before and it requires renewal anyway.

* (11:30)

The Canadian Electricity Association estimates that we have to spend \$350 billion in this country just on electrical construction projects. As have been mentioned many times, our sister province of Saskatchewan is spending \$15 billion to renew coal and go nuclear. Ontario is spending three or four times that, Mr. Speaker, to go wind and solar. So we're spending \$20 billion to build hydro that's going to last for a hundred years, that's going to build—provide us with \$30 billion of profit, will keep our price the lowest—the lowest in North America.

Think about that, Mr. Speaker. Member—you know, think about that. Our prices are lower than Saskatchewan by a mile—by a country mile. In fact, Saskatchewan increased their rates this year much higher than ours, and our rates are way lower than Ontario, and they're the lowest of anyone in North America. Now, did that come by accident? No, it came because we invested. Hydro is an investment. It's an investment in capital that lasts a long period of time.

I think, actually, the federal government—you know, Mr. Speaker, it—this is a federation. This

country only works when the levels of government can get along and work together. And, you know, that's when you set—that's—that problem with the Tea Party is they can't see past their ideology. But having said that, if you can put aside that ideological blinker system, that system that wants to privatize Hydro, that system that wants to do everything they can to stop hydro, if you put that aside and talk about the national interest, the federal government and the provincial governments can and will work together to build a transmission linkage. It may not be a national grand scheme like the railroad. It may be built incrementally, but the time has come and should come. And I implore all members of this House, regardless of your ideology, don't be dogged down by that Tea Party bag that's dragging us in the ocean, similar to the anchors suggested by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). Look at the future of this country and the capability of us being a part of the power surge in this country. Not only will we have alternative markets, we have clean, green energy.

And that's the other thing, Mr. Speaker. No one is paying enough attention to climate change. You only have to look around North America this week and say, something significant has happened to the climate on this continent and in the world. And we ought to—in fact, it's our duty to do something to improve that, and clean, green hydroelectricity is seen as that. That's one of the reasons why Alberta wants it. It's one of the reasons why Saskatchewan wants it. And that's certainly one of the reasons why the United States wants it and are willing to sign contracts that are going to bring \$30 billion—\$30 billion—to Manitoba over the period of those contracts.

So I urge all members to put aside their ideological blinkers and vote in favour of this resolution so we can work together with the federal government to make this dream come true. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): And speaking to this resolution on a western power grid, and—it seems odd that the NDP now is promoting a western power grid when they're—just last week they spoke very passionately against entering the New West Partnership with our western partners. But they seem to think that they can somehow be on the outside of some things and then be in on others. So it definitely is an odd situation we find—the NDP find themselves in. And just speaking—and I will try to stick to the resolution, Mr. Speaker. I really will.

So I'll start out by, first of all, looking at buying power, buying clean, renewable hydro power that Manitoba generates, whether it's in Saskatchewan or Alberta, western provinces, or Ontario going east, but the question always comes back to, at what price? And we know that right now Hydro's current rates are still—Hydro is still assuming export profits, but yet we know that it's not. Since 2008 Manitoba Hydro's been losing money on exports. That's why our domestic rates have started to climb and have climbed just 8 per cent in the past year alone, and they'll continue to. That—we no longer have the cheapest power around, and it's going to rise at a very quick rate.

And in the third paragraph of this resolution, it talks about Keeyask, Conawapa generating stations, and the Bipole III transmission line. Now, the Bipole III transmission line, it's my understanding, starts somewhere up north of Thompson somewhere—around the Thompson area. It goes over to the Saskatchewan border. It wanders back along Lake Manitoba across southern Manitoba. This is a proposed route. Clean Environment Commission has still not released their report yet, but based on Hydro's and this NDP government's proposal is that it'll wander across southern Manitoba and then loop back into the northeast corner of Winnipeg, and certainly a long ways around to get to a trans—to a converter station on the northeast of Winnipeg.

