

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

Vol. LXVI No. 56A - 10 a.m., Thursday, May 15, 2014

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 15, 2014

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 204?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Are we ready to proceed with Bill 211? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 211—The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act (No Fee for Registry
Checks Respecting Volunteers)**

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll call Bill 211, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (No Fee for Registry Checks Respecting Volunteers).

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 211, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (No Fee for Registry Checks Respecting Volunteers), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: Good morning. The sun is shining in Manitoba, which is a positive thing, and a great opportunity to stand this morning and speak to Bill 211, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (No Fee for Registry Checks Respecting Volunteers).

It's always an honour to stand in this Legislature and put a few comments on the record, to be able to

do so in a very free and democratic fashion. We know that there's a lot going on in this world, particularly we look towards what's happening in Ukraine currently and that the elections are coming up. In fact, I would suggest to this Legislature that those individuals fighting and demonstrating in Ukraine are fighting and demonstrating for what we have here today: a very stable, a very democratic and free system.

This morning, I took the opportunity to have a closer look at the structure of this Legislature and how peaceful and tranquil our Legislature is. You can move freely within the building. We serve without fear or favour, Mr. Speaker, and we note that that is what most in the world would love with their democracy or they certainly would love a democracy like ours.

In regards to Bill 211, I am honoured to rise today to put a few words on the record for Bill 211. This is a simple and straightforward bill that, if passed, would exempt volunteers from paying application fees for Child Abuse Registry checks, making it easier for Manitobans to volunteer their time to organizations by removing this onerous financial burden.

Mr. Speaker, volunteers are the most important resource that community organizations have, and when we look at national and even international studies, you find that Manitoba and western Canada, we are a people that not just give of our money but also give of our time. There's something that can be said about prairie folk and that's what we are, we're people of the prairies. We love to give of ourselves. We are very generous. In fact, that's why it's said if you're going to be an individual immigrating anywhere, Winnipeg is probably one of the best places to come to. We have a very open and loving approach to newcomers.

I'm always sad that we removed the friendly Manitoba off of our licence plates, because I think that identified who we are. We are very friendly individuals. We love to give of our time and, Mr. Speaker, I—*[interjection]* I do stand corrected. Some of our licence plates say friendly Manitoba, others don't. And I would like to see that they all would say friendly Manitoba.

Volunteers, Mr. Speaker, are really what keep a lot of our organizations going, whether it's our community clubs, our sports clubs, our service clubs. In fact, we had an opportunity to meet with an individual who's very actively involved in the seniors community and they find it very challenging to get volunteers because they don't—the first thing they don't want to tell a volunteer is, upon becoming a volunteer, they have to pay money for all kinds of checks. So it's covered by the organization and, if you're looking at three, four, five hundred volunteers, that starts to eat into the bottom line of the non-profit organization.

I know that when it comes to youth sports, it's very important that these registry checks take place. It's very important that they be kept current, and certainly we know, from all kinds of examples, that these are things that must be done. But, Mr. Speaker, it does become a financial burden on organizations that have to pay for it because, again, usually they are covered by the organization for those volunteers, and volunteers selflessly help others through their talents and skills. They make our country, our province, our communities a better place to live. Volunteers also provide essential services, especially in rural, northern and remote communities.

To give a sense of the scale of importance of volunteers in Canada, according to the latest Statistics Canada's volunteer survey, 40 per cent of Canada's population volunteered nearly 2.1 billion hours of their time. This is the equivalent of nearly 1.1 million full-time jobs.

In Manitoba, we are incredibly proud of the contribution volunteers make to our province. In 2010, our volunteer rate was one of the highest in Canada. As mentioned earlier, in 2010, our volunteer rate was one of the highest in Canada with 52.9 per cent of our population volunteering their time through a group or organization. This is well above the national average of 47 per cent.

Whether it's the teenager who serves on the student council or, for that matter, does referee work, the business executive who provides leadership on the board of a non-profit organization or the parent who coaches his or her kid's sports team, volunteers come from all walks of life and have all kinds of talents and skills to offer organizations. Volunteers are the heart of charities and community groups, sports teams and philanthropic organizations, 'advestry' groups and businesses. They are the lifeblood that sustains this province, and we should

be doing everything to encourage all people to use their time to volunteer for a cause they are passionate about.

* (10:10)

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are proud to support volunteers, and I'm sure all members of this Legislature are proud to support volunteers, and thus we should be committed to making it easier for Manitobans to contribute their time and money to organizations in the spirit of volunteerism. For this reason, we have introduced Bill 211, which will remove some of the financial barriers Manitobans currently face when volunteering.

Many organizations involved with children require volunteers to apply for a Child Abuse Registry check, and I would go so far as to say it's probably every organization now that requires it. This is a basic precaution that organizations must undertake to ensure the safety of their clients, staff and other volunteers. And I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, in light of the kind of cases that have come out with coaches and other individuals—there's an international case now of a teacher who taught at international schools who has—who might have abused over 1,000 children, and the case is now growing on an international scale. And we need these registry checks. We need these kinds of looking into who's actually involved with—and it's not just with children. It's not just with youth. It's also with all kinds of vulnerable people, whether it be a physically handicapped or it be the aged, they're also vulnerable to all kinds of abuse.

So we recognize that this is an important thing, and it's very important. In fact, my brother was a pastor in a church in Ontario, and they did a renovation of the church. And one of the things they did is they took all the doors and cut open the doors and put windows in. So, you know, no longer do you have Sunday school rooms or classrooms or any kind of room now where adults are with children that you can't see into. And these kinds of things do add a cost to what non-profit organizations are trying to do, so Bill 211 tries to address that.

The Child Abuse Registry processes upwards of 65,000 applications per year. In 2011, the cost of a check, of a Child Abuse Registry check, went from \$10 to \$15. Mr. Speaker, I know the argument is made, yes, but it's only \$5; however, five times \$65,000 is a big hit to volunteer organizations. The significant increase will cost volunteers and

businesses an extra \$203,000 per year and will affect an awful lot of organizations and individuals. In the grand scheme of things, the money made from this fee is minimal in terms of really what government takes in, yet has an enormous impact on the organizations that will be paying it.

We feel that with the increase in the PST, in the taxes, of \$184 million additional coming in, that perhaps the increase in the Child Abuse Registry wasn't the most timely. Manitobans are being asked to pay more even when it comes to sports equipment, those kinds of things, this added burden, and going from \$10 to \$15 is a substantial increase. This burden would have been best not foisted upon volunteers and their organizations.

I would like to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying Manitoba's clearly a leader in volunteerism. As a province, we give so much of our time and money to supporting community organizations and groups to help them achieve their potential. For this reason, we would be encouraging more volunteers and encouraging the volunteers who are there to provide their varied talents and skills to organizations across this province. I hope that this House would consider and adopt Bill 211 to show volunteers that we do care. This is a chance for all of us to do something meaningful today. Let's remove the fees for volunteers when it comes to Child Abuse Registry checks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): There's no doubt that all members of this House value the contributions that volunteers make every day to this fine province and the work that they do in supporting seniors and children and schools and hospitals. We rely on the volunteerism and the generosity of individuals. And as the member opposite stated, that we do have record volunteers, not only with their time but also with the financial contributions that they make to support our many organizations.

One thing that—I listened intently as the member spoke. One thing that I don't think he said, and I can stand to be corrected, but he did talk about the importance of protecting our children, and that is one of the tools that we use, is the Child Abuse Registry. But he neglected to say, in 2003, we exempted volunteers that directly serve children and agencies in which they represent.

So, in 2003, our government made a decision that we would support organizations and provide them with access to the Child Abuse Registry. That Child Abuse Registry access allows them to, with consent of an employee, they can run their own check on an individual. But, also, they can ask for an individual to do self-checks.

So we have a number of organizations that are eligible for exemption. We have up to 1,000 organizations that have applied for that, and we encourage them to do that if they have volunteers that are working in their organization directly serving children and youth. And so that could be church organizations. That could be community clubs. That can be schools themselves that are applying for their parent volunteers that are in the school. So I think that it's really important that Manitobans know that there is allowance made for them.

In 2013-2014, there was approximately 75,000 applications that were made; 30 per cent of those applications—so approximately 24,000 of those applications—they were eligible for the fee exemption and, of course, took advantage of that. And we are very pleased that they were able to do that.

These—this Child Abuse Registry 'treck' is extremely valuable. It ensures that individuals that we are entrusting with vulnerable children that we have confidence that they have not been charged for abuse. That's the one thing that we have to always be aware. It is only one tool that we have in our tool kit, that we have to make sure that there still needs to be thorough evaluation done of volunteers to give them information. There needs to be checks that happen with references that they have. But we need to ensure that as we move forward that we support volunteers in providing the valuable services. And, in doing that, we have the fee exemption.

There's also organizations that require that the individuals that are employed with them have to do self-checks, and in those self-checks they're asked to—they're going for employment. And so if you're being—if you are going to be employed in a certain organization that doesn't have direct service with children, and that includes health-care aides sometimes, fire-paramedic service, correction workers. Also, there's the college of—or the registered psychiatric nurses, the college of pharmacists that they have to go and they will ask that their members apply for a Child Abuse Registry. And there's also organizations such as the private investigators and

security guards, the taxicab regulation that they have to apply as well.

