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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
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PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
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REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
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ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
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WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Arthur-Virten	
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 26, 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

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed with Bill 200?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Bill 200—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Democracy for Voters)

Mr. Speaker: Yes. We'll now call Bill 200, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Democracy for Voters).

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), that Bill 200, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Democracy for Voters), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Good morning. It's timely that we're debating this bill on democracy and on by-elections the day after two significant by-elections here federally in Manitoba and, certainly, we want to extend our congratulations, of course, to all who put their name on a ballot. Democracy doesn't function unless there are those who are willing to participate, and so we commend and congratulate all those who participated in the by-elections last night in both Brandon-Souris and Provencher.

But, of course, we want to extend special congratulations to the winners of those by-elections

last night, the former member for Arthur-Virden who won—now to be known as Landslide Larry, I believe, in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, but we know he'll do a fine job of representing the constituents of Brandon-Souris—and also to Mr. Ted Falk in Provencher, who won last night as well. I know it was apparently nip and tuck, even during the day yesterday, in Provencher, until the Premier (Mr. Selinger) declared yesterday in question period that the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) had endorsed the member—or the now MP for Provencher, so we appreciate that endorsement in showing the big tent that's being created in that constituency, and we know that he will do well in his new career as well.

But to the matter at hand, of course, Mr. Speaker, we are still seeking a by-election in Morris, and it's interesting that in between the resignation of the former member for Morris, Mavis Taillieu, there were two federal resignations that happened in Manitoba and there were two by-elections that were already held for those two federal vacant seats and yet we still wait. And yet we still wait here in the Assembly, waiting for the Premier to get around to the issue that he doesn't consider a priority, I suspect, doesn't think that it's an important sort of thing to have people who represent Morris.

Now we hear some things about Morris here in the Chamber. We hear members, they swagger into the coffee shops in Morris and they want to talk about building this or building that, but they don't actually think it's important. They don't actually think it's important for the members to actually have a voice in the Assembly from Morris. Now perhaps the member for—or the Minister of Infrastructure thinks that he's the voice for Morris. Well, I would encourage him to run there if he thinks he's the voice for Morris, Mr. Speaker, and I—and we'll see how well he does. We'll see how well he does. He feels pretty confident. I would—you know, we encourage him to run, and we'll see how the by-election goes in Thompson then as well. But, ultimately, it's important to have an actual voice here in the Chamber for those members in that constituency.

Now they have—won't be afforded a voice on the PST when we come to a vote on that in several days. We know the government's trying to do everything they can to put up roadblocks to get to that vote.

They're trying to throw in motions and different sorts of things to try to stop us from getting to a vote on Bill 20, every sort of distraction under the sun is being thrown up. But, ultimately, Mr. Speaker, we're going to get to that vote, and we're going to see where these members stand on that, whether they'll go on the record and stand with the commitment that they made in the 2011 election or there—whether they'll completely flip-flop, as we suspect they will, having already brought in the PST, and not vote against Bill 20. But it sure would be nice to allow the member for Morris to be able to express that concern, whoever that member might be ultimately. And we don't presume to know the outcome of a by-election, but we think it's important that whoever wins that by-election would have their voice and be able to stand here and say how they feel the members or the residents of Morris feel about that particular issue. But they're not being given that opportunity, and that is certainly disappointing.

Now, I actually brought this bill forward with some regret, Mr. Speaker, with some reservation, because I would've hoped that we could've relied on the honour of the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to call the by-election in a timely fashion, just like I would want to rely on the honour of any premier. And when you look historically at by-elections in the recent past, we see that this by-election, the wait for it has gone on longer than any by-election, I think, in the last 20 or 30 years.

So, in the past, there have been premiers who have done the honourable thing and called by-elections in a reasonable time frame, and this particular kind of legislation to restrict by-elections and to call them to six months wasn't really necessary because we could rely on the honour of those premiers. We simply can't, unfortunately, rely on the honour of the individual currently holds the office, because he's proven that he is not going to do the right thing by ensuring that people have representation here in a reasonable period of time.

What he's been focused on instead is bringing forward excuses. We heard that very early on, right from the beginning. He said, well, we can't call the by-election in Morris because there's going to be some massive flood. There's going to be a massive flood this spring and all of Morris is going to be under water and we're not going to be able to hold a by-election. And, you know, I know a number of my colleagues from the area, they would report back and they would say, well, we don't see that sort of snowpack on 75, doesn't seem to be a threat on the

Assiniboia like there has been in past years, so we don't know what—where exactly this threat is coming from, Mr. Speaker. The US weather service wasn't giving us that sort of indication that there would be flooding in the constituency of Morris, either on the Assiniboine or on the Red River, but that was the excuse.

Finally, of course, the mayor for Morris, I believe, came out and said that the government was dealing with hyperbole and was simply, you know, causing panic within the constituency when his own belief was that there simply wouldn't be a flood of that level. Now, that's proved out to be true. The minister responsible for flood preparation one day opened up a bunch of flood offices, had a big pronouncement, big ad in the paper. All these flood offices, emergency preparations, get—come to the flood office, and two days later he shut them all down, silently, Mr. Speaker, after he realized, of course, that he had misstepped and that the event that was predicted, and why they were delaying the by-election, didn't happen.

*(10:10)

Well, then we moved on to two other excuses. They decided that they didn't want to hold a by-election in Morris because they actually had to sit in the summer. They actually had to do a little bit of work here in the Legislature and they weren't able to chew gum and walk at the same time and not have a by-election at the same time that they were sitting in the Legislature.

Well, I'm sure there was a massive pity party among Manitobans. So these poor NDP MLAs had to be in the Legislature and doing a little bit of work, but how that would have prevented a by-election in Morris is absolutely ridiculous. In fact, I would think that the time that you would truly want to have a representative in the Legislature for a seat is when there's actually something going on in the House.

And there was something going on in the House and Morris deserved to be represented here through that elongated session. But, of course, the NDP, you know, it would have been a little bit too much work, I guess. Maybe after the Legislature recessed at 5 or 6 o'clock, they might have had to drive a half an hour to get to the constituency of Morris, either in Headingley or the town of Morris, and it would have been a little bit too much work and, of course, they would have had to leave the Perimeter and that would have been scary and all those sort of things,

Mr. Speaker, why they didn't want to call the by-election.

So—and, of course, it didn't affect them federally. Federally, they held those by-elections at the time when the federal House was sitting, so we know that that excuse didn't hold water. Now, fast-forward to now, well, now, of course, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is saying, well, you know, we didn't want to conflict with the federal by-election so we couldn't call the by-election then. And now, of course, that's over, so I don't know what the excuse is, maybe it will be Christmas, you know, who knows?

It doesn't really matter what the excuse is, we know that all they are are excuses. They simply don't want to call this by-election. And it leads one to the inevitable conclusion and the unhappy conclusion, I would say, that the government isn't calling the by-election for partisan reasons. Perhaps they don't feel they're going to do very well in Morris. Now, I'm not going to be a—I'm not a prognosticator of the outcome of by-elections. I don't think they're running any sort of form research polls in the area but I would suspect that whatever the outcome is shouldn't be relevant to whether or not the government calls the by-election, because people have a right to be represented here in the Legislature.

Now, I know it's hard to find NDP votes anywhere these days. I searched for it yesterday in the by-election results in both Brandon-Souris and Provencher. It was hard to find any. I think they actually had a candidate. The good news is, of course, the member for La Verendrye—or, sorry, the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) gets to keep his assistant and that's the good news to the story.

But, ultimately, you could barely find any NDP votes at any of those elections. Now, of course, we had the same dynamic in the by-election that elected the Leader of the Official Opposition, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister). You could hardly find any Liberal—or any—lots of Liberal votes—you could hardly find any NDP votes at all. It seems that it's disappeared everywhere in the province. So maybe that's why they're concerned. Maybe they weren't concerned about a flood of water coming in the spring, they were concerned about the dearth of NDP vote. They can't find it in Brandon; they can't find it in Provencher; they can't find it in south Winnipeg, and so maybe they think they can't find it in Morris either. But—and that could be. We'll find out whenever the by-election gets called in Morris. Of

course, it will be statutory now, they'll have to call it within about a month or a month and a half to ensure that they meet the statutory provision of one year. But it simply shouldn't be done that way.

It shouldn't be done because they can't find any NDP support in these areas. Now, I'm not sorry that there's such a dearth of NDP support throughout the province of Manitoba, but I certainly think that people deserve to be represented here in the Legislature.

So I want to ask the members, next time they swagger into the coffee shops in Morris, next time they swagger around and say what they're doing, why won't they give them the elected voice they deserve in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker? Thank you very much.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I must say that the speech for the member of Steinbach, that was about as on-target as those North Korean missiles. He—in 10 minutes, he managed to almost hit everything but completely missed the point.

And I do want to say, by the way, that I appreciate the challenge that the member opposite had in bringing in this bill because, you know, if there's anybody should be sponsoring this bill, it's the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition is by-election—and I can't mention his name, but he's got it—he set a record because he's not only caused one, but he's caused two by-elections.