Now, that Bipole III transmission line as proposed without any changes will do absolutely nothing for a western power grid, and yet very conservative estimates are saying that it's at least—at least—a billion dollars extra than if it was an east route line. And we know how Hydro and this NDP government's record on construction costs, it's—has known to double as Wuskwatim generating station did. It doubled. So even if—just using the billion dollars, never mind if it doubled to \$2 billion extra, that's a—that could go a long ways towards building a western—at least a western power grid, but yet this government has no intention of changing their mind on this Bipole III transmission line.

It will do nothing. You cannot—unless you're going to spend another billion dollars to build a converter station on the Saskatchewan border—you cannot export one kilowatt of power off of that transmission line either west or south until it goes through a converter station. So that Bipole III transmission line is redundant in terms of this resolution, in terms of a western power grid. So it's—I guess that's from a lack of understanding maybe

from the member from Elmwood or maybe he just chooses not to look at that. It is a nonfactor in a western power grid.

I notice in the next resolution it talks about meeting climate change targets. Well, it's kind of hard to set a target when you don't have one, and their targets keep moving. They were adamant here a couple of years ago that Kyoto—they were blaming the federal government for dropping the Kyoto Accord, and now here just last week, here's the Manitoba NDP party now kicking aside Kyoto as not really achievable. They haven't chain—in fact, our greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba continue to rise in spite of targets set by this government. So hydroelectricity would help in terms of climate change targets, but it's difficult to meet a target when you don't have one.

So that's the problem with this government, and there's no targets, no firm goals in mind. They seem to want to blame the federal government for not showing leadership on—in terms of a western power grid. You know, if you choose not to be a part of the New West Partnership, the western 'prov'—our western neighbours are certainly not interested in dealing with Manitoba as an island. You can't blame the federal government when the province alone—Manitoba NDP party refuses to be co-operative with other provinces.

So, Mr. Speaker, this resolution is a bit of a fantasy, I think, of member from Elmwood. It certainly makes for lots of great speaking points. In it he can blame everybody else, but really what we want to know is at what cost? Because we know that power generation lines are expensive to build and they take a lot of planning and that, but this government's certainly had time to begin that and to all of a sudden wake up this morning and say, you know, we should have a western power grid. Well, where have they been for the last 20 years here? And they—the—as the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) rather eloquently explained it, once upon a time, the NDP were against the western power grid, and now all of a sudden they're thinking it's a good idea. So—but it takes a lot more than just to have the good idea. You have to get it in place.

So rather than trying to blame everybody else around, we have to—we really wonder what is happening at Manitoba Hydro, because we know that Wuskwatim was projected to cost \$900 million and power—export power was to be sold at 8 cents per kilowatt, that's export power. Now we know that—at

least the latest information we have is that the cost of that new dam has actually doubled. It's gone to \$1.8 billion. There is no profit in the foreseeable future under this—in this dam. Spot export prices have been 3 cents per kilowatt or less, and then we have transmission, so we're at—we think we're probably, oh, at least 11 cents per kilowatt to generate that power out of Wuskwatim, another 3 cents to transmit to you, at 14 cents—13, 14 cents, whatever it is. Pick a number; let's see what it really is.

* (11:40)

The Public Utilities Board and Manitoba Hydro were at odds because Manitoba Hydro would not release information even to the Public Utilities Board. We see now that Wuskwatim is going to lose \$100 million a year for a number of years to come. That will have to be picked up by Manitoba ratepayers, Manitoba taxpayers and consumers, and Manitoba will have to pick that up because you cannot—you cannot just force the market to pay what you think they should be paying. We're on—the energy market has changed so much in the last number of years and it's—and yet this NDP party, they don't seem to want to come to grips with the changing energy markets. They talk about the solar power, the wind power in the US. They should realize and should've heard about things called fracking in terms of natural gas production, just the overabundance of natural gas for the foreseeable future, and so what we've always asked is to take a second look at this to get a qualified needs-for study, an analysis of study of what is involved in Manitoba hydro production, where the markets are, the estimated profits out of this.

