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Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 12, 2014

The House met at 9:30 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

Mr. Speaker: Private members' business?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the agreement of the House, could you please call concurrence?

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Okay. We'll now resolve into the Committee of Supply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

The committee has before it for consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015.

On June the 10th, 2014, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) tabled the following list of ministers who may be called for concurrent questioning in the debate on this motion: Health, Jobs and the Economy, Family Services.

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question's for the Minister of Jobs and the Economy.

The recent Labour Force Survey showed that compared--this month compared with last May, the number of people employed in Manitoba has gone

down instead of up. This is rather surprising in a province which is receiving a lot of new immigrants and has got a lot of young people entering the labour force.

I just wondered how the minister would explain this decrease in employment this May compared with last May, and--

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Jobs and the Economy.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): I thank the member for the question, and certainly we pay attention to the month-over-month and year-over-year and group of months this year compared to group of months last year from Stats Canada concerning employment numbers, and naturally month-over-month we pay attention as we would with any set of numbers.

I think what's critically important is to pay close attention to trends. We are seeing a trend across the nation of some job losses across Canada. We have fared reasonably well in Manitoba over time, particularly through the course of the economic downturn globally, but it's instructive to pay attention to those numbers and, most importantly, to act in partnership with industry, with our businesses, small, medium and large, to ensure that we continue to partner with them and to invest; to invest in the kind of training that it is that they need for their industry to develop unique training programs where applicable, as we've seen happen in--for example, in partnership in our aerospace industry with Magellan, where we have students from Red River College right on the factory floor, essentially, adjacent to an on-site classroom where, as a result of that partnership, students have access to state-of-the-art equipment where they can be learning and preparing to be able to transfer right into that industry as they graduate, if you will.

So, certainly we pay attention to those numbers, whether it's a month-over-month or a year-over-year, and we want to make sure that we are building those partnerships accordingly to ensure that our industries here in Manitoba--as is the case for every industry in Canada, who cite their No. 1 concern being the development of a strong, skilled workforce--we want

to make sure that we are a strong partner in that so that we can continue to build our workforce.

So, if the member's asking have I noticed, am I concerned about it, any kind of statistical information that can come our way that shows a favourable economic situation or one that raises concern is one that I pay attention to and work with my department accordingly and with other departments, in particular Advanced Education, to ensure that we're building our workforce in a way that is authentic and meaningful for industry.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister talks about trends, and what's a little worrisome is that the—this May compared with last May, our employment numbers dropped; that this April compared with last April, our numbers dropped. Same is true for March, for February, for January, for December, for November, for October. So it's eight months in a row that compared to the year previous, that our total employment numbers have dropped, and that's of concern because that's quite a long trend and it's quite different from what's happening in Saskatchewan, where next door to us in each of those years compared with—each of those months compared with the year before, Saskatchewan's employment numbers went up.

And so that is a concern and it's particularly a concern when we see that manufacturing, which has been a strength in Manitoba, hasn't been growing as fast as in Saskatchewan. In fact, Saskatchewan has just overtaken Manitoba in terms of total manufacturing output, in terms of the total sales, and that compared with the fact that Saskatchewan, back in 1999, was way behind Manitoba. So just a concern about what's happening in manufacturing and what the minister's view is of this situation and what she's doing. Thank you.

* (09:40)

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, and again I would say to the member that we certainly do pay attention to labour market analyses that happen across Canada; StatsCan, of course, being the most regular purveyor of that information. And we do know that it's critically important that we continue to work, as I've said before, in partnership with industry to assist in providing them with what they declare to be their No. 1 need, and that is access to a skilled workforce. And we have acknowledged, and I would concede the point that the member also has acknowledged, that the entire globe experienced an economic downturn and during that time, I think, because of

diversification while Manitoba and a variety of industries have felt the pinch on that, without a doubt they have fared well because they have been nimble and have been open and have been willing to try innovative, new things and have been open to having government as a partner in that, and it's why we have spent, you know, significant resources and time in working with these industries to ensure that we are able to develop and redevelop. If a large multinational corporation makes a decision to move an industry out of jurisdiction, I know that, you know, here in Manitoba, we are well-positioned in partnership with Labour and Immigration to reach out to that workforce, to ensure that the skills that they have developed can be reapplied in those industries that are growing. And we know that this has to happen in a very rapid and nimble way. We don't want families that face that kind of an experience to have any significant gap in time to be able to transition to industries that are emerging in Manitoba.

We do know that there are—there's often quite a lot of comparison that is done between Saskatchewan and Manitoba. There have been, you know, numerous articles written recently on the subject of Saskatchewan's economy and perhaps its reliance more so on one or two sectors, as opposed to having a more diverse sector like we have here in Manitoba and the implications of that.