Now, some of us remember that the Leader of the Opposition, he—when he was in government and he was a Cabinet minister responsible for Emergency Measures. He quit as EMO minister just before the major flood in '97—quit. He then quit provincial politics in the middle of the flood. That's how much he was concerned about Manitoba. He put his personal ambitions ahead of the good of the people of Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you think that was just accidental, I just remind members opposite, that he then ran for the leadership of the PC Party. Then, when he didn't win, he quit that party. And then what he did after that, he did eventually get elected as Member of Parliament. And when he didn't get appointed to Cabinet, he announced that he didn't want to be appointed to Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I love members opposite laughing about this because they know and I know the Leader

of the Opposition is no laughing matter when it comes to the way things operate in their caucus.

But what he did is he quit federal politics, Mr. Speaker, again, because of his own personal ambition.

And I want to make a prediction here, Mr. Speaker. And this is, you know, I'm not being clairvoyant, but my prediction is: If the Leader of the Opposition doesn't get his way provincially again, we may be looking at a third by-election, because that's his consistent practice.

And I want to say, the Leader of the Opposition should also be bringing this bill in, Mr. Speaker, and I'll tell you why: because he's also caused more by-elections than virtually any other opposition leader I can remember.

Now, let's start with the member for Morris. *[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, I wonder why—you know, members opposite are pretty vocal. I wonder if they're this vocal in their caucus meetings.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I love—the other day, they got up in question period and they were talking about bullying and intimidation and the rest. And some of us were saying, it sounds like a PC caucus meeting. Because why would Mavis Taillieu, a well-respected member of the Legislature, former House leader, you know, played a significant—why would she have quit the caucus, just without any inkling whatsoever? Why would she have quit caucus? The member—all of a sudden, members a little less boisterous from their seats. You know, she ran, she got elected. I want to say it was a competitive race, by the way. We actually won the town of Morris in the election. But, you know, she had a lot of creditability and clout in that riding. But, out of the blue, she quit provincial politics—not the first one, by the way.

You know, I can perhaps understand why Larry Maguire left, Mr. Speaker. You know, I know last night, you know, he was probably wiping the perspiration off his brow because it was a close election. But I have a lot of time for Larry Maguire and I wish him well as a Member of Parliament. I think we all do. We'll miss him in here.

But isn't it interesting that all of a sudden the Leader of the Opposition takes over leadership of the party, and there's two of his key caucus members who quit, Mr. Speaker—one to run federally and one we don't exactly know why she quit.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a leader that's caused two by-elections himself, directly. And then you have a leader that's caused two of his caucus members to call a by-election. So actually, maybe, what we need in this particular case is legislation that protects us against leaders like the Leader of the Opposition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also have some advice for the member from Steinbach. He's now actually trying to, you know, steal Gary Doer's line about the swagger in coffee shops. We used to talk about the Tories' swagger in coffee shops. But, you know, you know what? I know Gary Doer, and for the leader—member of Steinbach, you're no Gary Doer. You want to talk about swagger, it's members opposite.

And I do say that, you know, the member opposite, you know—I mean you had—it pretty well summed up the way the way the members opposite are. You know, you saw this kind of conspiracy theory idea of floods. As if, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to floods, our forecasters go and, you know, film it on the backlot in Hollywood. I mean, they—this is their view of the world. They think the moon landing was filmed on a backlot in Hollywood. So you got the conspiracy theory.

Now, the member opposite got into the by-election. You notice how, you know, took a few shots at the NDP. Did you notice that he didn't once reference what the MP elect for that area said about Aaron Wiens, a teenager that stood up against homophobic bullying? Did you see the member opposite condemn the fact that the PC—or the Conservative candidate in the riding said it was a conspiracy?

* (10:20)

You know—*[interjection]* Well, you know what, isn't it interesting, because he talked about sitting all summer. We sat all summer, indeed, so that members opposite could filibuster—they could filibuster Bill 18.

But what I noticed, by the way, is when it came to the bill and the passage of the bill, they read various comments on the record, including the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), but they never once condemned the small group of people that made some vicious homophobic comments in the committee, and it—you know *[inaudible]* you look at the new MP and you look at that, what you see, Mr. Speaker, from members opposite, is that when it comes to homophobia in this province, when it

comes to bullying, it's alive and well and the Conservatives spent three months filibustering a bill that we are proud is finally legislation, no thanks to them.

So for the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), again, who was all over the map, I say to him that the reality is that his leader is responsible for the fact that we are now having to call two by-elections, and we will, indeed, be calling the by-elections. We have a legislative requirement to do that. But the real question is, and I say to members opposite: Why was that the case? Why would someone like Mavis Taillieu quit the PC caucus not even halfway through the term, not for any specific reason? I wonder what the dynamic is in the PC caucus. And I look at members opposite. You know, Mr. Speaker, I can't put the looks on their faces on the record, but I think the looks on their face show the fact that we know the real reason. We know the real reason we're dealing with a by-election in Morris.

So, Mr. Speaker, they want to point fingers; they want to blame people. *[interjection]* Well, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) says, what am I afraid of. Well, I'm certainly not afraid to go to my caucus. Believe you me, I actually do know the Leader of the Opposition well, and he hasn't changed a bit. He hasn't changed a bit.

And I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that when we do, in fact, have the by-election in Morris, when we do have the by-election in Arthur-Virden, I'm going to be very proud to campaign there along with every member of our caucus. Let's take Morris. You might want to take a drive right through the heart of the Morris constituency on Highway 75. I laughed the other day when they brought out a 20-year-old picture of a bridge—a million-dollar project. That was the biggest project they had on Highway 75 in the entire 11 years they were in government. We have already invested \$125 million. We're investing another \$215 million. We are bringing 75 up to interstate standards. That's the reality.

So we're going to campaign on that. We're going to campaign in Arthur-Virden. Guess who four-laned the highway, Mr. Speaker, to the Saskatchewan border? Was it the PCs that have had those seats, you know, since eternity, or was it the NDP that went out and, within a matter of years, we're now four-laned to Saskatchewan on Highway 1?

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to flooding, I look forward to the—going and visiting the communities downstream from the Portage Diversion. I want to

see what they have to say about the fact that this spring the Conservatives officially held up the operation of the Portage Diversion, supported a group that was doing that, that put them at risk. I want to see what those communities, St. François and others, have to say about that.

But, you know, the only swagger in coffee shops comes from Tories. They, Mr. Speaker, take rural Manitoba for granted. And I want to put on the record, when it comes to those by-elections, we're going to be fighting them and fighting them hard, and if you want real representation in rural Manitoba, vote NDP.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to be getting up in this House and speaking to legislation, particularly after the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) got up and started his speech by quoting the works of North Korea. It figures that he would start his speech by talking about North Korea because they have about as much respect for democracy, seemingly, as this NDP government does.

And I love some of the comments that the member for Thompson put on the record. He crawled into the grassy knoll and brought all kinds of conspiracy theories and even mentioned as much as that he can't wait to see what the people of these two constituencies are going to say when they vote. But he won't call the by-election. And that's what this is all about. This is about giving people the right to have their voice heard, and also he went on to talk about why, potentially, some individuals may have gone and sought other priorities and—you know, like, for instance, Gary Doer, who abandoned the NDP, realized it was a group of individuals that he was having difficulty leading. And what he did was, he didn't leave because he was going for a higher NDP position. He didn't leave because he was going to run for the NDP. Oh no, Gary Doer left and caused a by-election because he got a federal, Stephen Harper Conservative appointment, one of the most plum appointments that the federal government can give. That's why he actually forced the people of Manitoba to go into by-election. And not one member of the Progressive Conservative caucus stood in the way of that by-election. We supported the call of the by-election.

In fact, we have, now, the current member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), who used to be the former member for Elmwood after he was the current member for Elmwood, who actually left to run

federally and had a very short stay. He's kind of like Halley's Comet in this Chamber. He comes by periodically and he sits here for a little bit. In fact, we appreciate the fact that he knows that the House starts sitting at about 1:45 or 2:00 in the afternoon—well, at least by his time, because he's so busy out in Transcona trying to run again federally. And I'm wondering, if he does in fact run federally, if they're going to hold off the by-election in Elmwood for a year so they can criticize him, crawl like the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) onto the grassy knoll and try to figure out, why is he running for a second time? Well, because he realizes he's got no opportunity of any kind running provincially for the NDP, if you look at last night's results. In fact, the Fort Whyte by-election—and perhaps, Mr. Speaker, you could help me out here. Did the NDP actually get their deposit back for the NDP candidate who ran in Fort Whyte—or I think they might've gotten their deposit back, but just barely. In fact, the Liberal candidate took a sound, sound electoral thrashing to the NDP in that by-election.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you actually were to look at the results that have taken place, I understand why it is that the NDP do not wish to face the electorate. In fact, what they've tried to do is put as much distance between them and one of the biggest anti-democratic debacles that we've seen in this province, and I want to go to what happened in the last year and a half. We had an election two years ago in which the Premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), made several assertions: (1) that he would stand by and live by the taxpayer protection act, (2) he said he would raise no taxes, and (3) more specifically, that the thought of raising the PST was nonsense. This is a party that got elected, and the first thing they did was they raised taxes, raised it on home insurance. We spoke in this House before how that affects middle-class and lower-middle-class families who are sitting at the kitchen table trying to figure out how they can make pennies meet, while the NDP Cabinet ministers are rolling in the dough at the Cabinet table, talking about all the things that they get to spend their pet projects and whatever they feel they need to get themselves elected. That's what they're going to spend.