We—the NDP I realize are looking at Manitoba Hydro as being a cash cow for them because every time they borrow—Hydro borrows money, it's more money into the government's pockets. But that's not a good reason to be building hydro production right now and perhaps—and a western power grid. You know, we could look at this, and, if we think it's a good idea, yes, we agree with the western power grid but at the same time, let's make sure that we are able to ensure a profit out of this that we don't—that Manitoba taxpayers and ratepayers, consumers of hydro are going to pick up the difference because all we have to do is look at this billion-dollar boondoggle that we've got on Bipole III. We are still waiting for the clean environment report to come out to see whether the clean environment committee has—will recommend any changes to the route or

recommend any changes to compensation. We certainly are eager to see that, to see what happens there.

And so, Mr. Speaker, while we support a western power grid, let's get reality built back into this. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I'd just like to wish every member of the House, including yourself, a happy Canada Day for yesterday. I was out at the farmers' market pretty much the whole day serving hot dogs and cake to my constituents and they were all, you know, they were all really happy.

I talked to—you know, you hear the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) talking about she was out in her community, and it's a very different environment to what we hear in the House from the two-tier Tories over there, the negative attack all the time. You know what? I'm out there and everybody is really happy with what we're doing, and you know what they're really happy with? They're really happy with the doubling of the floodway that we did. They were really happy that their houses weren't under water this year.

You know, they realize that it was a tough decision to raise the PST by a point, but they also look at Calgary and go, you know what? We were all downtown today in Winnipeg and they were celebrating Canada Day. They went down into Osborne Village during the day, some of them, and then came back for the fireworks in the evening in St. Norbert. And they happened to be downtown, and you know what? They could walk around downtown because it wasn't flooded out because we built the floodway and doubled, actually—sorry, I'll give the credit where it's—credit's due. *[interjection]* I'll give credit where credit's due. Duff Roblin in the '60s, he built the floodway. We doubled it. We brought it to one-in-700-year. And, actually, Duff Roblin also did a great thing; he built the last power dam that we saw from the Conservatives in the '60s.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? It almost seems like maybe Duff Roblin ran for the wrong party. It seems like maybe he was actually an NDP member because he actually built things as opposed to them, because the last thing we saw them do was in the '60s, right? You know, you talk about—they talk about how they think that we should stop building. The Leader of the Opposition, stop building hydro, right? They also talk about how they should, you

know, like it was so great in the '90s when they collected more money in gas tax than they spent on the roads.

You know, that's all economic driver having more money collected than actually spent on roads. You know what, I'm thinking that all the businesses that they always talk about, how, you know, this increase is going to hurt them, I think a lot of them would actually appreciate the fact that they have a better transportation system and better roads now because we're spending money fixing them instead of letting them crumble into the ground as the opposition would do.

You know, I've been out on the doorstep a lot, Mr. Speaker. Since we dropped the budget, I've been out and canvassed, I think, five or six full polls and, you know, people are generally happy. People have jobs. The economy's good. Their houses are worth more than they've ever been because, you know, the things are good here, unlike in the '90s, when people were just leaving the province in droves and our housing prices were low because everybody was leaving. You couldn't sell it because there was nobody around. Nobody wanted to buy them.

So, you know, when they spout off their false numbers about bipole—it's going to be a billion, it's going to be 2 billion, it's going to be 5 billion more—you know, it's 400 million more, but they aren't factoring in anything to do with this east-west power grid. They're not factoring in that, you know, if we go down the—on the west side, that, you know, we could put a converter station in, and we can sell that power into Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I mean, it just—there's no vision on this side of the—on their side of the House. On our side of the House, we have a vision for the future, and it's having a clean, green Manitoba Hydro.