So as we proceed and value our volunteers, you can see that happening in a number of ways of the work that we do. Our non-profit red tape reduction strategy is one of those ways, making sure that agencies are getting multi-year funding, making sure that we're working on different initiatives to help them bulk purchase, making sure that we're helping them with training opportunities.

There is no doubt in our mind that this government doesn't support volunteers. We support them a hundred per cent, but we have the balance of making sure that children are being protected.

So, under the Child Abuse Registry, we continue to ensure that individuals have access, whether it's for volunteers or paid employment, and ensure that they are getting those checks done so they can continue to provide the important services that they do, whether they're coaching the soccer team or the hockey team, whether they're serving food at the school, whether they're volunteering at a church organization and providing Sunday school. It is important that we are ensuring for parents but also for the children themselves that we have done due diligence to ensure that they are safe.

And, in doing that, as I said earlier, I think I need to continue to state it, that in 2003 we acknowledged that it was important that volunteers that are directly working with children that they were fee exempt, and we continue to support that.

* (10:20)

So I thank the member for introducing his bill. I think it's really important that he understand that volunteers are already exempted within our system when they are direct contact with children. We need to make sure that we take some time to evaluate the bill that he's introduced. There would be concerns about what would happen to the volume, concerns about what would happen to the access of organizations. Right now the 1,000 organizations that have access, they have priority. We know that those organizations who are looking to have their volunteers on the front lines as soon as possible, and we need to ensure that they have that priority. We need to also make sure that when organize—when individuals are coming for self-checks, that we know that they are going to be volunteers. A number of—this could end up putting a lot of onerous activities on the volunteer organizations that are already trying

to provide good quality service to many Manitobans. We need to make sure that they're not having to do additional paperwork.

We know that the Winnipeg Police Service, it is important to them that we're able to identify who the individual is, what organization are they going to be representing—not just a blanket statement. So I'm going to continue to work with all of our community partners and continue to ensure that as we move forward, that we are protecting the most vulnerable in our society, making sure that we have our Child Abuse Registry and the number of people that have worked in the Child Abuse Registry and the thousands and thousands of checks that they have done to ensure the safety of children.

I'd also like to put on the record that it is very important that as we move forward with the Child Abuse Registry checks, that we ensure that they happen in a timely manner. We know that there are certain peak periods in which those requests are being put upon us, and we ensure that as we move forward we tell individuals it will take between three and four weeks, but our average is approximately two weeks. So we're very proud of what we've been able to accomplish. Not only are we providing timely service for our volunteers, but for the volunteers that are serving children and youth within our province, we are providing them with a fee exemption.

Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I'm pleased to rise today and put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 211, and I want to thank the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) for bringing this forward for debate in the Legislature today. This is a very important debate that we're having about volunteers, and we know, of course, that everything that we do and what brings us here is a result of many, many volunteers in the community, so volunteerism is a very important sector within our society and one that should be respected, in that case, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very important issue, Mr. Speaker, in terms of we need to ensure that there are no fees for registration checks when it comes to volunteers, and not sure what the Minister for Family Services was saying. She mentioned that there are no fees, and I'm not sure what she's—she mentioned something about back in 2003. Well, in the 2012 budget, in fact, the Child Abuse Registry check was increased from 10 to 15 dollars, a significant increase at that time. And the previous minister for Family Services, the now-Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), said and

admitted to this—she said it's a modest increase from 10 to 15 dollars, so there is admission across the way that there is a fee that is charged. In fact, it was increased back in 2012, and now they—the Minister for Family Services, the current one, was just saying that there are no fees. So I'm wondering, maybe the current Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross) could talk to the previous minister of Family Services. Maybe she could—should brief her on what is really going on here.

But this is a very important thing. We know that volunteers are hard to come by. People are busy in their lives, Mr. Speaker, and it's hard when—I know that we volunteered as coaches for—whether it's for a hockey team or soccer or baseball in our communities, for our children's activities, and my husband and I have often gone out and volunteered, and we've had to go through the registry check and pay for that ourselves.

But there are some people who, you know, this will be a deterrent from them actually getting out and volunteering for their kids' sports or for their kids' activities, and it's unfortunate because we need to encourage more volunteerism in our society, not less, and this is in fact a deterrent.

So I think the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), by bringing this forward—is a very important signal to say that we respect volunteerism, we want to encourage volunteerism, we do not want to discourage people from being involved in children's activities and we want to encourage that, Mr. Speaker. So I think it's very important that all of us in this House support this.

We know that members opposite, of course, increased the PST. That was a burden on Manitoba families. They did that, of course. They stripped the rights of Manitobans. They took away their right to vote on that. They went door to door in the last campaign promising not to raise taxes. They did that, Mr. Speaker, and that has been a burden on Manitoba families. And this is yet another burden on Manitoba families and it discourages volunteerism in our communities.

So that's why I encourage all members of this House to support this bill. This is a very important bill that is about respecting volunteerism. And I'm sure that each and every member of this House has a respect for volunteers, and should therefore support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for introducing the bill. I think it's well intentioned, but I think it's misplaced.

Mr. Speaker, the intention of the bill is to make it free for people to apply at the registry if they're volunteering. And, in fact, under the present legislation, if you're volunteering, if you're part of the 1,000 organizations that are registered as non-profit organizations that provide service, or if you're in one of the very many categories dealing with child services, you do not pay the fee. You're exempt from the fee.

I think the idea of the member's bill came before they realized that, in fact, volunteers were exempt from the bill. So well as intentioned that this is, it's wrong. In fact, it's an attempt to do something that's already in effect. In fact, it brings more red tape into a system, Mr. Speaker, by introducing a bill. And I don't question the intention of the member, but it is government policy now to exempt volunteers from Child Abuse Registry. Organizations apply for access. The whole volunteer base is fee exempt. There's a—currently 1,000 organizations taking advantage, including community centres, church groups, schools, sports groups, non-profits and many others. Not only is this the current policy that those volunteers are exempt, but exemptions were also made for work placements, student trainees, adoptive applicants and foster home applicants, as well as for applications by peace officers, the Children's Advocate, and the Chief Medical Examiner, in order to carry out their details.

So, you have an—you have a very important tool, where 75,000—or 70-plus-thousand registrations are made a year. It—there is a cost. There's a need to have people and programs to administer this particular process. There is a fee for the non-volunteer portion, Mr. Speaker; that's a modest fee.

But the member's bill is to exempt volunteers, and the act and present practice already exempts volunteers, so the bill is basically redundant and unnecessary.

And while, I—the member and all of the members talked about the fantastic work that's done by volunteers in Manitoba, and are—Canadian leading amount of volunteerism, and the efforts of volunteers in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, the fact is, that not only is—has it been recognized that volunteers are important in this particular legislation, but for a long period of time, I think, unknown to the member,

I suspect inadvertently, those volunteers are exempt from having to pay the fee.

So, I can only state in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, that while, again, I commend all members who—and everyone does—support volunteers and support the efforts to work with volunteers, and to make their lives—to at least recognize, in as many ways possible, their efforts and their need to—and our ability to help them as much as we can, they were already exempt by virtue of this—of the act and the policies. So, in fact, this particular piece of legislation is redundant and is not necessary.

And, as well tensioned as it is, I don't think we need to add another bill to the bills in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, when we, as the government, have looked—worked so hard to reduce red tape. For example, we've recently merged Crown—three Crown corporations and two Crown corporations, saved millions of dollars, reduced red tape by not the fictional thousands of pages that the Leader of the Opposition says that he was able to do in the years before he left government and went to Ottawa, but, in fact, real benefits.

*(10:30)

And I'm—it's interesting that the members opposite voted against—voted against—reducing Crown corporations and emerging Crown corporations, saving millions of dollars and making the laws more amenable to Manitobans. In fact, there were some initiatives in those red tape reductions that particularly helped rural and northern Manitobans that were asked for by committee, by members opposite, and then they voted against it.

Strange, but I digress slightly. But I do digress to point out that members opposite always talk about red tape reduction and fail to recognize the tremendous progress that's been made in Manitoba with respect to red tape reduction and respect to improvements that we've been able to make, and making the lives of Manitobans less paper-orientated and more productivity and, in fact, more jobs that have been offered and more hope for the future and more training positions for the future. It's almost as absurd as the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) yesterday trying to maintain that having more nurses than ever in the history of the province in Manitoba resulted in somehow more vacancies than ever in the province of Manitoba when, in fact, when 1,000 nurses were fired, you certainly didn't have any vacancies because all of the jobs were eliminated, Mr. Speaker, plus.

So a little bit absurd, but I digress slightly, because I do want to stay—unlike a lot of stuff that I've heard from the Leader of the Opposition in question period, I do want to stay on the high road and I do want to aim higher in this Chamber because I think it's important that we maintain that.

And while I do want to also indicate at this time that I want to wish the member for Springfield and also the member from our caucus who's going to Ukraine a very safe and a very eventful, a very hopeful trip. We're all proud of the—we're proud of the people that are going—*[interjection]* The member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), I correct the record. It's the member for St. Paul, Mr. Speaker, and also Mike Kelly from our caucus is going, and all of the Manitobans and all of the Canadians, all the Canadians that are going to Ukraine for the election. I admire their courage. I admire their initiative. I'm proud to be a Manitoban and a Canadian at this time for not only the work that's being done by people who are going to Ukraine this week and those who are there now, those who are going to be there in the future, but for the stands that all political parties have taken, both in Ottawa and here in Manitoba, on a non-partisan basis to work for democracy in that very fragile and very difficult situation that's occurring.