But it's the families—it's the families at the kitchen table who are struggling. It's the families who are going to count out pennies. We know that even when it comes to basic grooming as in haircuts, we know that families are cutting back on those basic things, and the NDP are sitting at the Cabinet table

with all kinds of taxpayers' money and that money would be better spent and better decided on at the kitchen table.

Then we found out that the NDP went ahead and raised the PST, and they committed not to, but they did it anyway. But that's not the point behind this story. What's even worse is that there was something called the taxpayer protection act, whereby any substantial tax increase would have to go to a referendum. Now, we know that historically the NDP has been great, great friend of referendums, historically speaking, except for, seemingly, when it comes to breaking their word. And, Mr. Speaker, we find out that they brought in the PST and discovered that it was in contravention of the law.

* (10:30)

So what they did is they brought in Bill 20, whereby they would gut the taxpayer protection act, they would gut democracy. In fact, they should have put another clause in while they're at it and they should have taken democratic out of their party name because it is actually a misnomer. This is a party that has despised democracy, has shown a disdain for democracy, has trampled democracy with their feet. Thus, it should come as no surprise to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, that this would be a government that would ignore people's right to have a representative and would ignore holding by-elections; that what we have is in this NDP government, a government that has turned its back on referendums, has stripped Manitobans of the right of a referendum and now it's even stripped them of the right of holding a by-election and being able to vote who they chose.

And I—the member for Thompson said that they are going to target both of these seats, and the member for Thompson has said that they are going to win both of those seats and he's going to work hard to do it. Well, we want to see them call a by-election and let's have a go at it. Let's go door to door, and I know that we will message to Manitobans that there is a NDP party where 57 candidates went to the door, 50 ND—57 NDP candidates went to the door and lied to Manitobans (1) about taxes, (2) about the PST and (3) about democracy.

And that is what we're going to go to the door on, and let the NDP go door to door and talk about how they hate democracy, they don't want by-elections and they don't want referendums. That can be their message. And let's go to the door and

present our case. Let's make our case at the door at that time.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that we now have to put legislation in place to do what's normally common sense, and that is calling a by-election. And I understand why the Cabinet table members, why those are the decision makers, the pooh-bahs across the way, why they're so hesitant. And if last night is an indication of NDP fortunes, I am not too sure that any NDP last night in Manitoba broke 10 per cent. I haven't seen the final numbers yet, we'll wait for the certified numbers to come out and then we'll find out what the actual numbers were. But the NDP placed dead last. In fact, in the last election it was the other way around, they actually came in second place. This time they had an incredibly poor showing.

And I spoke with one of the federal candidates who is running against our party and he indicated very clearly that the issue at the door that was coming up the most was that people are so angry at the NDP and the PST. And I'm sure that the NDP candidates will give a briefing to the great mindset of the NDP Cabinet. Maybe they'll call them in and consult with them and talk to them about it, and tell them the kind of reaction and the kind of response they had at the door.

So the fact that the NDP would love to cancel the by-elections—in fact, I'm surprised there isn't amendment coming forward from the NDP, and maybe there still is where they're going to say that by-elections need not be held interim until the next provincial election. I'm sure they would love that; they would love it in no uncertain terms to not even have by-elections. That's where this NDP has gone. That's how little they respect democracy and where they have come with this.

I would suggest to the Manitoba Legislature that we not accept that kind of a referendum, that we pass this resolution and we have a by-election called imminently, Mr. Speaker. It is time that the people of both the constituencies who currently do not have representation be given the opportunity to vote. However they vote, we believe that the people are always right. Let them have their vote, and the two individuals that then will represent them take their rightful seat here in this Legislative Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) for bringing this legislation forward, and I encourage the hasty passage of this bill. Thank you.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's a pleasure to follow the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler). If the member for St. Paul was given more opportunities to speak by his leader, I'm sure we'd turn more Conservative strongholds into nail-biters.

You know, I thought, you know, we'd be hearing something about Conservatives and vacancies. I thought we'd hear shock and outrage at some point by the Conservative members about the two Senate vacancies in Manitoba. Did you know that one third of all the Senate seats in the province of Manitoba are vacant? Well, nobody knows that because nobody noticed. But, you know, perhaps I thought they might be putting the same amount of energy into asking the Prime Minister to appoint senators. Maybe to appoint now—in addition to the 59 senators he's already appointed, maybe they'll ask him to appoint the 60th and 61st. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, that might result in some more by-elections. So maybe it's a good thing they haven't chosen to go there.

You know, every couple of years, the member for Steinbach steps up in the guise of supporting democracy and brings forward bills, and I think it's helpful just to take a look at some of the recent bills the member for Steinbach has brought in under the guise of expanding democracy.

Well, his last effort was Bill 220. That was The Voter Identification Act (Elections Act Amended). And where did the idea for this bill come—come from? Well, it came from the Deep South, Mr. Speaker. This junior Republican decided to bring up ideas from a bunch of regressive United States, finding different ways to suppress voters in their areas that they didn't think supported their way or view. And, boy, the member for Steinbach was only too happy to stand up and try to bring Jim Crow to Manitoba.

You know, I don't know if the members opposite read Doonesbury. I know they don't understand it very well, so maybe not. Doonesbury actually had a series just a couple of months ago as there was Jim Crow travelling from US state to US state, doing his best to convince people that even though there's no evidence of electoral fraud, there should be a bunch more rules and regulations in place to try and suppress voting. And you know, the member for Steinbach, he got right on board the Jim Crow express, and he brought in the—he brought in that—well, he brought in the bill; it didn't go anywhere.

And, certainly, what was this intended to do? Well, it's pretty clear it was intended to disenfranchise poor people, it was intended to disenfranchise the newest citizens of Canada, it was meant to disenfranchise Aboriginal people.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I had the chance to work on the by-election campaign for the member from The Pas and I know, in that by-election, there were Tory staffers in the polling stations that were challenging Aboriginal people who wanted to come and vote. And although, thankfully, it was possible to make sure those people were able to vote—I believe the poll wound up to be over a hundred for the member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead) and I believe under five for the Conservative candidate—it was still an example of how much Progressive Conservatives actually care about democracy in this province.

And, indeed, I know the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) was very excited about his bill and he decided to raise it when the Chief Electoral Officer came before a standing committee, and he put his great ideas forward. And what did the Acting Chief Electoral Officer say? Well, she explicitly said that the current ID requirements are more convenient for voters and that, under the laws as they are, the disenfranchisement of voters is less.

And, of course, the Acting Chief Electoral Officer reminded the committee that stricter ID requirements could be inconvenient, as showing ID may add some time to the voting process, not to mention disenfranchising people who have the right to vote.

So, you'd think maybe that would've been it, but no, no. The member also had Bill 219 and this was The Election Advertising Integrity Act, in which the member for Steinbach thought that, you know, this negative advertising would just stop if the party leader had to give a message that that message was approved. And where did the member for Steinbach get that? Well, south of the 49th parallel again. He should start looking for some good ideas in Manitoba. And, of course, we know just how careful the Progressive Conservatives have been to avoid negative advertising in elections and between elections—not.

And, indeed, of course, Mr. Speaker, with Landslide Larry winning his election last night, we know that in the weeks and the days leading up to that election, there was a torrent of negative advertising—nasty negative advertising brought by

the Conservatives, which we can just see is a taste of what's to come for both the federal and the provincial party.

So, it is always interesting to hear what comes under the guise of democracy, and it is certainly ironic, of course, that we're now talking about setting dates for calling by-elections. And there were many things the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) had to say; I get to add to a few of them.

Last time there was a by-election called in Manitoba, as a matter of fact, it was called very, very quickly. It was a matter of weeks; in fact, it might have been a matter of days, after the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) became the leader of the Progressive Conservatives. I don't want to say, won the race, because there was no race. There wasn't a single other Conservative in the province of Manitoba that was prepared to put their name forward, and so the member for Fort Whyte became the leader and the government called the by-election almost immediately. And what was the response from the member for Fort Whyte? I believe, if I've quoted him correctly, he complained about this being called right away and said, well, everybody knows that August is family month.

* (10:40)

Well, I didn't know that every Manitoban had the divine right to have August off. That's not the way it works for folks in my constituency. They may have a couple of weeks of vacation. Frankly, in my constituency, every day is family day and every month is family month. It doesn't mean you get a month of vacation, and I know how upset the member for Fort Whyte was that he actually had to go out and campaign an election and, you know, it was called within days. I can tell you, I can let you in on a little secret, Mr. Speaker. We weren't actually targetting that seat to be an NDP pickup. We didn't actually expect that was going to happen, although the more the member for Fort Whyte goes up and talks, as I say, there is more and more safe Conservative seats that are going to be toss-ups the next time there's a general election.

Now, of course—[interjection] Well, I hear some laughing across the way, and I'm sure they'll be laughing. I'll make sure I bring along a very good book that—[interjection] Well, here's the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen). I will bring him a book, it's called so many liars. It was written by Doug Smith, a prominent Winnipeg author, and he wrote about the Monnin inquiry and he wrote about

the cynical, nasty, scheme by the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba to disenfranchise Aboriginal people, to find ways to split the Aboriginal people's vote in the province of Manitoba, and we know how that turned out and we know the evidence that came forward in the inquiry. I will loan it to the member for Morden-Winkler. I think it will be very helpful for him.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that many steps we've taken to improve electoral law in terms of making it as easy as possible for people in this province to cast their vote, and the first place we started was by banning union and corporate donations. We thought that was a major part of moving ahead, that big money does not buy elections in Manitoba. It's individuals making their choices that decide elections in Manitoba, and the banning of corporate and union donations and limits in individual donors have increased the accountability demands in political parties. And I know that previous leaders of the Progressive Conservative Party have said first thing they'd do if they had the chance is they would repeal that law and they'd go back to the days in Manitoba of trying to get as much money as you could from the very richest and the most wealthy to try and win elections. Well, we're not going there. I know that the Progressive Conservatives have still refused to move from that position and it just shows you where they're at.