The member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) talked about fracking. He's saying, oh, well, we shouldn't build hydro because we've got natural gas fracking. Fracking has been shown to cause earthquakes. It pollutes water systems when that natural gas escapes from the rock and it goes up and it pollutes water systems when the natural gas gets fracked. Very different from oil fracking because oil is heavier than water and it sits—or oil is heavier so it sits bottom; it doesn't float up into the water system like the natural gas does.

But, you know, they don't seem to understand, and, you know, the member for Midland was talking

about having an understanding of things. Well, natural gas floats up and it pollutes the water system. Oil doesn't float up when you frack it. It sits down in the pools that it has, and it's not as dangerous as fracking gas.

So, you know, the member for Midland was talking about having an understanding; well, they should have an understanding that natural gas fracking is not safe and it creates problems, and it's not environmentally friendly. Even if you get the natural gas out, and you don't pollute the water, you end up with natural-gas-fired generating stations. So you're burning a fuel creating greenhouse emissions.

But that's okay because the members opposite, they obviously don't care about the environment. It doesn't matter. It's all about profits. We've got to just spend money and make money. And don't worry about anything about the environment, Mr. Speaker.

You know, cutting down all those trees on bipole route that they would choose to go down doesn't have any factoring into it. They just want to cut down a forest, an intact boreal forest, cut it up. You know, never mind that the caribou have a migration route. Oh, that doesn't matter, just let it go. It doesn't matter. It's all about profit. Well, \$400 million, we'll save that, and caribou, don't worry about them. Don't worry about the environment. Don't worry about the species. Don't worry about the water.

You know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that they talk about all of the—of having facts and understanding, but they don't really have an understanding of what's going on. You know, I hear the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), he was calling the member for—a member on our side of the House, he was calling him a Tea Party member.

Well, obviously, once again, he really doesn't have any understanding of what it means. I know he gets called it a lot, so he just thought he'd shoot it back at us and make it like, oh, well, look it, he's a Tea Party member. He obviously has no understanding what it means because to be a Tea Party member you're on the extreme right of things.

And that's where they are; they're on the extreme right. Never mind the environment. Never mind any good things for people. Let's have two-tier health care. Let's have two-tier hydro. Let's have two-tier horse racing in the province. They would rather do all of that stuff and have their two-tier system than to do the good things for people.

See, and that's the other side of the factor, is the left side, which isn't Tea Party, because Tea Party members are to the right. Well, all members on our House—on our side of the House, they want to do good things for people, Mr. Speaker. They want to have better health care, better roads, better education, you know. These are—daycares—these are all the things that we do on our side of the House.

So if they'd actually—if he'd actually do his homework and look up what a Tea Party member is, he'd actually see that that is far from what we are.

You know, on their side of the House, the Conservatives are talking about how great Saskatchewan is all the time. They're always, oh, Saskatchewan is the land of milk and honey. It's interesting because Saskatchewan's going to be building a 16—investing in \$16 billion worth of coal.

And the members opposite will say that coal-fired plants are clean. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? That's completely false. Burning coal is not clean. And anyway you do it, even with the scrubbers, there's still a carbon footprint.

Our hydro, on the other hand, is clean. And the premier from the province that they love, and that they think is the best province on earth, is actually talking about buying our clean, green power. You know, Manitoba hydro is a fantastic product that we have, but members opposite would stop it in their tracks. They don't want to have hydro built. They don't want to build the bipole.

And that's the other thing about the bipole. We have two lines running down the province side by side right now, and that was before my time, Mr. Speaker. I admit I wasn't in office when those—when that decision was made.

* (11:50)

But when you look at events, weather events like we're having lately and the ice storms that we had in the '90s, you got two lines, side by side, and then a weather pattern comes through, let's say even a tornado, Mr. Speaker, and it knocks out those two lines, you're looking at a billion dollars a week in lost productivity to the area around the bottom half of Manitoba, in the southern region. A billion dollars a week when those lines—if those lines ever were to go down.