So I wish the member for St. Paul and our member—and our caucus person that's going, Mike Kelly, and everyone from Manitoba and everyone from Canada who is going and all of the organizations who are going, I wish them well and I wish them—I say: *Mnohaya I blahaya lita*. Which is the Ukrainian way of expressing a greeting and long life and protection and happiness to all of them, because it's a very important initiative.

I know former members of the House Doug Martindale, Leonard Derkach, Rosann Wowchuk all went to Ukraine in past elections and all came back, I think, more informed people and also back with a fulfillment that they'd done something to improve the lot of people in that part of the world which are—which is very important in all parts of the world.

And I hope we can continue that practice of being non-partisan and working at all kinds—as we have this week with respect to the tragedy in Nigeria and to some of the other situations, Egypt, Syria and the Sudan and the various parts of the world where our fellow citizens don't have the same benefits *[inaudible]* and the protections and the ability to

speak in public and have our views discussed, but we don't lose our heads when we speak. Rather, we might sometimes be forced to sit down or forced to apologize, but we get to express our views. And in many occasions, as was witnessed yesterday, the effects of one individual like Moe Levy can have a profound effect on not just individual people's lives but on thousands and thousands of people's lives.

So with those few words, I'd like to conclude my comments by saying while I believe that this intention of this particular bill is well meaning, it's already a provision, it's already taken care of in the act. And that—Mr. Speaker, I do have some notes to talk about things that happened in the '90s that weren't very nice in the child and family services system. But because this is a very positive initiative that's been brought forward, albeit mistargeted, although it's a positive notion, at the same time I do want to indicate that the volunteer base is already exempt in the criteria. And the very nature of having organizations register, the 1,000 organizations, is not only administratively helpful, but helpful for those organizations so that they can get a priority in terms of hiring or in terms of getting volunteers on very quickly, which is a very important aspect of the abuse registry.

Thank you.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 211, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, also known as the No Fee for Registry Checks Respecting Volunteers. I listened intently to my colleagues across the way and their comments that the intention is well-meaning, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) noted. He also referred to it as a positive motion.

Now, the member for Kildonan was also suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that all the volunteers for all these organizations are exempt, but nothing could be further from the truth. For the three years preceding my entry into this House, including the—in—for whatever reason, I think the Winnipeg Free Press editorial labelled it as passive-aggressive behaviour on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Selinger) in the one-year delay in calling the election. But that being aside, I ran a not-for-profit. And we saw this on a regular basis, the cost of individuals wishing to either volunteer for us or make application to jobs in the field and wanting to have, to be able to provide—to be—wanting to be able to provide a clean criminal background check and a clean volunteer or a—and a

clean Child Abuse Registry checked. The cost of these—and you know, and my colleague who brought forward this bill, you know, he talked about, you know, the hundreds. You know, obviously, when we're talking about the hundreds and hundreds of volunteers, it adds up.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? We don't even have to go to the cost of hundreds of volunteers. And, again, the non-profit that I ran was a much smaller scale. And so we were only talking about, maybe, you know, we'd be lucky if several volunteers—and then obviously our consumers that we assisted in terms of their career path in re-engaging the employment market that they may have left or had to take pause from or looking for a different career path due to their disability or health condition.

But Mr. Speaker, when we talk about \$15, I mean \$15 doesn't sound like a lot of money, but for the non-profit world out there and for a lot of individuals out there it can be a lot of money. I mean, just put it in context, again, of the own non-profit that I ran. I mean, \$15 would be the equivalent of 10 transit tickets. I mean, that's 10 individuals that we would not be able to provide a transit ticket to in order for them to attend a medical appointment, for them to attend a job interview, for them to attend another employment counselling session with their counsellor, again, to facilitate that goal of self-realization through employment.

So the minister is just simply wrong. We would get—my email box would regularly get these email chains going from a number of the non-profit organizations flying around talking about this very issue and, obviously, the joining issue which this bill doesn't refer to, and that's the criminal background check. And, again, obviously a higher cost than this, Mr. Speaker, but another issue that a lot of the non-profits have had to deal with. So it's truly unfortunate that the government isn't looking to endorse or appears as unwilling to endorse or validate this bill.

I mean, the member of Family Services talked about that we need to take time to evaluate this bill, and I would agree with the minister. All legislation needs to be evaluated, and as part of that evaluation process is discussions here in these chambers with our colleagues and, as well, taking it to the community stage to allow members of members of the public and at large and other stakeholders to come to—come for and make—and to make their

views known on the legislation. And I have no doubt that my colleague would be willing to entertain any amendments to strengthen the bill so that it can become more than just the positive motion the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) refers it as, but a true testament of the work that volunteers do in our communities.

* (10:40)

It was also interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Kildonan was talking about red tape and that suddenly, you know, this bill would bring on additional red tape, and it was almost like he was starting to redebate a motion put forward by my colleague for Tuxedo about red tape reduction. And just recently, I was in Brandon. I happened to attend the mayor of Brandon's state-of-the-city address, and what I found interesting was that the mayor talked about red tape reduction in the City of Brandon, and while I obviously applaud the mayor for Brandon for tackling, obviously, a very serious issue not only to the business community, but to not-for-profit individuals within the Brandon area and obviously throughout the province, that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) didn't rise in his chair immediately and start demanding of the mayor to name those regulations that she was about to cut, because when we debated this very bill in this House, it was all about, you know, name them; name every individual one. But the member for Brandon East was silent and, in fact, he just applauded the mayor for her vague initiative, the same vague initiative that they seem to dismiss here.

When we talk about—you know, when we talk about some of the costs that non-profits face, Mr. Speaker, and we talk about, you know—and the—and, you know, the Finance Minister says, you know, she's ready with her whole, you know, binder full of, you know, what they refer to as the dark days. But we don't even know—need to go back to the—we don't need to go back to the dark days.

I mean, in the last three years, again, in the world of the non-profit that I ran, Mr. Speaker, I mean, in—as soon as I started the one program, the Province cut the funding by—but they didn't just freeze the funding in that program, and it wasn't a minus 1 cut, not minus 2, not even minus 3; it was a minus 4. In the very first fiscal year, we need to reduce that program's funding by 4 per cent, but guess what? We're going to expect the same results from you. And then they proceeded, you know, next year I think that particular program was a freeze and

I think the subsequent year it was a minus 1. Another program was a minus 1, then it went up to—I think it was about a minus 6 and then another year it was about a minus 5, and yet all that time, you know, we'll expect the same results.

But—so, Mr. Speaker, it's funny, the members opposite talk about the dark days, and in the last three years, I mean, it was just cut after cut after cut. And not only would they cut our funding, but they would also on non-profits and organizations that need to use these services and need to have these checks on their volunteers, they would add additional costs when the PST was expanded to insurance costs. I mean, it was—again, to a smaller not-for-profit it was a significant burden, and you can only cut—there's not a lot of fat in a lot of the non-profits due to the rollbacks and freezes imposed by this government over the last two years because of their inability to manage their own finances and their—and the—some of the spending decisions that they have made as a government. I mean, whether it's a vote subsidy, whether it's Spirited Energy, I mean, there's more than enough questionable decisions that this government has made.

I know in my own community, Mr. Speaker, as they closed Hydro offices and MAFRI offices and public health offices, and yet when you look at the actual budget lines there are no savings. And it was quite striking to see that in the Department of Agriculture's own Estimates that despite closing some eight agricultural offices, the budget from last year to this year remained absolutely the same. So it leads one to suspect that the government really talks a good talk when it talks about reducing costs and that, but the evidence, at least as presented in their own Estimates book, simply doesn't exist.

And so because they haven't been able to achieve those results despite—I mean, I remember the bold belt-tightening plan that the government announced and listed off a number of the initiatives. In fact, it was the member for Kildonan whose name was attached to the belt-tightening plan, and instead of tightening his belt, Mr. Speaker, he got out the elastic band and found that to be a—much more comfortable. And then, more recently, they made a big announcement about their lean-management plan. But, again, the lean management, the belt tightening, isn't for government; it's for those not-for-profits—those not-for-profits that have had to shoulder the financial burden of this government, and part of that financial burden, again, is child abuse registries.

So the members can stand up and say that this doesn't apply to not-for-profits, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that's simply not true, that maybe they need to talk to the not-for-profits. Maybe they talk—need to talk to Manitoba federation not-for-profit organizations over on Waverley. Maybe they need to talk to a lot of those not-for-profits who are, amongst themselves, talking about the—not only the red tape burden that's being imposed to—on them by government, not only the funding cuts that they're feeling as a result of this government, not only the new costs being imposed through the application of the PST to previously exempt services, such as insurance, or the more recent 14 per cent—

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): I want to start just by trying one more time to clarify for members opposite what the current policy is. I know it may not matter, but I'm going try anyways.

So let's start with what the Child Abuse Registry is about. The Child Abuse Registry is about protecting children. And it is in place so that people who, you know, have a history, record, are reasonably believed to have abused children, their names are placed on it, so that when in the future those people may look to take a position working with children, people can know that they have something in their past that would create a problem for them to do that. That is what the Child Abuse Registry is.

The Child Abuse Registry exempts organizations who have volunteers whose work is with children. An organization can apply for that exemption. And the member for Morris (Mr. Martin), when he was in the non-profit world, if he believed that his organization should receive an exemption, he can apply for that exemption. A thousand organizations have applied for those exemptions; 30 per cent of the registry checks that are done in a year are fee-exempt.