And while, you know, I pay close attention to what is happening in terms of employment across jurisdictions, I feel like our industries here in Manitoba have a very strong sense and, indeed, a very strong optimism about the future and about expansion, and it's why we're seeing the kinds of decisions being made here to locate headquarters and to build businesses because of a variety of interventions that have come into play, whether it's the development of training programs that are suitable specifically for their industry, whether it's an amendment to tax treatment, something in aerospace, a small venture business capital tax credit, whether it's an amendment to something like an interactive media—digital media tax credit. In combination, those things are assisting in making sure that businesses that are being wooed into other jurisdictions make a decision and make a commitment to put down right roots here and create good jobs, and I'll give you an example of what I mean.

We know that we have a fabulous young entrepreneur here in Manitoba, Noah Decter-Jackson of Complex Games and he had a dream some years

ago to develop a business, as he would say, playing video games all day. Well, it was a much more complicated than that, so sayeth the name of his company, but he started with two employees and built that company up to 40 employees, and came to government and said, you know, this is a very good place to do business; there's an element of the tax credit and the process that could be made even better.

Government responded to that and it's made a significant difference to ensure that he keeps his roots here in Manitoba. He's projected to go to 80 jobs in the next two years. He's landed contracts in his company with Disney and with Hasbro and he has put our industry, our interactive digital media ecosystem, if you will, on the global stage, and now these giant industries call him. And I think that's the sign of a true partnership between young, brilliant entrepreneurs and a government that can be responsive and adaptive.

So, again, I say to the member, yes, I pay attention to what's happening next door, what's happening in our manufacturing sector, what's happening in our export sector, but, indeed, I also pay most close attention to what our industry is telling us about what their needs are, and I work hard with my department to be responsive to that.

Mr. Gerrard: To the Minister for Jobs and the Economy, yesterday I had a gentleman in my office. He was getting support through social assistance. The minister had announced—or the government had announced in the budget that the social assistance funding for housing was going to go up. And yet he is still on the old numbers and desperately looking around for housing and wondering what is happening with the plans of the government to actually raise the funding for the shelter of allowance for those on social assistance or those on low incomes.

Ms. Oswald: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Chair. We did make a commitment in the budget that we would work to develop a new program called Rent Assist which will, indeed, see an increase in the amount that individuals will receive to assist them with their housing allowance.

We have been working very closely, certainly not only within the context of my own department, but with persons that have lived experience with the EIA system and also with advocates, those that—I know the member knows quite well—that have dedicated their lives to advocating for those that may

or may not have a voice in terms of helping to lift themselves up out of poverty.

We are going to be launching the new benefit July the 1st, and we will look forward to, as best as is possible—and we want to do our very best—to ensure that individuals that are eligible for Rent Assist will receive information about how to ensure that they are receiving the full amount of the benefit to which they are eligible, and to ensure not only that, but that they are receiving the other services that are available to them, most notably, the services that are available in order to assist them on a path to sustainable employment.

We have had a few programs that have come online that are new to Manitoba. In particular, I would note a program that started about a year ago specifically providing information to single parents. And the new approach and new attitude has seen very favourable results in a very short time. We know that this is a group in society who will also benefit from the new Rent Assist, which, of course, has as a target, to reach 75 per cent of median market rent within four years, and, also, most notably, Mr. Chair, will cover those folks that may fall outside of Employment and Income Assistance, thus working very hard not to build up the so-named welfare wall but to endeavour to have a smooth transition from welfare to work, which is what we want for all Manitoba families living in that circumstance.

Mr. Gerrard: My next question concerns the government's support for technology incubators.

* (09:50)

I note that in the Free Press last year, Martin Cash was writing, and he basically was saying that the province has not had any kind of long-term sustainable strategy when it comes to technology incubators.

Mr. Marshall Ring, who was a former member of the civil service, I think in Science, Technology, Energy and Mines some years ago, he is quoted in Mr. Martin Cash's article in the Free Press as saying the following: It has been several years since the Province has had any kind of long-term, sustainable strategy—oh, wait a minute. This is the Ring quote: The Province has never really had a holistic view on what they want to do. We have enjoyed provincial support for the past several years—he's now the CEO of the Manitoba Technology Accelerator—and then he continues: Now the Province is reflecting on what direction to take in the coming years.

And now that was said a year ago, and I'm just asking the minister what direction she's taking with technology incubators?

Ms. Oswald: I thank the member for the question. I have had the great privilege of meeting with Mr. Ring on a few occasions. He, along with others in what I will refer to as the innovation community for lack of a better word at the moment—he has been a really important voice in the development of the newly launched Manitoba Innovation Strategy.

I saw him last week, in fact, when we hosted—or he hosted us, I should say more appropriately, at the Manitoba Technology Accelerator for the really exciting launch of SkipTheDishes and its location of its head office here in Manitoba.

I've—just as an aside, I've heard opposition members making what I might define as a couple of snarky comments about that particular announcement, making—it's hard to believe, I know—but, you know, making reference to pizza drivers and so on. First of all, these kinds of jobs, the delivery kinds of jobs for an organization like SkipTheDishes and other restaurants, there's no dishonour in this. Lots of young people who are putting themselves through school get these kinds of part-time jobs to assist with that extra income, and I applaud them.