So by routing the power line further away, you're going to mitigate the fact that maybe if there's a weather event we'll still have some power coming

down to the bottom of Manitoba. But, you know, that wouldn't matter to them, except the funny thing is that the businesses would suffer, the ones that they are obviously one hundred per cent in favour of because they talk about all the time we should cut red tape, but then they want to let them suffer, because if we build a bipole, we have three lines side by side and we have them destroyed, a billion dollars, a billion dollars a week would be out of our economy in southern Manitoba.

So, you know, I know that they like to talk about how, you know, they're doing things. I heard the member from St. Paul talking about, 39 years we've been trying to get this done. Well, that 39 years they've been in power some of that time and they haven't built that west-east-west grid. So, you know, for them to talk about how they've tried to get it done—it's really great, you know, when you're in opposition, I guess the saying is you can say whatever you want because you don't have to be held accountable for it and they surely do.

You know, it's just like about their \$1,600 in PST that everybody's going to spend. You know, that's actually 600 times more—or 600 per cent more than what the average Manitoban's family is going to spend on PST. But, you know, never mind numbers; just shoot it out there and maybe somebody will believe it and bite on it, that they're actually going to spend \$160,000 on PST.

The biggest risk to this province is the Conservative Party, sitting across the House from us. They're the ones who would create market-rate Hydro system which would be way more than the \$20 a month in PST to the average family which we took very heavily on this side of the House, to have to do something like that. But market-rate would be for the average family, \$80 a month more, four times what we're proposing, but that's what they're saying.

So people need to really look at the facts. They talk about two-tier health care; well, that would cost people more money because only the rich can jump the line to get knees and hips and any kind of treatment. Well, once again, it's going to cost families more money.

They talk about, well, you know, we should be more like Saskatchewan. Well, daycare cost more in Saskatchewan. We should be more like Alberta, they say. Well, daycare in Alberta is \$1,100. So, once again, go from \$400 to \$1,100, you're costing families more. So, it's really, I think, it's really erroneous of them to talk about how they're going to

do this 1 per cent PST, we wouldn't do it because we're the party that doesn't believe in that, that's fine, but they're going to create an HST, they're going to do Hydro rates at market-rate and then they would create a two-tier health-care system; all of which, any one of them on its own, would cost Manitobans a lot more than what we're looking at on our 1 per cent PST increase.

So, for them to stand there and have the boldface lie and throw out false numbers is completely false and I think that we are going to build Manitoba Hydro and continue going. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to speak to this resolution and, you know Mr. Speaker, you learn something every day. I learned a great deal on the weekend.

I was very fortunate to attend a citizenship ceremony in Riding Mountain National Park on Canada Day with former-MLA Jim McCrae, now a citizenship court judge, and to see all the new Canadians. I was able to stay for a little bit of time because I had to run to the Canada Day celebrations in Brandon, which on a busy long weekend, you don't want to rush down there with all the trailers on the road and the RCMP out there as well making Manitoba safe. But, nonetheless, it was very impressive to see the new Canadians and to talk to them and listen to why they've come to Canada and the opportunities that they see here.

Unfortunately, they were not very happy with this particular government, talking about the PST increase and that was one of the things I learned, again, as we saw on Thursday night, the emotion, the raw emotion that's out there, disappointment and quite anger, a lot of anger with this government and the PST increase. And I learned again today, I learned that, you know, the MLA from St. Norbert built the floodway and I also learned, according to this MLA for St. Norbert, that he believes that water floats on oil. So, maybe we need some more physics education there, Mr. Speaker, a little bit more there.

But, indeed, when we look back it was indeed the Progressive Conservative Leader, Premier Sterling Lyon, who first started talking about east-west transmission lines and putting the processes in place to make that happen. I know Manitoba Hydro has owned the land for that to happen for many, many years and nothing has happened there. And it also—another former premier,

Premier Filmon, again was—had the foresight to combine Centra Gas, to buy Centra Gas with Manitoba Hydro and now we see the interactions of natural gas and hydroelectricity and generating electricity with gas and a lot of reports that are going into that and I'll speak to that a little bit later.