Of course, it was this government that introduced an independent commissioner to enforce the act, and the commissioner has been provided with broader discretion to ensure compliance with the act and, indeed, the enforcement process has been made more transparent.

We also made redistribution of boundary changes truly independent and reflective of the entire province. We expanded representation on the electoral boundaries commission to include rural and northern Manitobans by adding the heads of Brandon University and University College of the North to the commission.

And, of course, when the last distribution happened and the independent officers made the report, what did the Progressive Conservatives do? They whined about it. They complained. They complained that there were too many seats in Winnipeg. It was fortress Winnipeg, and how would they ever win? Well, I guess it was a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy because we know how well the Progressive Conservative Party did in the city of

Winnipeg, which was terribly, and we know that every time they stand up and talk about democracy, we know they have another agenda.

So, you know, they're going to make it up as they go. If there is one thing I will say about the Progressive Conservatives, they are consistent. Whenever they stand up in this House and talk about democracy, they really don't—they would do anything they possibly could to disenfranchise people, to stop people from exercising their vote. They would give big money interests the opportunity to buy elections. We don't support that, Mr. Speaker.

We support every Manitoban having the opportunity to choose their government and that's why we won't be supporting this bill, and I'll wait for the next idea that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) gets from his Deep South Republican friends.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Well, good morning, Mr. Speaker, and it's my pleasure to be able to stand and put some words on the record with respect to Bill 200 that has been brought in by the member for Steinbach constituency.

And, Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that, if I look a little bleary-eyed, it's because I was also watching it and following along last night as the results from the federal by-elections continued to come in. I wasn't sure at first where you access that information so I had to check a couple of sources, but I was able to do it and I would continue to follow as more and more of the polls were reporting into the night. And I do want to congratulate, first of all, Ted Falk, the new MP for the Provencher riding. I also want to convey my congratulations to my former colleague, Larry Maguire, on his victory in Brandon-Souris. It's certainly a by-election that didn't lack for drama and for excitement, but the people have spoken and the people have made a decision and they are going to have in both of those ridings fine representation going forward.

So what is the difference here, Mr. Speaker? Why am I talking about this with respect to Bill 200 and this new amendment act for democracy for voters? It's because what we had is a context yesterday in which we could have a by-election, where a by-election was called, where a seat became vacant and so the government moved and understood their responsibility to voters. They understood their responsibility to those constituents. They understood their responsibility to the principles of representative democracy. And they acted and they went forward

and they said, well, we're going to have a by-election, and there was all of that background work and parties organized, parties had their own ability to attract candidates to the race. There were all of those elections, and all of us here have been in those. I was talking to some of my American friends in legislatures there, and they talk about it in different terminologies and they use those terms primaries. We don't use those terms like primaries, but we all know that we go through our own nomination process and then, by virtue of the fact that we win that, we go on then to represent that party.

So all of that took place and it took place well, and we have new representatives in those areas as a result. Mr. Speaker, compare that to the sad state of affairs here, where an NDP government had notice provided almost one year ago that an MLA was vacating a seat, leaving a vacancy here in the Manitoba Legislature. Compare that, and as this government sat around thinking about how they were going to perpetrate one of the biggest tax hikes on Manitobans in the history of this province, do you think that they could have got around to discussing how they were also going to express fidelity to the interests of democracy, how they were going to uphold democracy by calling that by-election?

Well, what explanation do we receive today? That they simply didn't get around to it? That they were too busy devising the tax hike? That they were too busy devising a strategy whereby they would make an end run around the taxpayer protection act? They were too busy thinking about the lines of communication? It was going to be for flood mitigation—no, it was going to be for infrastructure; no, it was going to be for hospitals and schools; no, it was going to be for splash pads. And the rationale behind the tax increase, of course, kept shifting depending on the wind and the barometric pressure and other considerations. But what didn't change is the fact that this was a government that was giving its entire interest and its entire focus to raising a tax that went against the protections that were actually democratically enshrined for the protection of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot say how important it is today that we are having this discussion, that we are having this debate. And for the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) to stand up and somehow try to squeak around the obvious, the inescapable, that there is no rationale that those members can possibly provide that, I think, even sits well with them, because it

would've been so easy for members on that side to simply go to their leader and say, you know, it's time. It is time; we've got that vacancy there. Listen, we need to move in this direction. We've got lots of time. You're not always in session, although we held them here for a long time. For a very necessary reason we weren't letting this government off the hook. Just like Manitoba taxpayers, we're not letting this government off the hook, and it led to one of the longest sittings in the history of this place.

Even so, to somehow use that as an excuse and say, well, there wasn't time to do it, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans do not accept that argument that somehow there wasn't time. This by-election could have been held. It could have been scheduled. It could have taken place already. We could have an MLA now, in this Legislature, representing the constituents of that area. And really we have to ask ourselves what is the effect—what is the effect—of not calling the by-election?

*(10:50)

Well, Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) raised an issue in this Legislature, and he identified a woman who was living in the RM of Macdonald who had experienced a wait time in excess of 45 minutes for an ambulance that was dispatched and sent to her home, which I believe was perhaps 12 kilometres away from her home.

Now, this was a very unfortunate situation. As the member for Portage la Prairie clearly indicated, the woman's call should have received the highest priority. We're looking into the situation. We certainly hope the Minister of Health (Ms. Selby) continues to look into this situation and find out what went wrong and where the wheels came off—not of the EMS vehicle but where the wheels figuratively came off in respect to the length of time it took for the call to be responded to and this woman to be attended to.

But beyond that, there's another point here. Who was this woman supposed to contact to bring this concern forward? What was the appropriate channel she was supposed to avail herself of in order to express this concern about health-care system performance? Well, it's obvious where she should go; it's clear where she should go. We spend a lot of our time talking to constituents—I know that these members across the way do as well—talking to constituents about the fact that they can take their concerns to us. We are there for the purpose of

representing their interests and their issues and defending them or helping them advance their concern through the appropriate channels.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you've done that for constituents. I have done that. I'm still learning about how—some of the nuts and bolts of how that actually happens, but we're increasingly being able to connect to ministers' offices and to stakeholders and give information to people and help them navigate what can be a very difficult system to navigate. We all know that. If anyone has had a question or a concern or an issue with government, it can be difficult to navigate.

This government has removed from that woman in the RM of Macdonald the most obvious and the most practical and the most realistic way for her to advance her concerns through her elected MLA. They've taken away that avenue, and I can hear them chattering in the background, but I can tell you, they have taken it away. They know they've taken it away. It would have been the most obvious thing for them to do, call a by-election and not let them be—not let themselves be subjected to these accusations, but they somehow don't get to see that point.

You have to wonder about the kinds of conversations that are actually going on in their caucus rooms, because I refuse to believe that they are all circling the wagons, that they are all coming around saying, yes, Mr. Leader, as a matter of fact, what we're doing here is we're waiting for the opportune moment where the conditions will be just right for us to be able to win this by-election in Morris, and that's why we continue to say, stall, Mr. Premier, stall. We think that the storm clouds are gathering. We think we're almost there. We're almost at that opportune moment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, hardly the case, right, hardly the case. These members know the right thing to do was to call the by-election, was to express fidelity to the concept of representative democracy, to fill that empty seat in this Legislature, to bring the complement of members in this Chamber back up to 57 seats from the 56 that we are now at. Members in Morris, members in Headingley, members in St. François Xavier, members in Niverville, constituents in Starbuck, constituents in Sanford deserve this representation. They deserve this democracy.

This government that has routed the taxpayer protection act, this government that has written special get-out-of-jail-free conditions into legislation

for members and ministers, this government needs to pay attention to democracy starting right now.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit at the start it's very difficult to know even where to start. I think I can come up with, I hope, in my time another about nine or 10 reasons as to why I think the member's motion is not a reflection of, frankly, reality and is actually quite phony.

You know, when we sat here, when the member for Morris surprisingly quit in the middle of a whatever—a caucus meeting or whatever, she quit, we then had the situation where there were so many members of the opposition scrambling to run for federal nomination, we didn't know who was coming or going. Seats were flying out. One was going to run; the other one wasn't going to run. We didn't know if we'd have to call six or seven by-elections.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in the typical fashion of the Tory party, someone laid their hands upon one of the members in the front bench and he was deigned the member to run in that particular riding. Didn't help them that much, so, you know, we could be having by-elections all the time given the tenor of what happens in the Tory caucus and given the fact that members opposite are scrambling to run away from the leader as fast as they can.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a party that doesn't believe in levelling the playing field, a party that votes against eliminating union and corporate donations is not suggestive of a party that believes in a level playing field or believes in democracy, a party that doesn't even allow public and the media to go to their conventions, for heaven sakes. They don't even hold open conventions. How many political parties in the western world have closed conventions? I know of only one: the former Progressive Conservative Party, now Conservative Party of Manitoba. They don't even allow people to attend their conventions, and they're trying to say—they're trying to say that they are friends of democracy?