But I do want to make clear for those members that the 93 jobs that SkipTheDishes, which is currently housed in the Manitoba Technology Accelerator, are not the delivery person jobs. They're just incorrect about that and clearly didn't read to the bottom of the page of the news release. These jobs are highly skilled, high-tech jobs that, as the owner and CEO of SkipTheDishes rightly points out, these jobs aren't about delivering food, they're about mathematics.

And Marshall was really a huge partner with Josh in developing that company. And so he's seen, you know, right at the elbow of these young, fabulous companies who today are about using proprietary algorithms to deliver food in a very expedient way, but very much tomorrow will be about other services. It could be about the delivery of medical supplies or lab samples or—the sky's the limit, really. So he is just at the beginning of a frontier and Marshall has been a big part of that.

And to that end, he along with Eureka sat down with me and talked about, you know, building that innovation superhighway and ensuring that within the context of our innovation strategy that we had a

continuum of investment, whether it was a brand new start-up that could in fact be nurtured in an environment such as the Manitoba Technology Accelerator or Eureka or start-up Manitoba, that there would be investments on that spectrum and that indeed there would be investments in partnership with some of our larger industries who have developed their concept or their product and have created many, many jobs here in Manitoba but they're ready to take it to the next level and they need a partner. So many people, including the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, had a great role in helping us develop that strategy.

And I know that we had a brief conversation, I believe, about Research Manitoba the last time we met on the subject of Estimates, and that, of course, is going to be a very key part of that as well.

So, yes, I've listened to Mr. Ring. He's very clever and excited and a true Manitoban that wants to make things better for young people and beyond, and, indeed, I think that the idea of multi-year, sustainable funding for an incubator and for innovators and entrepreneurs at large is what is embedded in the strategy that we've put before Manitobans.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I want to move on to look at the question of what policies the government has when you've got somebody like Mr. Marshall Ring, who was an employee of STEM, who then goes out and works in an organization which is outside of government and yet which is receiving government funding, what the policies are in terms of conflict of interest and what the policies are in terms of acknowledgments of government and what the policies are in terms of reporting.

Now, in the case of Mr. Ring, he was with STEM. He then went over to what was at that time Biomedical Commercialization Canada. Biomedical Commercialization Canada received \$2 million to get started and then it has received, from time to time, funding from the Government of Manitoba, including in an announcement in 2008, and the year 2008, as the public accounts show, the province had given \$315,420 to Biomedical Commercialization Canada.

And yet, what is concerning is that in a recent testimony before the courts, Mr. Marshall Ring was asked who were the funders of BCC in 2007 and 2008, and Mr. Ring replied, I believe it was all NRC IRAP, when, quite clearly, he should have known

because he was there that there was major funding from the Province of Manitoba.

And so, you know, the question is what kind of policies are—one would have expected Mr. Ring to, you know, have been very thankful to the money it—he received and his Biomedical Commercialization Canada received from the Province of Manitoba, and yet, you know, he's, you know, crediting other people instead of the Government of Manitoba. What kind of policies does the government in place to make sure that the government actually gets the credit here and that there is, you know, appropriate policies in place for people transferring from the public sector to the private sector?

Thank you.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Chair, I want to assure the member that I believe in the context of the civil service and in the context of making those transitions that there are policies in place concerning what would be perceived as a conflict of interest. I know that there are policies across government, you know, regarding cooling-off periods and so forth. I can't cite that for him chapter and verse; I don't have a document like that in front of me. On the subject of—but I do know that the department is concerned about these things and pays close attention to such matters, but I can endeavour to provide the member for some text on the subject that he's raising today. I think there's also some information—I may stand to be corrected—but I believe there's also some information on the website regarding civil servants and this kind of transition.

The funding itself that government has provided, as I understand it, goes directly to the Manitoba Technology Accelerator. It's not funding that goes to Mr. Ring, you know, personally, for his endeavours. The Manitoba Technology Accelerator does employ Mr. Ring and so that, I think, just as a point of clarification, would be important.

* (10:00)

I'd also say to the member that I can't really comment on the testimony that the member is speaking of. I haven't seen any text or testimony of this nature. But I can say to the member that the Manitoba Technology Accelerator has received federal funding over time and, indeed, I believe is in anxious anticipation as we speak for a continuation of said funding, which is of significant concern to them at present. I hope that that's been resolved. But I know that there have been some anxious times in the months that have passed.

But I would acknowledge the member's point very carefully that it is important that we pay close attention to the path and the role that individuals have taken transitioning from positions in a department to a more independent venue. And it's important to ensure that there is fairness and integrity in that process. I am of the belief that that is entirely what happened in this case with the Manitoba Technology Accelerator. And I respect that the member has that question. But those policies are in place.

Mr. Gerrard: I look forward to receiving that material. And if the minister is interested, I can send her copies of the matters that I discussed and quotes from Mr. Ring.