When an organization applies for an exemption, it also means that their whole volunteer base is exempt. It doesn't mean that every individual volunteer has to go and prove they're a volunteer. The organization can administer that.

The bill that is before us today would change that. The bill that is before us today would actually create a bigger red tape burden on volunteers, who

now each, individually, would have to prove that they are a volunteer in order to get an exemption.

The other thing that happens with those organizations is that they get priority in terms of getting checks because, again, the core purpose of the Child Abuse Registry check is to protect children. Now, many, many organizations ask for Child Abuse Registry checks and employers, even for positions where people aren't working with children because those organizations believe that is a useful thing to know about people who want to volunteer with them, and I don't debate that.

But that was not the intent of the Child Abuse Registry. Those people should have access to it, absolutely. But when you have 75,000 applications a year, you do want to prioritize those applications that go to the core work, which is to protect children, and that is the system that is currently in place.

So the thousand organizations taking advantage of the exemption include community centres, church groups, sports groups, non-profit organizations and many others. And others can apply, and the policy will be applied to them. Not only are those kinds of exemptions in place, but exemptions are also made for work placements. They're made for student trainees. They're made for people who apply because they are considering or leading up to adoption, and they are exempt for those who want to be foster parents, applications by people who are peace officers, the Children's Advocate and the Chief Medical Examiner. So there are many, many, many exemptions in place.

And so, as well intentioned as this may be to support volunteers, I do believe that the end purpose of this would not only be to add an administrative burden to those volunteers—in fact, make it tougher for volunteers to get an exemption from fees—but I also think it would run the risk of creating a huge volume pressure on the Child Abuse Registry, which has worked very hard to bring those volumes down. We heard from the minister, we're looking at average wait times now in the range of two weeks and has the ability to prioritize those checks for people who are going to work with children because, again, the purpose of the Child Abuse Registry is to protect children.

* (10:50)

I did want to also respond to some of the things that we've heard in the Chamber today, and one of the things I want to talk to is the value of volunteers.

And I want to reflect for a moment on an event that I was privileged to attend last night, and that was the TJ's Gift Gala. I know this is an event that several of my colleagues on this side of the House attended last night, and this—when you talk about volunteers, a very compelling story of the parents who run this organization, Floyd and Karen Wiebe, who, for members who don't know, had a 20-year-old son who was murdered, a son who was drug-involved. And they have taken that immeasurable and incomprehensible tragedy and come through it, and they now use his story to talk to thousands and thousands of children all over the province. And last night we went to their annual gala that they use to help raise funds for that.

And they are an inspiring couple of people. The last time I went I wasn't a parent. This time I was and it was a different experience to hear their story, for sure, as most things are, I think, when you become a parent. Because this is a family that looks like many, many families, and to think about the heartbreak when a child—you know a child is doing things that are dangerous. You do everything that you can to help them and still tragedy occurs. So the fact that they've taken that and now use their experience to comfort other parents who are going through this, but also to talk to kids about the choices they make is inspiring, and they have been volunteers and we should celebrate them.

The other thing that they did last night in their generosity—and this is often the way, I think, with inspiring people—is they are generous with the credit as they honoured the former minister of Justice, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), for some of the work that he had done in office. *[interjection]*

I heard a comment from across the way that we can't celebrate anything we've achieved. Well, we do celebrate the things that we've achieved, but actually community organizations also celebrate the things that we have achieved by working with them. And some of the things that were celebrated last night: the victim bill of rights that the minister brought in; the work that he did on the meth strategy; the work that he did to take the ingredients for methamphetamine off of easy access on store shelves—moves that were criticized by members opposite during that time—the work that he did on the restitution, the forfeiture of proceeds of crime. Also, I think that was a bill that at the time members opposite said would never do anything, would never mean anything. The work that has been done to ensure that you can shut down drug houses, all of these measures, innovative, creative

measures that the member for St. Johns worked on and the member for St. Johns worked with members of the community, and last night, you know, he was honoured for that. And in his humility he gave, of course, that credit to volunteers like Floyd and Karen Wiebe, who came to him with the stories.

I know the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) would rather give the credit to his former boss, but really the credit for those initiatives belong to the families of victims who brought it forward and advocated for it.

I also want to share with members some of the other things that we are doing to support the not-for-profit sector, which is a very important sector in Manitoba, performs millions and millions of dollars' worth of important social service work, does it at incredible value. And some of the things we have done—one of the things is to reduce red tape for those organizations. Anybody who's worked in one of those organizations that knows it's not uncommon for you to have to apply for funding and have a funding relationship with multiple departments, five, six, seven, eight government departments. We've started an initiative to select organizations and allow them to have a single point of access with government even when their funding may come from several departments, and I think that has helped those organizations reduce the amount of time that they have to spend engaging with government departments, applying for funding, filling out forms, so that they can do the work that they need to do.

The other thing that we have seen happen that we have been part of is setting up a sector council for the not-for-profit sector. Just like there's sector councils for construction and other important industries in this country, there is also a sector council for the not-for-profits so they can come together, talk about some of the challenges they face and some of the solutions.

But, you know, I would not want to disappoint the member for Morris (Mr. Martin). I don't need a binder of things that happened in the '90s. I actually lived through the things that happened in the '90s so I can talk about them with some memory, and I want to reflect particularly on some of the things that happened to volunteers during that time because I was active in the not-for-profit world. That's where I worked.

And I remember cuts in budgets during the '90s when the opposition was claiming tough times because they weren't happy with the transfers they

were getting from Ottawa: cuts to organizations like the foster family organization completely wiped out that organization; cuts to friendship centres where volunteers were active working with kids and others to keep them out of problems; cuts to child-care centres which are not-for-profits. In one year, the operating funding for child-care centres was cut by the members opposite by 4 per cent, and nursery schools were cut by 50 per cent in one year, Mr. Speaker. So that is the record of how members opposite value, in air quotes, volunteers. That is the record that they have. When times are tough, when they experience economic challenges, they take it out on the not-for-profit sector, they take it out on volunteers. That's what they do.

We have, I believe, in place a policy that is responsible, that covers the needs that the member opposite is raising, but also protects the fact that the core purpose of the Child Abuse Registry is to protect children. It exempts 30 per cent of the people that apply for it. Organizations who believe that they have volunteers who are working with children can apply for that exemption. The bill before us today would make it harder for those volunteers to get that exemption, will make it harder for the Child Abuse Registry to do its job.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to get up and speak, and I'm really pleased to speak about this particular bill, because we have, of course, already done it largely. So I did just want to go over that, because as Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) just mentioned, the Child Abuse Registry is, of course, to protect people who are working with children—to protect the children, so that is the goal and we do have a really excellent system in place now that we didn't actually have years ago when it was extremely difficult and every individual did have to apply and they did have to pay in the past.

So this change that we made—I think they said it was 2003—was really an excellent adjustment to the system so that now the whole volunteer base of people working with children are exempt from the fee, and the excellent part about it is that the organization can apply. So I just want to get that piece really clearly onto the record, because that makes a tremendous difference in the time factor and how quickly you can actually get the person volunteering and get back the information that you

need. So, as was mentioned by others, there's all-over a thousand organizations registered to take advantage of this policy. So that's absolutely excellent. And it includes community centres and church groups and schools and sports groups, non-profit organizations and so many others.

So—and I'm not sure if others had mentioned this, but the exemption is not only in place for those people but also for work placements, for student trainees, for adoptive applicants and foster home applicants—wow, that's pretty good—as well as for application by peace officers, the Children's Advocate and the Chief Medical Examiner in order to carry out their duties. So I think we've pretty much got that covered now. I mean, I do appreciate the thought, and I'm glad that we thought of it 10 or 11 years ago; 30 per cent of the CAR checks—they're exempt, so that is absolutely excellent.

And I, like the member—like the Minister of Finance, remember the '90s, and I was, as probably people in here know, involved in the foster-care world, so I was there when they killed our organization in the 1990s. And I remember it well because you really needed that support. You know, it was a really tough job back in the '90s. When you got kids dropped off at your home—it was—I ran an emergency home—you didn't get any information on them, you know. It was 3 o'clock in the morning and some young man was just dropped off at your house and, you know, you were up and you really needed a support organization to be sort of helping you along through some of these nights.

I do remember a young fellow who came and, after about three weeks, a psychiatrist phoned and asked me how he was doing and I said—well, not the psychiatrist, the worker—and I said, oh, he seems to be fine. And they said, whoa, that's a miracle, because the psychiatrist said he should, you know, never be in the home of anyone ever again.

So that was what the '90s were like in the child-care world. So I do remember those days and they really, truly were the dark days of the '90s; there's no question about it.