The member, unfortunately, in his last speech talked about jail. The closest this Chamber ever came to jail was in 1995, and had not the statute of limitations run out, Mr. Speaker, there'd have been a lot more Tories in jail than there is in Saskatchewan, and in Saskatchewan half of the Tory caucus of Grant Devine is in jail—or was in jail because of election irregularities. We had to have a public inquiry that had to say at the end, tragically, that that

great old party, the one that had a little bit of a scandal in 1918-1917, that Duff Roblin had to come back because his grandfather—great-grandfather was implicated in, that party that came back got itself into a worse scandal in the political history of this province. That's not democracy.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I often—we often joke on this side of the House about what it must be like in caucus. I don't envy members opposite. We hear what it's like in caucus over there, and I don't think—you know, I can see why the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) talks about going to the coffee shops, et cetera, because I would do things to get out of that caucus too. Like I—you know, the—you know, you—if you irritate the leader, you might be in trouble, and you don't know what happens and there's kind of—there's anger management issues. And, you know, I'm part and proud of a caucus where you can say—and I've been part of a caucus for well over 20 years. You can say anything you want and that's what a democracy's all about. You can say anything you want and it's allowed in a democratic forum. You can say in your caucus whatever you want and, no, microphone isn't clicked off, and it's not clicked on and off, and that's—well, how a democracy works.

And, you know, let me make another point. When we called the election really quickly, the Leader of the Opposition said, it's too fast, summer's for vacation. So when we hold off an election, the Tories are all rumbling and stumbling over each other to decide who's going to run and who's going to run in their safe seats. And we're holding off a by-election, they say, oh no, it's not fast enough, Mr. Speaker, it's not fast enough. We need legislation. If we had had the member's legislation, we would have probably had, you know, one, two, three or four by-elections in a row, every time a new by-election, because who knows would have happened in that caucus in terms of who was going to get the coronation to run in a particular riding.

Mr. Speaker, we have done so many changes to The Elections Act on the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer to make democracy and to make eligibility, to make participation greater. We should be working towards greater participation, not lesser participation. And it's not helped by politicizing the issue or by putting in place a phony, phony piece of legislation that not only contradicts what their own leader has said, who criticized going too quickly into a by-election and now they're saying we're not going quick enough into a by-election,

but to a political party that doesn't have open conventions, that has caucus issues, is not prepared to accept a level playing field in terms of corporate union donations and is a party where people tend to want to leave pretty fast after being there for a little time.

* (11:00)

And so I suggest that members opposite that they ought to take a look inwards and not continue to, as they constantly do, look outwards and blame everyone else in the world for the state they're in.

This is a healthy democracy, and the ability to talk and speak openly is very much a part of it, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we have in this Legislature the opportunity to do that, and I support that. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House—does the honourable minister still have comments that he wishes to make? Has he completed his comments?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was under the impression that the clock at 11 o'clock resulted in my inability to continue my discussion until next time.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. That clarifies it. Thank you very much for that.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Mineral Resources will have three minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private members' resolutions.

Res. 1—Cultural Diversity

Mr. Speaker: And the resolution we have before us this morning is sponsored by the honourable member for Concordia, and the title of resolution is Cultural Diversity.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Braun),

WHEREAS one of this province's greatest strengths is religious and cultural diversity; and

WHEREAS since 1999, over 100,000 new immigrants have settled in Manitoba, bringing fresh perspectives that are strongly valued; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Human Rights Code prohibits unreasonable discrimination and advances inclusion on grounds such as ancestry, nationality or

national origin, ethnic background or origin, religion or creed or religious belief, religious association or religious activity; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has committed to an inclusive workforce that values diversity, reflects the population served and respects freedom of religion and the right to religious expression; and

WHEREAS Manitoba and Canada must maintain a reputation throughout the world as a place where people can live together in peace, a place where cultural and religious differences are celebrated and not criticized.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba reaffirm to the people of this province that Manitoba's religious and cultural diversity is a point of pride; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue the commitment to diversity and religious freedom in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Concordia, seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration:

WHEREAS one of this province's greatest strengths—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Mr. Wiebe: It is indeed an honour to debate this private member's resolution here before the House this morning. It's a point of pride that we continue to put issues of human rights on the agenda and allow this Chamber to speak to those issues and to express, I believe, a universal opinion of all Manitobans, to celebrate and to honour those that have come to Manitoba for—to add to our cultural diversity.

I begin by stating something that I think we all know as a national trait and something that we all hold dear: Canada is a multicultural country. This is perhaps become something that we take for granted and that we maybe don't concentrate on just as much as we possibly should. I know people of my generation, anyway, Mr. Speaker, certainly see it that way. We've known nothing else. This is the Canada that we've grown up in and this is the Canada and Manitoba that we see every day.

To look around our communities today, whether it be the local sports club, the community centre,

certainly our schools, we see a level of diversity that has only increased and become more diverse. Our K-to-12 schools, for instance, Mr. Speaker, are filled with folks from all over the world. Different languages, different styles of dress and, indeed, different faiths, are all expressed throughout our community.

Here in Manitoba we've made a point to put that into practice and welcomed people from all over the world to our province, 70,000 new Manitobans from all over the world, from distinct places and distinct cultures, contributing to our economy, working all over the province, in rural Manitoba, in the city of Winnipeg, bringing with them a vibrant cultural scene. And these variety of cultures, I believe, Mr. Speaker, make our communities more vibrant and make our province a better place to live.

Manitoba has a diverse workforce, as I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, and we've taken steps to ensure that that is the case within the province in Manitoba, in terms of our government employees. We set benchmarks in 2004 to ensure that that diversity that exists within the workforce is reflected in our Manitoba government workforce. And since 2004, the number of visible minorities has rose from just 2.9 per cent to 8.7 per cent this year. So we see that it's working in Manitoba; here is a place that we can say it works and we can live together, and we can celebrate our differences.

And it's almost easy to take that all for granted, Mr. Speaker, to assume that that's the way of the world and where a more global, a more inter-connected, a more understanding place everywhere in the world, and certainly we believe that that's the case in Manitoba. And we believe I—that it will always be this way. But we know that there's a growing threat to this way of thinking. It's not ubiquitous everywhere in the world. We see hate crimes elsewhere in the world, violence against newcomers on the rise in places like the United Kingdom and in Germany. Extremist parties have emerged and they've proposed radical measures that persecute those that are different. When we see these xenophobic policies actually being debated and passed in democracies throughout Europe, we know that diversity is being put to the test. Economic pressures further put pressure on this and when there is that pressure, we see that those that are different are an easy target.

This is troubling, however, Mr. Speaker, maybe something that we think is very far away. It's a

different place, a different history, a different way of thinking maybe we believe. But we see this—but when we see this policy coming to Canada, in Canadian provinces, like Québec, I believe it's time here in Manitoba that we take a stand and we firmly stand with those new Canadians that have come to Manitoba.

It's what we're doing here, Mr. Speaker, we're taking a stand; we're standing with those who want to practise their faith openly and proudly. We want to stand with those who want to speak about how their faith has shaped them, has made them better people. And I believe faith is not something that we need to hide away, not to be talked about or to be ashamed of. I believe it's an essential element for many that shapes us, that makes us who we are. And the ability to practise that faith is fundamental to how we see ourselves as Canadians. I know for me it is and for my family.

As a Mennonite, we came to this country to escape persecution. My family died simply for having their own culture, simply for speaking their own language and for practising their faith. They were driven out of their homes, they were driven out of their country and they became refugees, Mr. Speaker, because of their faith and because of their wish to express that openly.

They came to Canada, they came to Manitoba and they were guaranteed the right to practise their faith. They were guaranteed the right to practise their culture openly, without fear, without persecution. And, I believe, Mr. Speaker, as everyone would attest, those refugees that have come to Canada, whether be Mennonites or others, have contributed to Canadian society and made us a better place to be.

Now, to be clear, Mr. Speaker, a values-charter type law, something that we'd see in Québec, wouldn't affect me as a Mennonite. I don't practise my faith openly, I don't outwardly show my faith to others. It's something that I can choose to share with others, but there is no visible demonstration of that faith. So I can practise it without any judgment. Nobody has to know what my faith is, unless I choose to share it with them.

* (11:10)

But for our Muslim brothers and sisters, for our Sikh friends, for our Jewish friends, this is not an option. In many cases, a part of their faith is to show their religious symbols openly. They should be given that same right as I am given. Just as I am a

Mennonite, I am able to practise my faith, they should be given that same right. In this way, Mr. Speaker, I believe that an attack on one faith is an attack on all. Mennonites came to this—to Canada to be protected from religious persecution, as did many others. I feel that we must make a stand, we must take a stand and defend that right for others just as I would want to defend that right for Mennonites, and I will defend that right in the workplace, in the freedom of speech that we enjoy and in this House. When we don't allow folks to display their religious symbols and to celebrate them, I think we lose a little bit of what makes us Manitobans.

So I ask all members in this House to support this resolution, to demonstrate to the rest of the world that we stand with people of all faiths, of all cultures and that we in Manitoba will fight for that right for all.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I thank the member from Concordia bringing forward this resolution on cultural diversity, and I agree that our province, basically the culture of our province, the people, the places that they reside in, the cultural background, their faiths, their, again, diversity throughout the province is—basically makes and defines Manitoba in which we live in harmony. And we encourage many, many people from all corners of this wonderful planet of ours to come to Canada and, in fact, Manitoba, to partake in the way of life that we have here and, as well, celebrate our rights and freedoms that we are so honoured to have each and every day here in this wonderful province and, in addition to that, the great country of Canada.