So according to the Canadian Centre for Energy Information, Mr. Speaker, when we look at western grids and eastern grids—there are three, apparently, grids in Canada: the western grid, the eastern grid and the Québec grid, which includes Atlantic Canada. It's interesting—to me, anyway—that the border between the eastern and western grid is actually the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. We're not part of the western grid. We've got a long ways to go to become part of that grid, so just a minor little detail that someone needs to pay a little bit more attention to.

And, of course, the east-west transmission is much less common than north-south transmission. We could've looked at building Canada and, indeed, that is what a—one of the things that a lot of our Conservative premiers looked at, how we can enhance Manitoba and our role in Canada. But this NDP government did not see that. They didn't believe in Canada building the east-west grid.

They wanted to tie us more to the US, and we've seen to the—the impact that that has happened—that the effect that that's had on Canada as the US economy disappeared and went into recession and remains in a very fragile state. That's where we're sending our power at a loss, Mr. Speaker.

Instead of building Canada with an east-west grid, as we could've done, as the plans were there to do, we tied it to the US market and against—I guess, the NDP doesn't believe in Canada, as they don't seem to believe in the environment.

You know, it's hard for me to find another government that has a worse record on the environment in Canada than this NDP government. They talked about climate change—we're going to definitely hit these targets and if we don't hit these targets we shouldn't be in government, they said. Well, let's see. Well, we didn't meet that target, so we'll revise it, we'll come out with another report. We'll change that one; we didn't meet that one either so we'll revise that again, and we'll blame them on somebody else and then we'll drive industry out of Manitoba and we'll drive people out of Manitoba.

Maybe that's—you know, the—that's their goal on climate change, you get rid of industry and you get rid of people driving cars, you know what? You're going to meet your Kyoto targets, but I don't think that's a sustainable way to do it, Mr. Speaker.

And we know that they have their environmental permits, and those were brought in quite a while ago and they should be a very successful way to measure what people have on their facilities. And I know from first-hand experience, Mr. Speaker, how those are filled out, how they're completed, how they're maintained, and then we see that the government doesn't even look at them. They just file them away and it's bureaucracy at your worst. You fill out these reports, you put all the reports together, you make everything public than you have on your facility and the government doesn't even look at it.

So when there is, you know, a fire like we had at Speedway last year, the government says, well, we never knew what was on there. Well, look at your own environmental permits. You got them. You know what's in there. Why isn't this happening? So, again, another environmental problem that this government just ignores.

And let's not get started on the lake, Mr. Speaker. I mean, they've had how long to deal with this issue, and where have we gone? Just—it's just not happening. They're looking for somebody else to blame it on.

And Hydro, again, there's a whole—another—so the environmental record of this government is quite discouraging, Mr. Speaker. It's just damaging to Manitoba.

But we do have, you know, a couple little issues that we've been seeing here recently. I see in the resolution that this government wants to share Manitoba power, you know, Manitoba's power, and that's a noble thought. What about the thought of profiting from Manitoba's power if we're exporting it? There's another thought, but I don't see that anywhere in this resolution, because what profit do they make from exporting to the US right now when we're selling it at such a loss? Hmm, so that's not apparently important to this government to make a profit on your sales to the US, and they just want to share it.

But I do think if we were selling power—our power to other provinces or to other states—to states, that we probably should look to make a profit on that

and that will enable the expansion of that utility, Mr. Speaker.

But then when we look at natural gas, we know that natural gas is a critical issue here that we deal with. We talked about fracking apparently here and other things, and we see that natural gas-fired generation over the past decade has risen significantly from 17 to 25 per cent of the US power generation. Isn't that surprising? And we see with

natural gas availability and the price fairly low right now—in fact, the lowest we've seen in a number of years, Mr. Speaker, that that's where—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) will have three minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

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