What is also of concern is the reporting process. When, you know, we have an organization like, whether it's Biomedical Commercialization Canada or the Manitoba Technology Accelerator, get funding from the Province, what is the reporting requirements? And as part of the same testimony, Mr. Ring was asked, did you have to report any of the services provided by BCC to its incubatees to either NRC or IRAP, and he said no.

Now he wasn't asked about reporting to the provincial government, but I would ask you: What kind of reports would have been required to the provincial government when it was funding—well, in that particular year, it was more than \$300,000 to Biomedical Commercialization Canada?

Ms. Oswald: Certainly this particular item of funding that the member is referring to does predate my time in the department. But I feel confident that I should be able to do some research and get back to him on the nature of that reporting.

I know, broadly though, I can tell the member that in our discussions with the incubators, with Eureka and the Manitoba Technology Accelerator, and with the very good and imaginative folks at formerly known Ramp Up and AssentWorks, we've had a number of conversations with them about the importance of reporting. There have been individuals that have said that the nature of the reporting they felt was not as sleek and as streamlined as they would like it to be. They ask government as much as possible to, in the case of a grant application, for example, to move at the speed of business.

And we have made a commitment to do that, which, of course, has resulted in a lot of work done in the department, whether it's in the

Commercialization Support for Business Program or if it's in broader funding for organizations, we've worked hard to not only improve and modernize the nature of the reporting that organizations need to do back to government—certainly we want it to be complete and fulsome, but not cumbersome—but also the work that we have to do back to them.

We're working very hard in the context of our innovation strategy to ensure that there's as much online access, to ensure that they can respond in that manner and to ensure that there is comprehensiveness and integrity in all of that reporting.

We're going to continue to take advice from them, while maintaining, of course, standards that the department and, indeed, the Auditor General would find appropriate. But making sure that we are as efficient and we are, indeed, as fulsome in that reporting, finding that delicate balance is very important as we go forward.

And so I take the member at his point that accountability and transparency in the funding of these organizations is important. And on the specific issue that he raised that predated my time in this department, I'll endeavour to see what kind of documentation I can return to him with.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister and I look forward to receiving the material in due course.

You know, this matter of somebody who has moved from working within the public sector to an organization outside is important, and I'm not suggesting that there's any particular problem with BCC and the Manitoba Technology Accelerator, but I'm just using it as an example of trying to understand what the process and the safeguards are. And part of the reason that I bring this up is that in conversations with people in Ontario, I have heard allegations that some of the people who were involved in negotiating the takeover of the property register by Teranet in Ontario then subsequently moved to Teranet and made—and then were getting much higher salaries than they had been in the public sector, and there was concern that, you know, there had been a bit of a conflict of interest here in the way that Teranet had been set up.

Now, I mean, I'm not going to address those allegations. I don't know how serious they are, but what I do know is that, you know, when we've got situations like you've got people within government setting up organizations which are to be outside of government, there needs to be particular safeguards

and, you know, conflict of interest and issues which are dealt with carefully and well.

And I just am looking forward to, you know, getting the material that the minister has in this area, and just want to make sure that it's not just a matter of that somebody is an employee. I mean, he's, I think, the CEO of the Manitoba Technology Accelerator, and we hope that for the good of Manitoba that he does a great job in bringing lots of—incubating lots of companies. But at the same time, I think it's important that, you know, we make sure, you know, that there is the appropriate accountability in conflict-of-interest issues resolved. And so I would presume that the minister is committed to making sure that this is in place, and if it's not in place, to make sure it will be.

Ms. Oswald: I am pleased to have an opportunity to respond, and I do take the member at his word and I am heartened to hear him say that he does not mean to cast any aspersions on Mr. Ring and his journey from government into this organization. Because while one can say, you know, I certainly don't mean anything by it but I'm going to ask you, you know, six questions potentially about Marshall Ring's integrity and his behaviour, it can create a perception, even if not intended, that can at minimum be seen as a personal attack, but in the larger arena can start to, you know, impugn motives and could evolve into something that would be very, very dangerous for the business credibility of an individual and reputation in a community, not only locally but nationally.

And so I want to reiterate what I believe I heard the member say, and that is that this line of questioning is about a concept about the importance of protecting the integrity of that transition from government to private enterprise and that it is not about the personal integrity of Marshall Ring.

I believe that's what I heard the member say, and I would fully support that. And if that's not entirely what was meant, then I want to go on the record to say that I think it's really important that when we debate ideas here in the Manitoba Legislature—that I believe are for the betterment of all of our society in ensuring that we have strong policies in place that are transparent and accountable, that in doing so in having this kind of a debate, we don't take an opportunity even inadvertently to drag somebody's good name through the mud.