The resolution—we talk about the resolution, Cultural Diversity, and I—as I was reading through it, it seems to me that a lot of the points within the resolution are well put. Some of the pieces within there, though, I feel that the government, once again—I'm not sure who writes this stuff. I know that the member from—

An Honourable Member: Concordia?

Mr. Ewasko: Not from Concordia, from just down the road here, and I'll think of that name in a little bit.

An Honourable Member: Wolseley.

Mr. Ewasko: From Wolseley—and I thank you very much, member from Tyndall Park, that helped me out on this one.

The member from Wolseley often speaks on how he often is happy and ecstatic to hear that we on this side of the House write our own speeches, and it's interesting that on their side of the House they have their 192-plus communicators to help them with theirs.

And so when we look at their—the resolution today, Mr. Speaker, we look at the politicizing of a good resolution. In—again, you know, probably we'd be in favour of this resolution with a few friendly amendments added to it or a few tweaks to be done. But, you know, one of the things that I look at, and it stands fairly clearly, is the second clause. It says, whereas since 1999, over a hundred thousand new immigrants have settled in Manitoba, bringing fresh perspectives that are strongly valued.

In fact, some of these changes had been done within the province even before then, before 1999, and, of course, they know that. But do you think that they would put that in a resolution, Mr. Speaker? This is not a government who stands up for Manitobans. They are not a—this is not a government who gives credit where credit is due.

And I would like to think that when we're talking about cultural diversity throughout this province, I would think that we would have to work together, and that's basically what ends up happening when we talk about the great people that come to this province and add that spice of life throughout our various festivities, our everyday way of life. And they're bringing in their culture, they're bringing in their faith, and we're able to share, you know, pretty much on a daily basis with so many people across this great province.

And then when I look at the very next WHEREAS, the clause, we have the mention of Manitoba Human Rights Code is mentioned there. And then we talk about some other words as inclusive and reflects the population served and respects Manitoba, and they talk about this current government. Well, if we take a look at the Human Rights Code, we take a look at inclusivity and we talk about respecting the freedoms, this is a government that, again, ran in the last election—in the 2011 election—that they were going to balance the budget and they were going to do so without raising taxes. So they went around the province, all 57 candidates of the NDP party, and they're knocking on doors and they're basically making that promise that that's what was going to be done. And a few months later, Mr. Speaker, they all of a sudden bring

in the various widening of the PST and the increase of fees and taxes to various other needs—absolute needs to these people who are coming in, whether they're new immigrants or just were fellow Manitobans that have been here, you know, throughout their history since day one. Then, in 2013 budget, they went ahead and they increased the PST by one point or a 14 'pourt'—14 per cent increase without taking it to those people that they're mentioning in this resolution that they represent. We talk about inclusivity, we talk about respects of freedom. Well, what about the freedom of choice, the freedom of—to vote on Bill 20?

I know that they're wanting to pass Bill 20 in the next week or so, and the fact of the matter is is they're—they've got \$500 million, half a billion dollars, that they've promised to go towards infrastructure. Where is it? There's no plans, Mr. Speaker, and we've seen evidence of this for the past number of years since I've been in this Chamber. But the fact of the matter is, is this is not a government that holds people's thoughts and beliefs in a high regard. They basically want to run it as a dictatorship and they want to impose things on the people, and it really—[interjection] The member from Gimli's asking me, what am I talking about? Well, the fact of the matter is, is that the Bill 20, they want to push it through and they're pushing it through without taking a vote or having a referendum from the people, so it's too bad. And I know that the member from Gimli is going to have a few minutes and—going to have a few minutes to put some words on the record, but, again, once again, I'm—I'd like to speak specifically to the member from Concordia, that I do believe that it is a great resolution and that I think with a few small—very small friendly amendments, I think that we would definitely be in favour of it.

A couple of things that I would like to bring to his attention, because I know it wasn't brought up in his speech, but just to let him know—and, again, a friendly amendment and just a friendly little bit of a history lesson here, a little bit, is that the Provincial Nominee Program has recently just celebrated its 15th anniversary. And, in fact, Mr. Speaker, it was 1998 and it was actually the member from River East who played a vital road—vital role in the creation of the program, and a program so successful it has been emulated by other Canadian provinces throughout this incredible country of ours. In fact, it was a PC government, under the direction of Gary Filmon, that created and implemented the Provincial Nominee Program. This was also the time that he—that the

Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation was renamed to include Citizenship. This program has been so successful that it has brought over 100,000 skilled immigrants to Manitoba since 1998—there's the small, little amendment, since 1998. It is amazing on how backing that statement up in the resolution by one year would speak so—would speak volumes on us coming together, working towards a common goal.

* (11:20)

Another huge motion that was brought forward by the Progressive Conservative government under Gary Filmon was the multiculturalism act of 1992. And I know that, no doubt, that 192 communicators on their side of the House failed to mention it to their caucus, but I would like to just put a few words on the record into exactly what was the purpose of that act in 1992. And so I'm hoping the member from Burrows, Tyndall Park and Concordia, of course, is listening. But the purpose of the act was to recognize and promote understanding that the cultural diversity in Manitoba is a strength of and a source of pride to Manitobans, to recognize and promote respect for all cultural values and to enhance the opportunities of Manitoba's multicultural society by acting in partnership with all cultural communities and by encouraging co-operation and partnerships between cultural communities, as well.

I would just like to end saying, with some friendly amendments, Mr. Speaker, I could see that this resolution would move—

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

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to be here today to speak on this particular resolution, especially—I thought maybe this was going to be one where we would actually all be agreeing. To continue the commitment to diversity and religious freedom in Manitoba seemed like something that everyone on both sides would be able to stand with. So it was a little bit saddening to hear the remarks from the member from Lac du Bonnet, but not surprising. Okay, I'm a little bit surprised, just a little bit—a little bit surprised.

But Manitoba, to me, really is a model for the world in how we work together. Is it perfect? Is there never any, you know, racism in Manitoba? Of course not, because there's people in Manitoba, and people aren't perfect. So, yes, there are those things but, overall, in our legislation, I think, in our belief

system, in our tolerance and love for diversity, we really are a province that is—that the world can look on and go, you know, it can work.

And I can remember long before I was in here, my daughter went to Sister MacNamara School, which is very much in the inner city, because it was connected to my daycare. And she was probably the only child in many of her classes who was Caucasian. Kids came from all over the world there. So, and we would go to a school event, and everyone would be dressed in their various, you know, outfits from whatever their countries were that they'd come from originally. And people were speaking different languages all over the auditorium. And there was flags from every country all around the walls of the gymnasium. And—but there was one thing that was absolutely the same—didn't matter what country they came from, it didn't matter, you know, what they might be wearing—when their kid was on that stage, they were up there with their cameras in the front, clicking away at their kids, right.

And you just went, wow, you know, it shows you that this can work in the world, that people have those same, you know, values and love for their kids, doesn't matter where you come from, everyone's the same in that. Sometimes there would be, you know, a little—a group of kids from—I don't know where they were from, all over the world—and they would be singing some little Irish tune that was very, very cute, and vice versa. So, it was just a great place. And it was really then that I think that I really noticed the tremendous diversity.

And I came from a small, you know, town in southwestern Manitoba where there was nobody, at that time, long time ago. You know, there was one, I think, one family that had come from China in our town. And that was the extent of the diversity that existed back then. So I really wanted my daughter to end up in a school like Sister MacNamara, where it was kids from all over the world.

And now that I'm representing an area that's just fabulously diverse—and I was recently with the member from The Maples, actually, at Diwali at Maples Collegiate. And, you know, and it was just a huge celebration, and people were coming wearing their outfits from—their suits from the Punjab, and many of the people who weren't from the Punjab had found out how beautiful those outfits are and were wearing them, and it was just a fabulous celebration of diversity.

And in that school, you know, they did one of the—one of the programs that came on stage was all the different musical instruments. I'm sure the member from The Maples could actually name them for me, but they're quite different and they're being taught. The kinds can take that at Maples Collegiate in their music program if they wish. That's one of the things that is offered, and I think it's those kind of seemingly small things that really make us a province to be proud of in that area.

I go to—on New Year's Eve I'm at three or four different functions. So I start in the Philippines and then I run to the Caribbean and then I'm at the Guyanese event and then I'm back at another Filipino event, and that is the norm in the constituency that I come from. Our seniors for the Caribbean had a seniors event where they were celebrating their seniors, and instead of just celebrating their own seniors, Mr. Speaker, what they did was they invited a whole bunch of different-like groups each year. So they asked the community from Ethiopia to send over, you know, the senior that they want to recognize, and the, you know, the people from whatever country it is they happen to pick that year. Sometimes it's the Aboriginal community, the First Nations, and they celebrate together from all these diverse communities, and that's what we see all the time in this province and I'm so proud to be here in a province that is known for that.

The member from Concordia was talking about the people who had come here to escape persecution, and the member from La Verendrye and myself were at Holodomor, City Hall, recently, just on the weekend recognizing that. And many of those people, they had—we had some—a couple of survivors there with us. It was really an honour to be able to bring the proclamation there.