Our friendship centres did, in fact, disappear, so—as well. I think CAP spaces, I believe, were cut as well. There was just so many—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) will have six minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 17–20th Anniversary of Becoming an Outdoors Woman

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution we have for consideration this morning is sponsored by the honourable member for Morris and the title of the resolution is the 20th Anniversary of Becoming an Outdoors Woman.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Emerson, that

WHEREAS Manitoba is composed of a diverse array of ecosystems and wildlife across the province; and

WHEREAS Manitoba is home to some of the best areas for fishing, hunting and outdoor activities in the country; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's economy is strengthened by over \$470 million of revenues and spinoffs generated by the hunting, fishing and lodging industries and related tourism; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Wildlife Federation is a strong advocate for the sustainable and thriving economy involving flora and fauna natural resources; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Wildlife Federation promotes the growth and enjoyment of the outdoors throughout the province; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Wildlife Federation has particularly been successful in promoting the inclusion of women in outdoor activities under the Becoming an Outdoors Woman, or BOW, program; and

WHEREAS the BOW program will celebrate its 20th anniversary of offering important skills development and training to females of all ages and backgrounds in a wide range of areas such as camping, hunting, photography and survival skills.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba congratulate the Manitoba Wildlife Federation's successful initiatives encouraging participation in an active outdoor lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Morris, seconded by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon),

WHEREAS Manitoba is composed of a–

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

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

WHEREAS Manitoba is composed of a diverse array of ecosystems and wildlife across the province; and

WHEREAS Manitoba is home to some of the best areas for fishing, hunting and other outdoor activities in the country; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's economy is strengthened by over \$470 million of revenues and spin-offs generated by the hunting, fishing and lodging industries and related tourism; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Wildlife Federation is a strong advocate for a sustainable and thriving economy involving flora and fauna natural resources; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Wildlife Federation promotes the growth and enjoyment of the outdoors throughout the province; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Wildlife Federation has particularly been successful in promoting the inclusion of women in outdoor activities under the "Becoming an Outdoors Woman" or BOW program; and

WHEREAS the BOW program will celebrate its 20th anniversary of offering important skills development and training to females of all ages and backgrounds in a wide range of areas such as camping, hunting, photography and survival skills.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba congratulate the Manitoba Wildlife Federation's successful initiatives encouraging participation in an active outdoor lifestyle.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. I'd like to—before I get into my comments, I would like to acknowledge a couple of guests in the House today: Mr. Rob Olson, acting executive director of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, as well as Brent Kellett, who is their fishing chair on the board. So I'd like to welcome those gentlemen on behalf of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when I was presented with this opportunity to bring forward this private member's resolution, and I said, absolutely, I would love to speak to this resolution, partly because I have a young niece who's only in her mid-20s. And she has—she's unfortunately one of these young people that have left our province for greener pastures, in this case to the province of Alberta where her and her husband and young child reside. But in Alberta she has become a particularly active outdoorsperson or outdoorswoman. She will post—consistently post on Facebook pictures of various wildlife, including some quite large bucks that she has taken down either by rifle or through bow hunting. And they know—and she knows all too well the value and the importance that hunting is within the larger parameters of wildlife conservation.

So, I mean, in this instance, like, again, my young niece is one of those young—again, one of those young persons and young ladies that is involved in hunting.

But we need to do more, Mr. Speaker, in—earlier this spring I had the good fortune of attending the Manitoba Wildlife Federation's annual general meeting, and what really stood out for me was the number of women who were attending as well the annual general meeting who were active fishers and active hunters throughout Manitoba. And they appreciated that opportunity to be—to learn more from their colleagues as well, I guess, to share their own fishing stories about maybe the one that got away or the buck that they only—they almost got.

It's quite timely, Mr. Speaker, that I'm rising today to talk about the 20th anniversary of the BOW program put forward by the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, in that only yesterday I had a private member's statement talking about the southeast mentored hunt program that target—that provides opportunities for young people in both rural and urban settings to get out and experience and learn. Not only, obviously, you learn about safety—the safety—hunting safety regulations, but also participate in the hunting of local wildlife. Recently it's—currently it's—or more recently it was the turkey hunt.

But this is a—young men and young women, because if we don't engage young people, young women in the—in fishing and in hunting we risk a lot in terms of our own heritage as a province. I mean, this province is a province that was built in part by hunting—and that is where, actually, where a lot of our fur trade came from, Mr. Speaker—and it wasn't

exclusively a male domain. I mean, obviously, not surprisingly it was predominantly a male domain, but it wasn't exclusive.

And it's through the work by organizations like the Manitoba Wildlife Federation that recognized the importance of engaging women in wildlife management through hunting and fishing that they started up a program some 20 years ago, Mr. Speaker. So May 23rd, I have no doubt, will be a—the start of their celebrations, and I have no doubt that they have a lot to celebrate over the last 20 years in terms of engaging women in their program into the BOW program in terms of skill development and training, in work—they've provided a number of workshops over those years with instructors, and to provide that hands-on training, that class training—classroom training, safety training as well as skills training and then, more importantly, how do you take that training that you've learned within the classroom on hunting and fishing and how do you translate into the actual field?

I mean, as we all know in this House, Mr. Speaker, and I have no doubt when my colleagues across the way rise and speak on this resolution, I think we will all consistently talk about some of the great hunting and fishing that we have here in the province of Manitoba. And, again, in my short tenure as Conservation and Water Stewardship critic, whether it's organizations such as the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, the Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association, Moose for Tomorrow and so on and so forth, I mean, consistently I hear that we are the envy of a lot of jurisdictions not just in Canada but, indeed, North America.

And a lot of people actually don't have, unfortunately, a good appreciation of the impact of that, the wildlife—that wildlife hunting and fishing has on our economy, almost half a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker. So this isn't small potatoes. This provides a significant source of revenue for our province in terms of taxation—which we know members love—but also in terms of communities, communities that are building around—their industry around that hunting and fishing experience. So whether it's ecotourism or just lodge fishing and that, there is a lot out there, and I think a lot of urban Manitobans would benefit from engaging more in terms of those opportunities.

We all know not only, obviously, the importance of being outdoors from a health perspective, Mr. Speaker, I mean, even hunters that may—or fishers

who may at the end of the day be unsuccessful during that particular outing in terms of securing a catch or not will indicate that they did not only enjoy the camaraderie of their colleagues, but they enjoyed just that opportunity to be outdoors, to re-engage with nature. Because we all know that being outdoors is not only—it's—I mean, not only good for us physically, but it's good for us mentally. And so opportunities, we need to look at opportunities to get more people outdoors. As I indicated earlier, whether or not we in more urban settings want to acknowledge it or not, hunting is a critical component of our larger conservation strategy here in the province of Manitoba.

* (11:10)

And I note that deer hunters here in Manitoba have just been advised that there's been some changes to the annual provincial hunting guide in 2014 when it comes to whitetail deer. And they've been limited to antlered bucks of at least four inches or higher this hunting season according to the Manitoba Hunting Guide that was just put out.

Now, obviously, Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that the women through the BOW program will be more than anxious, as any hunter, to take it—to take up the challenge and try to get that trophy and to share that story with their hunting colleagues, and hopefully not of just the one that got away, but the one that they were able to bag.

So, I mean, these programs, Mr. Speaker, didn't start just out of the blue. In the case of the BOW program, Darlene Garnham had a vision in leadership, and she developed this unique outdoors course. She was a trailblazer for women hunters in this province. And, obviously, over the course of 20 years, you can gauge a lot of volunteers and instructors who have made sure that this program not only started, but was enhanced and continued throughout those 20 years.

So, obviously, Mr. Speaker, not only am I here to acknowledge their efforts, but obviously congratulate the Manitoba Wildlife Federation for their continued investment and efforts in expanding the BOW program in Manitoba, and as well as the efforts of financial sponsors, including Cabela's, Manitoba Natural Resource Officers Association, the Heights Archery and the Province of Manitoba, who, without their financial support, this program would not be possible.

So, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to pay tribute to some of the women, the young women, and—who are now, after 20 years, maybe a little bit older, who got this program started, the opportunity to celebrate 20 years, and again—and acknowledge my own niece who, at 25 years old, has put her uncle to shame when it comes to hunting skills. So for her and for all the women out there, I congratulate the Manitoba federation of—Manitoba Wildlife Federation on this 20th anniversary, and I look forward to celebrating many more anniversaries with them.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to welcome our partners from the Wildlife Federation here today. We just actually met yesterday on some substantive issues with regard to big game populations and our mutual objectives of ensuring that Manitoba continues to offer not just Manitobans but the world some of the most tremendous opportunities for hunting and fishing and trapping.

I also was able to proudly confirm that despite some of our adjustments to the grants to outside agencies as a result of the need to skinny down some of our expenditures wherever we can find efficiencies, wherever we can find cost savings, we've been able to ensure that the Wildlife Federation continues to get a strong, robust and predictable funding from the Province of Manitoba. And that is because, Mr. Speaker, we have such a strong partnership with the Wildlife Federation, and they have produced some remarkable programs. They have been arguably the greatest leaders when it comes to conservation efforts and engaging Manitobans in what has to increasingly become a pursuit of our population, and that is getting outdoors and getting an appreciation for the environment.

I want to just say that I find the resolution certainly worthy of support and encouraging coming from members opposite, and we certainly would support this resolution wholeheartedly.

I want to, first of all, commend the Wildlife Federation on the Becoming an Outdoors Woman anniversary. That attests to its longevity and its usefulness and its importance for engaging Manitoba populations that increasingly are being recognized as important to ensure that more and more become involved in outdoor pursuits. And it's—women are one of the main populations and the target, obviously, of this initiative, but we also are

increasingly concerned about getting more youth involved in hunting and fishing and trapping, and just getting them outdoors and getting them into the environment.