* (10:10)

So I respect what the member is saying about the importance of having policies in place. As I've said to the member, I believe there are a number of policies online that—to which he may refer. I can endeavour to get some hard copies of that and to augment those with any specific historical information that he cited today from a situation in 2008—as appropriate, that is—and want to assure him that as we go forward in the context of our recently published innovation strategy that is about really modernizing this pathway from a brilliant idea to commercialization and really moving as swiftly—and, you know, with high quality—moving towards not only that commercialization but, ultimately, interesting jobs for our young people here in Manitoba, that we will do that with transparency and with the kind of speed that's needed in order to get these good ideas to market.

So I thank the member for this question, and he has my assurance that I will pay close attention to it, and if I may take the opportunity one more time to commend the Manitoba Technology Accelerator broadly, and Mr. Ring individually, for his efforts and commitments to Manitoba, I will do that now.

Mr. Gerrard: And I appreciate that. You know, I would not have raised this about Mr. Ring except that he, himself, raised some concerns in testimony that he made before the courts, and it just got me asking what were the reporting requirements? What were the requirements for people to acknowledge the support of Manitoba, and just want to make sure that we have, as a province, got good, strong policies in place and that, you know, it covers the variety of things that people could put in place which, if not monitored or done properly, could, you know, lead to difficult circumstances.

And, you know, in—there are some questions which have arisen, and I would ask that the—and be thankful that the minister is going to address these. And I would ask that she look at the matter of where you've got organizations like BCC which used instruments like shareholders' loans that, you know, we have the proper policies in place for the reporting and the certainty that things are being done properly.

So thanks very much to the minister, and I look very much forward to receiving those materials. Thank you.

That's my questions, and now I pass it over to whoever is next.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I just have a couple of quick questions for the Minister of Family Services.

I have a constituent who has written me regarding their mentally challenged son who they've been taking care for their entire life. He's been part of the In The Company of Friends program for the past 15 years, and I think funding comes out of the department's Innovative LIFE Options program. They are trying to find longer term, 24-7 funding for him so he can live in his own apartment. They are obviously concerned about what the future might bring and their ability to continue to provide the support at the level they have for the majority of his life this far. So, ultimately, their desire as parents is to have him settle into his own apartment, but they've been told that the only way that they're ever going to get that funding is if it's crisis funding.

Is there not an ability or something within the department to try to provide funding for this type of thing before it becomes a crisis?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Yes, in our community living branch of the department we have phenomenal men and women that work every day with people with disabilities and with their families trying to find solutions for independence.

We have, as a government, increased the funding to the community living branch by 442 per cent since 1999, and we are extremely proud of that. But we obviously have much more work to do with that as we really are moving into an area, and have been for a number of years, of supporting individuals living in the community.

The member speaks about In The Company of Friends and I'm very familiar with the good quality of service that they provide. I'm not familiar with the specifics of this case. If he'd like to share it with me, I'm more than willing to look at this and see how we can work with the family to come up with a solution that meets their son's needs and also can give them a peace of mind as he gets the support that he needs. And he is correct that we need to make sure we're problem solving before there is a crisis and giving families the choices that they deserve.

Mr. Goertzen: I'll table the letter of concern that I received from the family and the discussion that I had with them personally. Essentially they've been told that the only crisis—the only way crisis funding will be available is when there's a crisis and they'll

never be able to receive any other sort of funding to have independent living for their son in any other way.

Now they're tremendous parents and I see them in the community and really doing incredible work with their mentally challenged son, Richard, and they deserve a lot of credit, but ultimately, there's only so and so much parents can do when they reach certain stages of their life.

So I want to—I'll table this letter for the minister, and she's given me the assurance that department staff will contact the family and try to work with them and I'd appreciate that.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I thank the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) for bringing this to my attention, and we look forward to working with Richard and with his family to find a resolution.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I have a few questions as follow-up for some of the questions in Estimates that I had put to the minister.

In particular, we had talked in Estimates about CPP and the pension benefits that an individual must trigger as soon as they are eligible for when they're also receiving EIA. And we had looked at private pensions in relation to that. And I was wondering if the minister had had a chance to come to answer whether private pensions were treated exactly the same way that CPP pensions were treated.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: At the time of Estimates we took that question under consideration and we are working with the department as well—Department of Family Services, as well as with the policy folks of Jobs and Economy and we'll provide him with an answer in a timely manner.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister for that answer. I was hoping that that would be sometime recently soon because we do have some individuals that are feeling that they are being short-changed, I guess, in the system. And in particular, one of the questions that occurred around that is when you trigger these early pension payments, it has a significant impact on the total amount of pension benefits that they would receive after 65. Is that something that is traditionally done that when this is triggered? There is no compensation for the fact that they've actually reduced their pension amounts in the future substantially?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: That's a very specific question about EIA policy that I would be remiss if I put facts

on the record, and I think that it's really important that I take this point under consideration and provide it to him at a later date.

* (10:20)

Mr. Wishart: Would the minister be more comfortable if these questions were put to another ministry? Do you feel that this is not within your mandate? Because it is your department that is requiring the triggering—triggering.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I—of course, I can answer any of the questions that are put forward, but I think that it's my responsibility, there are a number of policies that direct how we provide services to clients within the EIA program and I do not want to put misinformation on the record. I think that I have a responsibility to represent the program and provide accurate information, and that's what I'm committing to do.