But—so people from all over the world have come here and we work together, and I wish that both sides of the House, you know, could be together on this instead of taking it as an opportunity to sort of, you know, dis the other side, be standing up for what makes Manitoba great, one of the many things that makes Manitoba great.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we have in Manitoba over 137 countries represented. So if this is not a model that could be followed around the world, you kind of want to invite, you know, people from these countries where everybody's fighting to come in and see, you know, this can work. This can actually be done. Over a hundred and twenty languages are

spoken in our province and, you know, we really do celebrate and I just find it exciting.

People come here and they can find work. People are being helped to now work, and we've done a lot of work on that trying to get people the accreditation that we need, and I know there was just an article in the paper today, actually, on that, and some of the improvements that are going on in that world. But people are working. When I'm knocking on doors and people have come over here, they have bought a house. The whole family that's there have jobs. You know, everybody is doing well, and it's very exciting is all I can say.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, that rural Manitoba has tremendously changed from when I was a kid and there was nobody there from any other country, and so all over rural Manitoba, as well, people are coming from other countries and it's what we need to see. Manitoba's business and community leaders are very much behind, you know, key architects of the Manitoba immigration model as well because they can see the value added to our province by all these different communities. And it saddens me that there are legislation, you know, coming in Canada like we are seeing in Québec. I just think it's the opposite of the way that we need to be going in our country, and it's disturbing.

* (11:30)

So I know that every sector of our society, I think, supports what is happening in Manitoba in the level of diversity. Well, except maybe—well, maybe not the opposition, but I would have thought most of them, too, would have been in support of this.

Our newcomers to Manitoba are protected, Mr. Speaker, from unscrupulous recruiters for the strong—with the strongest legislation in Canada. The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act ensures the registration practices are transparent, objective, impartial and fair, and we can be proud of that kind of legislation.

Manitoba's Worker Recruitment and Protection Act provides protection as well for temporary foreign workers, including the licensing of third-party recruiters and registration of employers before they can recruit a temporary foreign worker. And I think that is, you know, something that just is tremendously important to see in our country as well.

So I'm very proud of what we're doing in this province and I wish we could all stand together on this one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): It's my pleasure to stand in the House today and add some comments to the resolution that was put forward for the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and indicate, just at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I think the whole issue of cultural diversity and the proud record that we have in Manitoba is shared by all members of the Legislature regardless of political stripe.

And it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that for some reason or other in this resolution it seems that 1999 is the year that Manitobans woke up and realized that cultural diversity was important. And that's not true, because for decades and decades, from the beginning of time, I think that all Manitobans recognized and understand the contribution that different waves of immigration have made to the diversity of our province of Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have seen as time progresses, legislation change, rules change, immigration agreements certainly be put into place that did provide an opportunity for more immigration to our province of Manitoba. And along with that came, certainly, the cultural diversity that we all take pride in. And we all know that cultural diversity does add to the richness of our province and makes life more enjoyable for all Manitobans, and it does deserve to be celebrated.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, if this resolution hadn't been politicized by saying 1999 was the year that, you know, immigration flourished as the result of an NDP government being in power, we certainly could have supported this resolution.

And there is another WHEREAS in the resolution that talks about the provincial government being committed. If in fact the government had wanted this resolution to be passed, I think they should have said that all members of the Legislature—which is quite true—all members of the Legislature believe and are committed to an inclusive workforce that values diversity, reflects the population served and respects freedom of religion and the 'relite'—right to religious expression. And with a couple of friendly amendments, certainly I think we all could have supported this and stood together.

But, Mr. Speaker, I—the NDP appear to be forgetting some of the history of our province of Manitoba. And, you know, I go back to the days of the Filmon government, the Filmon administration, where I know day after day we hear in the Legislature, but—there was nothing but bad things

that happened when the Filmon government was in power in the '90s.

Well, I would like to indicate that I take great pride in remembering and recognizing the pride as the minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. We introduced the first ever multiculturalism act in the province of Manitoba and it still exists today.

The government today hasn't changed that act because it was an act that reflected our beliefs, our collective beliefs, and it was passed unanimously in this Legislature. It was passed by New Democrats, Conservatives and Liberals in the Legislature of the day.

We all stood together, and I just want to talk about what that act and the purpose of that act, that piece of legislation was. It was to recognize and promote understanding that the cultural diversity of Manitoba is the strength of and a source of pride to Manitobans, to recognize and promote the right of all Manitobans regardless of culture, religion or racial background to equal access to opportunities and participation in all aspects of society, and it was to recognize and promote respect for all cultural values and to enhance the—excuse me—the opportunities of Manitoba's multicultural society by acting in partnership with all cultural communities and by encouraging co-operation and partnerships between cultural communities.

And I stood with pride and introduced that legislation, and I stood with pride when all members of the Legislature supported and endorsed that legislation, and I stand with pride today knowing that the NDP government today continues to keep this legislation in place and, Mr. Speaker, that's something that we should all be proud of as Manitobans. And if in fact that has been reflected in this resolution that—and credit was given to all members of the Legislature for the role that we've had to play in the multicultural diversity of our province, then we could have stood with pride and said, yes, to this resolution—and the resolution, the intent of the resolution is the right intent.

I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that we all can agree that the Provincial Nominee Program and the negotiation of that agreement was a source of pride for our province, the first ever agreement that was signed across our country of Canada, an agreement that all other provinces envied and all other provinces looked at emulating about having the same kind of program and opportunity for their provinces as we have for Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's 15 years. It's the 15th anniversary this year of the signing of that Provincial Nominee Program, and I take great pride in that also. It was an agreement that had its beginning in the early 1990s, and it took several years under the leadership of Gary Filmon and his vision for this province—and I know because I was the minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Recreation at the time when the Premier called me and indicated that he was going to change the name of the department. It was going to become Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, and the reason he wanted to place the focus on citizenship was because he felt that we needed to have some more control in the province of Manitoba over immigrants and the number of immigrants coming to our province to fill the skills shortages that we were experiencing in the province of Manitoba.

So my mandate at the time was to begin negotiations with the federal government to sign a provincial nominee program to give us some ability in the province to make that happen. And, you know, I wasn't the minister that was able to finally sign that agreement. It was Rosemary Vodrey in 1998, and it took many years to negotiate what was a landmark agreement across the country that has served our province extremely well.

* (11:40)

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I know that the government today likes to take lots of credit for that, and rightly so. They should be given credit for continuing along the path and the vision that Gary Filmon had as he led our province of Manitoba and pushed for that agreement to be signed.

And so I have nothing but good things to say about what has happened in our province since that agreement was signed, and it continues to be a source of pride for our province. We can take pride, all of us, as legislators, as Manitobans, and I don't think we should take credit as members of the Legislature for this. I think we need to give credit to those community organizations that have worked so hard to try to integrate new Canadians into our society.

We have lots to be proud of here in the province of Manitoba. We have lots collectively in this Legislature to be proud of. We can speak with one voice when we say that all of us, regardless of political stripe, understand and know what immigration has done to make us who we are today as a province.

And none of us should be ashamed to stand in our places and make those comments. It's just unfortunate that this resolution couldn't have been worded in a little different way so that we could all stand here united and say, yes, it wasn't the Progressive Conservative government of Gary Filmon or it wasn't the government after 1999. We've been proud of—

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

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): I certainly want to tell all of my colleagues in the Chamber this morning what an honour it is to have an opportunity to speak to the private member's resolution that has been brought forward by the MLA for Concordia.

I want to just make a few comments in regards to his speech, the very personal speech he made this morning, where he talked about his family and how they fought for their democratic freedoms and how they escaped persecution and how they came to this country to find a better life because of the freedoms that we enjoy in this country and in this province.

And I want to say how proud I am of the constituency that he represents. He represents a very diverse, multicultural community. In fact, he had this past weekend a celebration of that diversity and that multicultural community that he represents, and I hear—of course, I bought a ticket—but I hear it was an absolutely wonderful celebration and a wonderful celebration of food and entertainment and dance and these are the kinds of contributions that immigration has made to our country and to our province and to our communities.

And I want to say how proud I am of him bringing forward this resolution but also the comments that he put on the record today in regards to this private member's resolution, because he believes that religious and cultural diversity is a point of pride for us as a caucus and a point of pride for him as the MLA for Concordia. And I have to say that I'm quite disappointed that the MLA for Lac du Bonnet would suggest somehow that, you know, he—that some spinner somewhere wrote that speech because I think, you know, that's quite disingenuous. I think that this was a very heartfelt speech that the MLA for Concordia made. He talked about his family and he talked about his community and he talked about how proud he was to represent that community. So I would just like to say thank you to the MLA for Concordia for his speech this morning and thank him.

I would also like to say how proud I am of belonging to a caucus that is multicultural and diverse. This is a caucus that represents all corners of this province. This is a caucus that is diverse. We have in our caucus cultures—Metis culture, we represent the Aboriginal culture, we have people from the Indo-Canadian culture and, of course, we have people from the Filipino culture. And, of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention that we are very, very proud of having the first woman of colour that was ever elected in the history of this province right here on our bench.

And I have to tell you, it is—it makes us all richer to have elected representatives from all corners of this province, from all—from a lot of cultures in this province. Because what we do, then, is we represent the society that we live in and we represent the society from all corners of this province, and I think that that is something that we should continue to strive for. We should continue to look for people that can represent all of the cultures in our province, if possible. Wouldn't it be terrific to continue on in having a society that truly is elected here in this Chamber that represents all corners of our province and all cultures and religions in our province?