There is a very real concern, particularly with the advent of the Internet and the devices that are available, that we need less screen and more green for our kids. And what's at stake, Mr. Speaker, is, in fact, the very protections for our environment. If children and youth do not know about the environment and do not love it, there is a serious risk they will not protect it. And by way of hunting and fishing and trapping, we can engage youth in getting outdoors with a pursuit that is part and parcel of the history of this country and this province but, as well, provides a tremendous family opportunity. This is about building communities and families and the strength of Manitoba itself.

So we commend the federation for its efforts when it comes to women, but also for its efforts and including that of the Fish Futures, for example, in engaging youth, and the trappers' association for engaging youth in trapping opportunities.

So this is the kind of base that we have to build on because we have to attend to this in much greater attention than we have in the past. Is my—that's my firm belief.

There's a third population, as well, that we have to do a better job of engaging in outdoor pursuits, and that is the new Canadians, Mr. Speaker. It's important, and it's been recognized all across this country, as evidenced by a very special meeting of the parks ministers, led by our federal minister, that we have to be more innovative in attracting new Canadians to the outdoors and to our parks as a vehicle to achieve that. So, I'll return to that in a few minutes.

The resolution, I could make a case, would be even more attractive if it did recognize the efforts of the federation in involving the other populations that I just mentioned. But when it comes to the efforts that are at hand here in Manitoba now to build on what is already in place, TomorrowNow-Manitoba's Green Plan, sets out an agenda to get children more involved and that strategy sets out a number of ideas. You know, when you look at organizations like FortWhyte Alive, that provides a great venue, a great place closest to the city—well, within the city—that can help to engage youth, but there are other venues that are increasingly being recognized internationally, that provide youth with a learning

opportunity and a greater appreciation will help to get them out into the outdoors.

And, of course, what's happening at Assiniboine Park Zoo right now is a great example of that. The Polar Bear Conservation Centre and the soon-to-be-opened Journey to Churchill, I think, is going to provide an international attraction, but also an attraction to Manitoba children themselves.

So, another area that is in need of being built on is the area of sustainable development education. It may not be widely known to Manitobans, but Manitoba is an international leader in sustainable development education and there's a real passion in the Education Department of Manitoba in this regard. There's a curriculum component that is extraordinary, and we can only grow with that effort.

Our parks strategy, as well, speaks loud and clear to the role of parks, as I said earlier, that do provide a great vehicle, a good, practical vehicle, for getting kids and families outdoors. The whole section in the parks strategy called Happy Campers, I think, will provide greater enticements. The gateway to healthier families section in there talks about other enticements. We have to ensure that our parks aren't just passive places for healthy living, but are actively supporting healthy living.

One little interesting initiative in the park strategy is to expand Wi-Fi opportunities in our parks. And when we announced the initial expansion just last year, there was a certain mixed reaction that I found really interesting. Some said, well, why are you putting Wi-Fi in our parks when you're trying to get kids outdoors and enjoying the green, as I said earlier. Well, if you don't provide those opportunities for kids to get out there with their device, there's an even less of a chance that they will leave home.

So it's an interesting and fascinating debate, but I think all across North America it's recognized that you have to modernize our parks and you have to modernize in ways that ensure that kids are increasingly attracted to the camping opportunities that we have available.

We are, coincidentally, Mr. Speaker, on a day when it comes to new Canadians, we are announcing a new initiative to ensure that those that are new to this country, that are just getting their citizenship, have an opportunity and an incentive to go and explore Manitoba's fantastic parks.

* (11:20)

And so today we are announcing Canada's—that Canada's newest citizens will receive free park entry to our provincial parks. This is an initiative that is the result of a partnership with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship Cultural Access Pass program and, as a result of this, the new citizens and their children will receive one year of free access to our parks. And, of course, there are galleries, museums and other historic sites that are eligible for inclusion in the program. So now about 50 provincial parks will be added to this, and, of course, that includes Birds Hill, which is close to Winnipeg, and, of course, the Whiteshell, which is the great boreal escape, and Spruce Woods. So Manitoba Parks is very excited to join this—the Cultural Access Pass program, and we think that this is a great way for them to experience some of what Manitoba offers.

I just want to conclude by celebrating what this province does indeed offer the world. It has an amazing array of hunting opportunities, and, as a result of the nomination process for Manitoba's official fish, I think we've seen a tremendous engagement of youth and adults both in looking at the tremendous array of species of fish that are out there on the landscape. It was really encouraging to hear some quite deeply felt debate about what our greatest fish should be, what the opportunities are, but I think it did expand the understanding on the part of many children in our schools about how many species we have. I think it's over 90 species that are in Manitoba. I think that is a surprise by itself. But when you see the tremendous opportunities, whether it's the catfish in the Red, of course, the famous goldeye, when you look at the sturgeon, that historic deep-lurking mysterious fish, when you consider, of course, the walleye and the shore-lunch opportunities that it provides, when you think about the fighting sensation that you get from the northern pike or when you consider so many of the other fish species, this is a great province to have offered to the world. So—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I'm proud to stand and speak to this resolution brought forward by my colleague from Morris to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Becoming an Outdoors Woman program, which began on May 23rd.

Mr. Speaker, my first experience of seeing a lady with a gun was when I was a very young man and a skunk attacked our dog. And my mother

grabbed the .22, and, as the kids ran into the house, she fired through the screen door, missed the dog, but she did get the skunk, and we were able to enjoy that odour for some time afterwards.

At any rate, when we grow up on a farm or when you grew up in rural Manitoba, there wasn't always someone there that could do something like this, and so it was important then as I—as a young man, when I got married, I thought it was important that my wife should learn how to use a gun.

An Honourable Member: I agree.

Mr. Graydon: And it seems like it's unanimous in this House today.

So I took her to a shooting range to try out a new Brown Bess I was buying. And it was an indoor range, and, of course, these black-powder guns give off quite an odour and they make quite a noise. And when you see the people sitting beside you with little .357s and nice .38 little friends, and I said to her, keep the barrel up, but she leans back to keep the barrel up, and as she shot, the target disappeared totally. She had shot the hanger. So we did all the rest of this training outside of this facility.

However, I'm proud to say that grandchildren and my daughter-in-law do either take lessons or does hunt. My daughter-in-law is an active hunter. She is a rifle hunter. I would suggest she has done some fishing as well. But my son has seen to it that both of his children right now are taking archery lessons, and my daughter—or granddaughter will probably never shoot an animal, but she will certainly understand what the outdoors is. She'll have that ability to carry one of them, but she will also participate in something that's very, very important in outdoors. It's not all about hunting or supplying food, but it's also about photography and enjoying the recreation that is out there. And, also, she will probably be able to promote the tourism that Manitoba has to offer with the great varieties that we have, whether that's fishing, hunting and the topography that we have as well.

When I heard my colleague talk about the mentored hunt program and yesterday, I believe it was, that he had did the private member's statement, and there was four individuals in the Chamber. One of them was—or in the gallery, one of them was my son and my colleague from Agassiz, I believe it is that he's now, refer to them as Duck Dynasty group. However, they do a program of the mentored hunt, and I'm proud of them for doing that.

They took that program over after the National Wild Turkey Federation left the province of Manitoba. National Wild Turkey Federation had done a mentored hunt on my ranch and my brother's ranch for many, many years with wild turkeys. This was—the participation in this was both male and female, and this was young adults or young people that have just passed their hunter safety that would not have an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors or possibly to ever go on one of these hunts. And, at 12 years old, they were able to do that, mentored by an adult.

And I have to say that the Minister of Conservation has also helped now in the—in that program, helping to fund part of that program. He skinned it down, as he said, very, very skinned down, but he is helping, and I'm very thankful for that because the program would've been much harder to carry on. But the program, when it was started at our place, was also national and international. So it was both on the United States side of the border and Canadian side.

We—my father and I started with a small nucleus of wild turkeys, and we built it into a large flock that we protected. And it was a great opportunity to give back to the communities and to be able to let young people enjoy what we have been able to enjoy. My father said that, when he was a young man, wild turkeys were—they were common throughout southern Manitoba, and as I grew up, they were never there.

So this was an opportunity that we took and really have seen—we've been the net beneficiaries of this because we've seen so many young people enjoy this. It's not just that they go out to kill something. That's not it. They're outdoors. They can feed themselves. They're shown how to do these things properly.

Some of these young people come out there with a shotgun and a camera, and they have an opportunity to shoot a tom turkey from here to you, Mr. Speaker, and they take pictures of it. That's what you're showing them, that there is an opportunity and what we can enjoy in our province.

So they also get to learn property rights. I heard the minister speak of the parks, but we also have to realize that a good portion, a large portion of the wildlife in Manitoba today is on private property, and the rights of those owners of that property need to be respected. And if young people learn that, when they go or take some of their friends to enjoy what

they have enjoyed, they will also learn the same thing.

I would say that the aspects of tourism have never been fully captured in our province for outdoors, and in the States, it's been—it has really been promoted. There's many, many women hunters there, many women—outdoorswomen there, not necessarily hunters. Like I said before, they could be photographers. They could be just enjoying. They could be authors writing. We need to promote more of that, and I commend the Wildlife Federation for sponsoring and finding sponsors, such as they have with the archery club. And I commend them for the other things that they do, as well, with the outdoors people.