Mr. Wishart: Well, I would certainly encourage the minister to provide us with the correct answer. Can she give us some estimate of when that might be?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We will be able to provide that information to him as soon as possible.

Mr. Wishart: Well, I guess that's an answer in one form or the other.

I'll move on, I guess, and ask a couple of questions about procedure when children are placed in care of Child and Family Services. Is it standard procedure for a family to receive written notice when they—that a child is received into care with reasons for their child being taken into care?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I have the—had the privilege of being a intake worker in Saskatchewan for the department of family services, and had the responsibility and the opportunities to work with a number of families and provide support. And at times we had to make the tough decision about apprehensions of children and it's not an easy decision that a person makes, but it is a decision that is made in the best interest of the child. And as a front-line worker, they're going in to very complicated situations, situations that are full of emotion and love and passion, but they're having to work through those emotions and really look at the facts about what is in the best interest of the child.

Workers are going into families every day, and when workers from whatever agency are going in they are using specific assessment tools that we've provided to help give them some information and

evaluation about what their next steps have to be, and they're also working with supervisors and doing case consults. Families are part of the plan when possible, because sometimes the situations are very volatile and it's very complicated. But families are informed why their child is being apprehended and sometimes the reason is not accepted, but the workers are acting within the best interests of the child, and I think that it's really important that as we have conversations about family services and the child-welfare system that we always have that in our mind as the No. 1 priority.

It is a difficult job that they do, and I know that from personal experience and I have the utmost respect for them on their not-easy situations. And as I know, myself as a parent, parenting is very, very complicated, and when you are dealing with families that have other issues and barriers that are placed in front of them it's even more complicated. So as for our child-welfare system it is very important that we're providing support and, if necessary, children, yes, are being apprehended, but always with the hope that there is reunification with their family. That isn't always possible, but whenever it is that has to be our goal. We know that being a part of their family of origin and their community is vital for their personal growth and for their future.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister for that answer, but we were talking about a Manitoba situation. I know you—the minister has experience in front line in Saskatchewan.

But in Manitoba, following the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, one of the recommendations, and it's—occurs—reoccurs in many other inquest recommendations, is that paperwork—more attention be paid to paperwork and that the paper trail be well documented. And, I guess this is part of that recommendation process. Whether or not it's an emergency situation, and the workers feel that they have to act immediately, that's one set of circumstances. But if it's not an emergency situation and an ongoing situation, is there an attempt made to provide the family with a written list of reasons so that they might attempt to address the concerns of Child and Family Services so that they can retain the child, if possible, or at least move towards getting the child back in a timely manner? Is there a written list of reasons, and is that part of the protocols?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd just like to clarify for the member that, yes, my practical experience was in Saskatchewan, but the issues facing families in

Saskatchewan and Manitoba, when it comes to child-welfare issues, are very, very similar. So, he can criticize my experience, but I will always believe that that experience that I had will help me as I have this journey as the Minister of Family Services. And I will value that experience and cherish the families that allowed me into their lives in Saskatchewan, and shared their visions and their passions for their families, as well as the tragedies within their families, and their willingness to share and to work together for a resolution and to have their children back.

When it comes to apprehension of a child, it is not an easy decision. Our workers are not walking into houses and saying, nah, we're going to take this child. It is based on collateral information that is received. It is based on information and the professional evaluation of the social worker at the time. And families—and sometimes—and if it is not a urgent situation, families are a part of that planning and, yes, of course, because reunification is one of our goals, when possible. We are sitting with families and sharing what needs to happen and, ideally, helping them find those necessary supports. It is a partnership. It's a partnership between agencies and families. It's a partnership between the social workers. There's also other counsellors and family support workers that can be engaged, as well, as we rely on the education system and the child-care system to provide the necessary supports.

So, yes, there is ongoing communication and planning when it comes to working with families and working towards reunification. And there are standards and policies and expectations, when we're working with the authorities and the agencies, that they need to follow as they're engaging families and providing support to them.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for that answer.

It was hardly my intention to criticize your past history, of which I have no idea of the performance during that time. But I did want to make it clear that it is quite clear from the websites in Saskatchewan that policy and procedure is different than it is in Manitoba. So I would like to talk about the Manitoba situation.

And, clearly, the minister has indicated that there is policy and procedures. And I asked a very clear question: is it part of your policy and procedures to provide to the family in writing a list of reasons, so that that family might attempt to address the

concerns of CFS, as to why the child was taken into care? And is that the case? Is there a policy to provide a written list of reasons to the family when a child is received into care?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I want to assure the member, when I am talking about standards and policies, that I am specifically talking about Manitoba. That, yes, there are differences between jurisdictions. I'm talking more about my experience as a front-line worker and the opportunities of working with families. That hasn't changed. Some of assessment tools and expectations and, of course, with devolution, which is so important within this province, that is very different than Saskatchewan as well, especially when I was practising.