I am proud of the work, of course, that our government has done in regards to immigration, and I wasn't surprised that the MLA for River East got up and, you know, talked about the initial bilateral agreement with the federal government. It's quite obvious, you know, that—you know, we get criticized on this side of the House by the MLA for Lac du Bonnet, you know, in regards to the talking points, but it was obvious that the talking points over there haven't changed.

But having said that, you know, this was—we are proud of the multiculturalism act that was brought in by the previous government, and, you're right. It hasn't changed, and it hasn't changed probably because it doesn't need to change. Because we are proud of the multiculturalism that we have happening in this province and we are proud of the contributions that people from different cultures make all across this province, and, quite frankly, if it isn't broke, let's not try to fix it.

We are proud of the work that our government has done with the federal government in regards to the bilateral agreements. Those bilateral agreements have been re-signed many times by the ministers of Immigration in our government because we know that the contributions that are made by newcomers

coming to this province drive our economy, and that is what is important to us. We need skilled workers to come to Manitoba to fill the labour market demand here in the province of Manitoba. This is an economic program and it's also program that makes us rich. It makes us richer as a province and it makes us, I believe, a province that we can be proud of because we all want to live in a province that—where everyone is respected.

And the bilateral agreements that we have negotiated with the federal government, those negotiations are built on trust and respect, and we will continue to do that work with the federal government and we will continue to work all across this province in providing resources and programs to newcomers so that they can continue to participate in our economy, so that they can find good jobs and so their children can go to the great schools that we have here in the province of Manitoba and so that they can also find good jobs here in the province of Manitoba.

And they can get post-secondary education. We were also the first province in Canada to have our young people who came from other countries and attended universities here in the province, to allow those young people to work while they were going to university. Because we knew that if they came here and they were trained here in our post-secondary institutions or our colleges and they could also work off-campus, that's probably what would happen, Mr. Speaker, is they would stay here in Manitoba because they were already getting educated here in Manitoba and they also had the opportunity to work here in Manitoba. And we want those young people to stay here in Manitoba and be part of the fabric of our society and continue to grow our economy.

* (11:50)

Some of the work that we have done in regards to the protection of our newcomers who come to Manitoba, of course, is the protection of temporary foreign workers. And this was a very important initiative for us as a government, because the temporary foreign workers, when they came to Manitoba, it was completely and totally unregulated. And so some workers were coming to Manitoba, promised jobs by recruiters. They would come here; they would leave their family to come here to—for good jobs, and then when they got here, they realized that those jobs weren't real. And sometimes they weren't getting paid the salaries that they were supposed to be getting paid. Sometimes they were

promised lodging, and they got here and all of those promises didn't happen. And so I'm very proud of the work that we have done—the Manitoba's Worker Recruitment and Protection Act. It was a piece of legislation that we worked with the federal government on, so they were supportive of this legislation. In fact, it became a model and they have done other work in regards to the—that legislation to protect newcomers when they come here, so that their families can join them and their families can continue to—

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, a pleasure to put a few words on the record regarding this resolution brought forward by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

I appreciated some of the comments from the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan). I think some of her comments were certainly appropriate in—and talking about the good work that was done in the 1990s under the Filmon government and the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) in terms of multiculturalism and the immigration programs that were brought in for the Provincial Nominee Program.

And I—and so I'm disappointed that that didn't show up in the actual resolution, that it didn't show up in the text. Had it shown up in the text—and perhaps the member for St. Vital wants to have a discussion with the member for Concordia about different sort of things in terms of how this could be changed to make it more reflective of the reality of what's happened in Manitoba—when this resolution reappears—and, of course, it does come back, I suppose, either later in this session or in the next sitting in the spring—it might be something that would garner broader support, because we obviously want to pass something that's reflective of the realities of what's happened.

And the member for St. Vital has made some points about that, about ensuring that there is actual—a reflective chorus about this and that it's not something that doesn't properly describe how Manitoba has become the province that it is in terms of multiculturalism and the number of people who are coming to Manitoba.

Certainly, I've experienced that within my own community in the region that I represent—the many

people who are coming from countries all over the world—and that's been important in seeing the growth of the community, not just in terms of numbers, but the growth in the community in terms of its diversity and all those good things that come with that as well, Mr. Speaker.

So my hope is that, in the course of the time that elapses between today and whenever this resolution reappears for debate, that the member for St. Vital will have discussions with the member for Concordia about her comments on how to make this more reflective of the truth, in terms of what's happened. And, obviously, we want to vote on something that's reflective of the truth, as we all would in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

I do think it's important also to reflect on the comments from the member from Concordia about religious freedom, and I appreciated his comments about that, and I take them as coming from the heart, Mr. Speaker, as those comments would come from the heart. But it's more than just talk, of course. It's also—has to be backed up with action. And, certainly, those in the faith community—in the many different faith communities that are represented in Manitoba would certainly expect that their views wouldn't just be reflected in a motion, but that their views would actually be respected in action, and we've not always seen that.

Even in recent history, we've had discussions even about the building of the Youth for Christ centre on Main Street, and I know the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) has spoken passionately about that in the past. And we know that the NDP members federally were strongly opposed to that and they didn't come up against—didn't have much resistance from their provincial colleagues who did the bare minimum to offer any support to that particular facility, Mr. Speaker.

And, in fact, they spoke negatively—some of the NDP members—about the fact that they had a faith perspective. Now that centre has been built, and I think if you drive by there any time still today you can see it's being used, it's being utilized. There's many young people who are there who are participating in activities. It's well kept, it's well staffed and it has a great volunteer base. And it's proven to be, I think, an asset. And yet the NDP government, when they had the actual opportunity to support something like that, spoke against it, often on behalf of religious reasons, which is unfortunate,

because now they say that they're in favour of religious freedom here within the House. So actions, I think, actually speak more louder than words.

We have, of course, had many people who've come to the Legislature just in these recent months to speak about issues of religious freedom. I remember the passionate presentation that was brought forward by the Islamic social services head who came here and did a wonderful job of making a presentation about presenting and protecting religious freedom.

And this government questioned and mocked her. And that was unfortunate, because I think her comments were appropriate and should have been listened to, and this government didn't and, in fact, said and acted in a way that was disparaging towards her comments. We saw letters come forward from the Sikh community, and the government quickly dismissed all of those things and said that those weren't appropriate concerns.

And, in fact, I think they should have at least been listened to and given a fair hearing, but this government decided not to support the—or at least listen even to the comments by the Sikh community when they wrote a few months ago. We heard from the Coptic community, and again this government and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) himself specifically dismissed the concerns that came forward from the Coptic community.

We saw pastors come forward in this House and to committee, and the government in some ways were quite disparaging to those people who raised concerns about issues around religious freedom. We heard from the Catholic league of rights who came to the Chamber—or came to the committee and made a presentation on behalf of Catholics in Manitoba and Canada. And this government snickered and mocked and were very disparaging at the committee.

So it's a little disingenuous, although I think the member brings it forward for all the right motives, and certainly we all support the right motives of religious freedom, but to come and say that you're going to support issues of religious freedom and then to all those religious leaders do something completely different in your actions, doesn't send the right message.

So I think they need some soul searching, to use those words, Mr. Speaker, and to go back and to think about these sort of things. Because it's not enough to put platitudes on the record when your actions don't actually back those things up, when

those individuals who are concerned about religious freedoms, on behalf of their individual religious communities, are treated in a disparaging way by this government.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): As a former chair of the Manitoba Intercultural Council, it's always a pleasure to get up and speak on these issues.

As a son of immigrants, my parents came here in the late '40s, early '50s, and I lived the life of an immigrant family. It was very interesting. Of course, times were tough and we struggled as a family. There were—financially, things were always a struggle, especially because our family didn't know the language and went to a German church and, you know, was very involved in the ethnic community, got to know other communities as well.

Mr. Speaker, my father spoke six languages, and unfortunately he died far too young. And one of the languages that he spoke fluently was Ukrainian, and I wish to this day I would have picked up a little bit more Ukrainian from him because certainly him and mom had the knack of speaking either Polish or Ukrainian between the two of them so that we as children couldn't understand them. So, you know, we—but we never got the opportunity to really—to pick up the language.

And always was raised with great stories. You know, I can remember there was a story of a whole bunch of young German youth went to the grocery store, the corner store, and bought themselves a pint of milk and sort of stood on the sidewalk, and there were all the Canadian English kids, and they—one of the guys pulled out a knife and very carefully cut the bottom corner out of the milk carton, and you did that for all the rest of them because that's how you would consume the milk, and the English Canadian kids were laughing at them. And finally one of the guys stepped forward and said, here, let me help you. And he showed you how to properly open up a milk carton, then kind of stood there and looked at them. And, you know, these were the lessons that you learned. They felt a little foolish, but, you know, these are the lessons that you learn when you come to this country. There were all kinds of stuff.

In fact, my one aunt tells a story about when they landed in Montreal, they'd never seen an escalator. So they had officers standing at the bottom of the escalator, pulling people as they came off the boat, throwing them sort of on the escalator, and then on the top end they had to have people to pull them back off again.

So, you know, all these experiences, and that's what makes Canada such a great place—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable

member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) will have seven 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, November 26, 2013

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