* (11:30)

We talk about the faces of freedom, and I've done that in the House here before with our wounded veterans. And we have many women that have been in the forces and some of them have been wounded as well; not necessarily that they've lost limbs, but they've been wounded mentally and this outdoors is a great way to relieve that stress and address some of the issues that they have. It's so relaxing, healthful to be outside and enjoy everything that God created for us in this province. And we have a responsibility to look after that, to see that it's there, and we—and in order to—for future generations, and in order to do that, we have to work with everyone, the ladies and the men in this province, with our young children.

So with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will let someone else get up and put a few words on the record. Thank you.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): It's a pleasure to rise today and to welcome our guests in the gallery. It's been, I guess, almost a couple of months since I last saw you gentlemen at the anniversary dinner, and I want to congratulate you on the wonderful work that you do.

But I have to admit, I do have to open with an apology. I remember that I told you that I was actually planning on attending this year's BOW event, and, unfortunately, the reason why I'm not going to be able to attend is because we have a weekend planned with our boys and family to be out at the Interlake, and what we are going to be doing there is they are going to be introduced to, well, a new layer of weapon safety for them, gun safety for them, related to skeet shooting. So we're going to be—do some family stuff. I'm hoping to get my

compound bow out there as well. So it's a weekend of target practising with the boys, and we've got some uncles and grandpas coming, and so I hope you accept my apology for not being able to make it this year, but I will try again next year.

I have to say, I really appreciate the program because of what it provides in terms of the wealth of opportunity for women, and I have to say I also appreciate the dinner that you organized, and it was a real pleasure to be able to sit next to Eva Shockey at the Wildlife Federation dinner. She and her father Jim do some amazing work in terms of promoting what in our family we refer to as organic harvesting. And so it's one of those things that it's—for us it really is a family-building opportunity. And I had been looking forward to this, as—basically this, for me, was going to be the opportunity to have some girl time with some friends out there. But mom duties always trump personal time, so we're going to be out there with the boys, and I have to say that this kind of outdoor activity and the kind of activity that you promote really does do a lot for building family. It goes back to things like being raised going fishing with my father and my uncles and my cousins, and, you know, that ability to bait a hook at six is a vital resource because, again, when there's enough of you out there, your folks can't be baiting everything for you. Again, it was being raised on pickerel as a result. That was just—that was a given. That was just what you ate. But it was that opportunity to do those family activities.

And it was something that, for a variety of reasons, my own travel, my own moving to different places where the opportunity wasn't there, it's been really nice to come back and now to be able to share that with my own boys. And while I had been doing some archery in high school, that's something that I've now revisited as an adult. And from a perspective of health and outdoor living, I can tell you nothing gives you greater sort of sense of accomplishment and things that you can do with your kids than spending a weekend where, first of all, you start off in the workshop and they each get to work with dad on making their own wood duck box and then walking out across the ice on the slough so that each of them gets to help pick the location for their wood duck box and being able to put it out there, check on it at the right times during the year. They go out, they do that. Then, when the slough melts, well, there's a whole bunch of other different activities, and whether that's grabbing snakes from the—garter snakes from the snake pits—my only rule

with the garter snakes is don't bring them in the cabin, you know. I like to keep the cabin as critter-free as possible, but I have no problem with them.

It's a lot of fun, and the one thing I do find in an age of technology, it's amazing when they're out at a place where they don't have access to running water, to anything other than a wood stove—and we have some propane out there—they can find time to keep themselves occupied, and part of that is the skills and, again, the sense of being an adult they get when they get to, you know, either—they've started off with pellet guns and other things; we've worked their way up through different things, but the safety issues that we teach them about—and the wildlife recognition, I think that's the other part that I really enjoy about this is the kinds of things that you offer here really help encourage that because I think so many of us have moved inside and we forget about the wildlife that's out there.

And we've got one particular boy in the family—interestingly enough, named Hunter—has got quite the prowess at tracking. So he's the kid that is much like his father, and, boy, he is—for him it's about identifying birds and about being able to track.

And so I just want to say that, you know, the outdoorswoman program you provide, what I really love about that is because it's not an option or something that's necessarily available to everyone—they may or may not have been raised around this kind of lifestyle—you provide that opportunity for women to acquire this skill set, acquire this kind of independence around these kinds of things that in many cases have been, you know, very much gender segregated. So I know that I wasn't necessarily exposed to the outdoor mechanics part of things and, again, in terms of accessing certain tools I know that I wasn't given the same range as my brothers and my cousins were. So I'd like to really thank you for what you do because it allows all of us as Manitobans, and especially as a mom, to be able to pass on that love of all of the richness that we have here in this province.

And the work that you do in partnership with the Province really, again, makes sure that we all have that opportunity so that, again, someone like myself who, yes, fine, I live in the burbs, I'm part of that, but at the same time it's nice to know that because of the skills that I've acquired in this area and that I hope to build on even more the next time, that we can do things. I mean, because there's nothing more fun than making a pot of moose stew or moose jerky, that's

still one of my favourites. I don't know how many people in the Chamber here have had caribou heart, but that's another thing we—Roberts River is another wonderful place that folks need to get up to. If you have not been up to Roberts River for caribou hunting, that's something you've got to do. That's one of our goals, is to go up there as a family and to be able to both harvest caribou, but also harvest some of the wonderful plant life we have. If—you know, if you haven't had cloudberry, you've got to give them a try. Cloudberry is a wonderful indigenous plant. But, again, this is the kind of thing, like there's the wild plants and interpretive hike section that you've got in there, that's the kind of thing. People don't realize just how many natural food sources are right at their fingertips if they know what to look for.

And so, again, I really appreciate what you're doing. I know that this adds a great deal to the richness and the bonding within our family. And I hope that as more women—I mean, you've done this for 20 years, but as more women take this up, that that's something that other families can share in as well.

So, again, I want to congratulate you on the 20th anniversary of this program. Again, I look forward to doing it. I hope you don't mind the reason why I'm missing this year, but I know the boys and I'll have fun. And, again, I look forward to staying in touch with you and seeing what we can do, because, again, in the portfolio that I now have as the Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors, I can tell you this is one of the healthiest ways to get out there, whether it's trekking across the slough, whether it's tracking with the kids and looking for plants and wildlife, even just getting them out there for fresh air. You might not get something, you might just be sitting in the stand, but you get to appreciate nature, listen to things. That's a healthy thing to be doing. I'd much rather have my kids sitting up in a tree stand waiting for an animal, than sitting there exercising their thumbs on a Wii or something like that.

So—[interjection] Well, oh, yes. Oh, yes, I forgot to mention. Oh, the—I wanted also to thank you for the dinner, because I rarely win anything when I attend dinners and buy raffle tickets. And I have to say, it was really interesting. On one side of me sat Eva Shockey and on the other side was the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), and he and I both had a lucky night that night in terms of raffle draws. I believe he came off with the—came out with the fondue and the chocolate fountain, and I got myself a new shotgun case and a safety harness for

the tree stand, which I appreciate because I've got a wee bit of vertigo. So I needed a new tree stand that I can custom fit to me. So thank you for that. It's nice to see that of all the places to have some luck in a raffle draw, it was nice to add something to my equipment selection that I didn't have to share with family or wasn't a hand-me-down. So, again, thank you so much for a wonderful evening. I look forward to much more partnership with you folks, and, again, things that you can do that'll help my family and I build a great outdoor lifestyle that I know that they will treasure those memories forever.

* (11:40)

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure to stand and put a few words on the record to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program, which will begin this coming—the 23rd of May. I'd like to also welcome my friends Rob and Brent to the gallery today and to also thank the member from Morris for bringing this resolution forward and, of course, all the words that have been put on the record, Mr. Speaker, in regards to support for this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, year after year, participants of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation's becoming an outdoor women's program gear up to face new outdoor challenges, from casting a fly rod for the first time and hunting their first deer to archery and outdoor cooking. Through the Manitoba Wildlife Federation the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program has become offering important skills—or has been offering important skills development and training to women of all ages for backgrounds for 20 years. They provide a variety of workshops for women to choose from with patient, reliable instructors and hand to answer—on hand to answer any of the questions participants may have.

Mr. Speaker, programs like the BOW initiative encourages people to take part in the beautiful outdoors in Manitoba. Some of the best practices and the places to fish, hunt and take part in outdoor activities in Canada are found right here in Manitoba. And that is something that we need to encourage for years to come because we have so many fantastic environments, not only for fishing and hunting but, as some of the members had put on, as well, bird watching—or birding, I should say, as the sport is known.

Basically, it's to encourage people to come out and experience the great outdoors of Manitoba and all the fantastic sights that we do have here and to

encourage our tourism sector to continue to grow because they are quite the economic driver in the province, and I'm not sure if we quite give them the credit that they do deserve, Mr. Speaker.

I know that another program that the member from Emerson had mentioned, the Faces of Freedom is another incredible program to bring awareness and support to the hunting and fishing economy of this province and to help, again, promote for people with disabilities and war veterans who had given their time and had made some sacrifices. So they were able to come and share those times here in the province of Manitoba, as well, and I do congratulate the Manitoba Wildlife Federation for standing behind that as well.

The educational, social and health benefits of being in the outdoors should be available to everyone, and this is what the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program seeks to accomplish. I know that Dr. Christine Thomas, a professor from Wisconsin, found that participation by women in outdoor pursuits was astoundingly low in comparison to men. Now, I don't have the exact stats, Mr. Speaker, but I mean that goes without saying that that actually was the culture at one time.