* (10:30)

I have said on a number of occasions to the member that, yes, we share this information with the family, we problem solve about how we move forward, and with the ultimate goal, if possible, on family reunification, and provide them with a road map and support for that journey so they can address the issues that were identified at the time of apprehension and work towards reunification.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister for that answer, but in that answer there was no specific mention as to a recorded form. So it is a verbal procedure, your discussion back and forth with the family, is that how this is done?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Every case is unique, and every worker brings a different perspective to a case. They are working, you know, verbally. Sometimes they're providing the information written. I'm at the opportune—I'm getting specific information, whether it's a policy or a standard that we have that it is written, I want to make sure that as I put information on the record that it is accurate and that it is a fact.

Mr. Wishart: Well, that certainly explains why so many of the recommendations include improvements in the records, because we don't see any record keeping that is a mandate as part of the process.

If, in some cases, language is a barrier, does the staff and the minister have someone available to help with translation with a family that would be looking at a child being taken into care?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: There are a number of standards and policies that are in place regarding written work and maintaining files, so I do not want the member opposite to mislead the House and suggest that there

are not file keeping that is expected and needed as part of planning and working with a family.

There are a number of assessment tools and ongoing forms and file recordings that are expected. We have our technology called CFIS which we rely on across the province. So there are standards in place for keeping files and maintaining files, and all authorities and agencies are expected to follow those standards and policies.

The member then asked the question about translation services. We are very fortunate within the department that we have a number of staff that represent a number of different cultural groups, and we may be able to provide that service within Family Services if necessary, but also if we need specific translation services, we will get those, as well, to make sure that we are providing the families with the opportunity to share within their first language.

It's my experience that—I was—learnt very early on in my career, when you're working with families from other countries and that English is their additional language, that it is extremely important that you give them that opportunity to share their own experience and their emotions in their first language because that is the language that comes and that they're most comfortable with.

So, yes, we provide—we have people within the department that represent a number of cultural groups and do speak different languages, but if we do not have anyone that's available we will certainly look into the community and find a resource that we can work with to ensure that they have that opportunity.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister for that answer. I certainly agree with the minister in that it's far more easy in a stressful situation for people to explain their problems and their situation in their first language, so certainly in every case where that is a problem, I think the department and the minister should make every—take every opportunity to bring in someone to help with translation to make sure that the complete story is received and not just part of it.

I did want to ask one further follow-up question. Recently in the media there's another family situation where they're trying to prevent their child being taken into care and, certainly, this one seems to be—the baby hasn't been born yet. So clearly there's time here to deal with any family situation or at least try to deal with any family situation.

When does it become a priority to take the child into care and when is it a priority to provide the family with the supports that they might need so that they can actually look after the child in their own situation? How does the minister and her department decide which way to go on an action? I'm sure it's a case-by-basis, but there must be a procedure by which you at least evaluate which one is the most likely option and provide the supports that are necessary when that is the best option.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'm trying to prevent myself from cautioning the member about case managing, because it is very hard to make those decisions when you're speaking with a family and if you do not know the entire picture.

I know that I get approached by families myself and you have to be very, very careful that we are not second-guessing the front-line staff. We need to rely on the expertise and the professionals that are making those assessments of the families. There are opportunities at every level to have conversations with the parents about options. If possible—and I'm not going to comment on any specific case, I'm just talking generally—to prevent apprehension, there are options in some cases; in some cases there are not. I cannot talk to the specifics of this and I am not going to do that, but there is conversation that happens. Apprehensions happen because the child is seen to be at risk. That is the fact, and that is the information that's gathered by collateral agencies, by the worker themselves, and the evaluation is made.

So I suggest that the family continues, families continue to work with their social workers, that they work towards following a journey to a place where they can, in a way, parent their child in a healthy manner and ensure that the child is no longer at risk. It's important that child safety has to be what directs us every day in Family Services.

Mr. Wishart: I thank the minister for that answer, and I will turn the floor over to my colleague who has some further questions.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Chair, I just have some questions of clarification for the Minister of Health, and I would like to start with some explanation so that I can understand this better. She keeps tabling a chart called active practising nurses, and it's a chart that compiles numbers from all the various colleges.

In the 2013 column where it indicates 17,795, can the minister confirm that this is the total number

of nurses who work in Manitoba no matter where they work?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Yes, I can confirm to the member that those numbers are compiled from the annual reports of the College of Registered Nurses, the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses and the College of Licensed Practical Nurses. There were some previous questions that the member and other members had in some of our other concurrence time, and I wonder if she wanted me to read some of the information that I have into the record for some previous questions that she or other members may have had.

* (10:40)

Mrs. Driedger: Actually, I would prefer that we get through our set of questions first, and if there's time left at the end of concurrence, that we do that. So I thank the minister for that clarification.