But I do know, with programs like the BOW program, those numbers are—the gap is starting to narrow, Mr. Speaker. In response to these findings, of course, was developed in the United States called the Becoming an Outdoors Woman's program with the goal to empower and encourage women of all ages and background to pursue outdoor activities.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has been at the forefront of the outdoor women's movement, in large parts thanks to the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. Darlene Garnham helped get the program off the ground here in Manitoba. Through her vision, she ensured that the program would emphasize co-operation, eliminate peer pressure and foster a friendly and open environment where women could ask any and all questions, no matter how basic. She recruited patient instructors and friends to help her get the program off the ground and to help her plan the lineup of events and activities.

Since then, hundreds of women in Manitoba have participated in the program. Many have gone on to become avid outdoorswomen, inspiring a new generation of women to take part in outdoor activities.

This year's BOW will take place from May 23rd to 25th and will feature a whole range of workshops from backpacking and camping to fishing and archery. There are also many classes taught in such areas as building birdhouses, woodcarving, fly tying, bird identification, outdoor photography, medicinal plants and traditional healing and survival skills, Mr. Speaker. Most importantly, though, this program teaches women to be confident in outdoors and empowers them to take on new, exciting challenges.

I would like to thank the Manitoba Wildlife Federation for their continuing investment and efforts in expanding this program in Manitoba. Lastly, I would like to recognize the financial sponsors, of course, because with any program, Mr. Speaker, such as this, you can't do it without the almighty dollar and the support of the sponsors such as Cabela's, Manitoba Natural Resource Officers Association, Heights Archery and, of course, the Province of Manitoba, for without their generous financial support this program would not be possible.

And, again, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to stand up and put a few words on the record, but I would again like to congratulate Manitoba Wildlife Federation, thank them for attending today, thank the member from Morris and the member from Emerson for putting a few words on the record, and, of course, members opposite for standing up and supporting this very important resolution today.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I, too, wanted to just put a few words on the record. I have pages of notes here that I've been making while we've had this debate in the Chamber, but I will keep my comments brief. I know other members of our caucus would like to put a few words on the record as well, so I'd to make some time for them.

But I did want to take an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, just to congratulate the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, and they've been a strong voice for hunters and anglers in this province, and we appreciate your work. You've been great partners for us as a government and we just want to really congratulate you on this fantastic program.

The Becoming an Outdoors Woman program is, I think, an important piece in the puzzle of figuring out how to engage the next generation of folks in hunting and fishing. I know in my own family we've had a discussion about the BOW program and something that my wife has indicated an interest in,

you know, she—not that she's not a competent outdoorswoman in her own right, but something that we can, I think, build on, and something in my family that, you know, I grew up around and something that, you know, just comes second nature, but isn't necessarily the case in all families. And something that I think we can improve on, and I'd like to see it expanded, certainly, and promoted and more participation, because it is an important part of engaging folks and getting them interested in the outdoors.

So I think it's an incredible program. I wanted to congratulate the Manitoba Wildlife Federation. You know, one of the best parts of living in Manitoba is experience in the great outdoors, and, you know, you don't have to go too far; certainly you can talk to folks from Manitoba, they recognize it. But it's only when you go outside of our own province and you talk to people from across Canada, certainly in the United States, they recognize it, but the best part is when you talk to somebody who's from, say, Europe or from somewhere where they don't have this opportunity and to see their experience and when they get to see what we have to offer, I think it's just an incredible testament to what incredible places we have in Manitoba.

You know, I've experienced a lot of them but I feel lucky that I'm still young in my journey of experiencing different places in Manitoba and getting out there and hunting in different places and hunting different wildlife. So it's something that I'm very excited about and I'm glad that others are as well.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to congratulate the Wildlife Federation and express my appreciation for having this resolution before the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It is my pleasure also to stand today and speak in favour of this resolution. And I just want to echo the words of some of the other members—the Minister of Healthy Living spoke at length about the healthy aspect of hunting, fishing, gathering, the harvesting of natural foods without any additives or hormones or anything like that—antibiotics—truly that is the most healthy food that we can consume, and the process of going out and doing the hunting and gathering, also the physical activity, the sunshine and fresh air that you garner in that process obviously also add to the experience. And there is a saying, they say that time

spent fishing is not subtracted from your lifespan, which I think is very true and applies to this whole idea.

* (11:50)

Myself, I have been a fisherman since I was about six years old. My father bought a fishing lodge up in northern Manitoba, Aberdeen Lodge, and I spent many, many years—I was a fishing guide, as a matter of fact, when I was 10 years of age, if you can imagine that. Going out on the big lake with a boat full of Americans was quite an adventure, eh? But I consistently caught more lake trout than they did, so I proved myself apt.

And speaking of lake trout, I just want to put my plug in for the provincial fish here, no more worthy fish than that, I think, a very 'proliferate' fish, a long-lived fish. We don't know exactly how long they live, but we certainly know how big they can get, anywhere from 60 to 70 to—up to 100 pounds. I think the record lake trout was exactly 100 pounds. The largest trout I ever saw was an 87-pound fish. It was caught in a commercial net out of Wollaston Lake, I believe. I was in a restaurant and I had to sit there and have three cups of coffee staring up at that fish. A massive specimen, you literally could not have wrapped your arms around it, that's how large it was. So, again, my plug for that particular species.

Other things, I do want to acknowledge, of course, the Manitoba Wildlife Federation for all the good work that they do not just on this particular topic, bringing women more actively into the whole hunting, fishing, trapping side of things, but also for the other good works that they've done.

And I've had the pleasure of working, myself, with them on things such as the recently established Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund, something that we worked long and hard on. And, you know, some of the parameters of this new fund are worthy of putting on the record. Once again, the fact that this fund is a dedicated fund, that monies gathered through the check-off on the hunting licences goes into a dedicated fund that remains separate and will not be subsumed into general revenues, I think was a very important component, and also the establishment of a board of people—not in the government—from entities such as the W—or the MWF, the MLOA, the Manitoba Trappers Association, so that these people will decide ultimately how this fund is spent, I think, those two aspects pushed this over the top.

Of course, it follows on other things that we've done as a government. Not too, too many years ago we established the hunting, fishing, trapping heritage act. It was something that we worked in collaboration with members opposite, which is not that unusual. A lot of legislation passes through this Chamber unanimously. Of course, the public, in general is not aware of that. They just follow the few examples where we disagree. But quite often we work hand in hand, united as members in this Legislature, and that was an example of that.

Another thing this government did, I believe, well, it was when Gary Doer was still our premier. We established Provincial Hunting Day here in Manitoba. That was important as well.

These initiatives are important in sending the right message out to the hunting, fishing, trapping community, that the government recognizes these activities as legitimate, as healthy, as positive, so much so that we've entrenched it in legislation so that future generations will bear this in mind: that these are activities inherent in humankind and are now entrenched in law.

I look back to when I was first elected in 1999. The first three acts through the Legislature are noteworthy. One, of course, was the ban on union and corporate donations to political parties, very important. The other one was the reconstitution of The Water Rights Act which had gone by the wayside under the—I won't go there today, we're speaking positively today—and the third one was banning of penned hunting in Manitoba. That was very important, first of all, because just the very act of shooting an animal in a pen is despicable, in my opinion, and not considered a sport in any way, shape or form. And banning that activity, which was also supported by all three political parties at the time, sent a message, again, to the general population that, you know, we will not tolerate things that are unethical.

Ten per cent of the population hunt—10 per cent of the population are adamantly opposed to hunting, 80 per cent of the population are ambivalent to it and are subject to being swayed either way, either pro- or anti-hunting, and something like penned hunting just sends the wrong message to the general population, and that one act was very important.

It was done at a time when there was also a debate on about the spring bear hunt and baiting for bears, which can be considered controversial. But anybody who understands bears knows that, first of

all, they're not an easy animal to hunt, and, secondly, bears have adapted very well to humankind—too well, in fact, to the point where they can be troublesome, whether you're a fishing lodge owner or a farmer or what have you, so hunting is the best method of keeping those numbers in check. Hunting from a stand is the most effective, because your chances of making a clean killing shot are dramatically higher than if you're shooting from the ground at a distance. So that was in sync with the whole concept of banning penned hunting. And because of the first initiative, there was very little discussion on the topic of the spring bear hunt here in Manitoba, whereas in Ontario, to the east of us, they did ban the spring bear hunt, which, I think, was poorly thought out.

So, you know, those are the types of things that governments have to do so that we govern responsibly and that the general population stays in sync, in agreement with how we manage things.

There was some talk about parks as well. This government has a good record on establishing new parks, and I don't have to look very far outside of my own constituency—the Fisher Bay park, something that was put in place by this government, a rather unique park in the sense that it's a water park, in essence, with a number of islands in it and the shoreline of Fisher Bay as well.

But I also want to put on the record the importance that I feel toward wildlife management areas, Mr. Speaker, something that is near and dear to my heart. And I want all Manitobans to be aware of this resource to make sure that we continue to advocate for protection of that type of habitat as well.

I see the clock has almost run out, Mr. Speaker. I know we want to pass this resolution, so I conclude my remarks on that note. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on the resolution?

House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the resolution of the 20th Anniversary of Becoming an Outdoors Woman.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I just wonder if you could canvass the House to see if there's unanimous consent to pass the resolution.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the record to show that this resolution was passed unanimously? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Deputy Government House Leader): I wonder if you'd canvass the House to see if it's the will to call it 12 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 12 noon? *[Agreed]*

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 15, 2014

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