Now, in her Manitoba Nursing Labour Market Supply there are several pages. The total number of nurses working in Manitoba, no matter where they work, is included in the first graph. On page 4 of her document, it has another graph that says total filled nursing positions.

So can the minister confirm, then, that for 2013, the number of 11,611 are the numbers that are actually funded by the government in the public health-care system?

Ms. Selby: I did bring with me the department expenditure Estimates with me, assuming we were going to be going over that in concurrence today. I did not bring the document that she's referring to so I'd have to get back to her with that, but I can tell her that whatever way we look at the numbers, they are a record number of nurses practising in Manitoba right now.

Mrs. Driedger: And that's the clarification I'm seeking from the minister is not only the total number but where that total number is working, because they're spread out and that's the clarification I am actually seeking from the minister.

Does she want to see if she can get her hands on a copy of her Manitoba Nursing Labour Market Supply 2013 so that we can continue with questions on that? Because that is what I'm seeking clarification on today.

Ms. Selby: Certainly, be happy to discuss nurses with this member as much as she would like to.

I can tell the member that there are certainly more nurses working everywhere in Manitoba now, a record number of nurses working, and it's true. Some of them are probably working in private practice because we've got more doctors working in Manitoba. So it would make sense that as you hire 560 more doctors, those doctors are going to hire more nurses. So any way you want to look at it, no matter how you want to break the numbers down, no matter what label you want to put on it, according to the College of Registered Nurses, we are at a record number of nurses working in this province, and there are more doctors working and, therefore, those more doctors likely need more nurses.

Mrs. Driedger: And I don't dispute any of that. I am supportive of the fact that Manitoba has more nurses. I know that we were the ones that set up the nursing recruitment retention fund in 1999 after about two years of work with the nursing professions. I sat around a nursing advisory council for a couple of years and we worked very hard to put in place a lot of the things that are rolling out today, especially with the University of Manitoba, who weren't graduating enough nurses and they acknowledged that.

The nursing schools in the hospitals closed, and that had a significant dip on the number of nurses that were actually graduated into the system. And the University of Manitoba wasn't prepared to pick up the slack for that. There were meetings with—the university worked very hard, and this government is the beneficiary of that, which is a good thing. So I don't dispute that there are more nurses, and there should be, and that's a very good thing.

All I'm looking for right now is just a clarification of some of these numbers so that we're all clear on what the government is trying to say here. So there are 17,795 nurses in Manitoba. We've confirmed that. The minister now has a copy of her own labour market supply, and I'm just asking, on page 4, if she can confirm that those are the total filled positions under the direct responsibility of funding by the provincial government?

Ms. Selby: Certainly, we are committed to working with nurses every day to make sure that we have a stronger and better health-care system in Manitoba, always working to improve things.

We know in 1999 there were 14,092 nurses practising in Manitoba. That's compared to back in 1992 when there were 15,665 nurses practising. Of course, we know that our workforce continues to

grow. The number of nurses, as I've said earlier, is at a record high now.

In this past year alone we've added 143 more nurses and nurse practitioners. That's 307—it's 3,702 more than when we took office. But we know we need more nurses. We know that we need to make sure that nurses are working in a supportive, safe environment, able to deliver the best care that I know that they want to, that I know that they do, and it's why we're hiring more. It's why we're training more.

I do find it interesting, both the member—but particularly, her leader, the Leader of the Opposition used a quote from MNU recently in a press release that was published in the Free Press. It's funny, because at the time when they were in government they were not spending much time chatting with nurses and not working with them. In fact, I can tell the member that in April of 1998 the Manitoba Nurses' Union issued a report entitled, Health Care in Manitoba: A Report from the Front Lines. That report states that 1,000 nurses have been laid off by government. To this day both this member and the Leader of the Opposition had—deny it happened. But I wonder if they'd like to bring that up with the Nurses' Union who are in a different mindset.

I have a breakdown here in the same report that the member is referring to. She's referring to page 4 where under the title, more filled positions in Manitoba nursing workforce, it very clearly says that the following graph illustrates the number of provincially funded permanent and term nurses' positions filled in Manitoba's health-care system. So I think it clearly answers any question that she has, and if she turns to page 6 of the same document you can see a breakdown of everything from permanent and term nursing positions, from RNs to RPNs, LPNS, et cetera, all broken down.

So, yes, there are, as we said, an increase of the number of nurses who are practising in the provincially funded program but, of course, there's also a record number of nurses practising, as I said, because there are more doctors.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Chair, I have to say, I don't understand why this minister is always so partisan and condescending with her answers. These are just—this is concurrence. This is the same as being, you know, in a committee room. This is where government is expected not to be condescending, not to be partisan, but to give some honest answers about questions, and that's all I'm looking for is not condescension but answers to some serious questions

so that we're clear on what is happening with all these numbers. There's a lot of numbers and I don't think these are unfair questions. I just find this minister's answers always tend to veer off into very partisanship debate and I'm not looking for that all. I just want some clarity here so I understand that.

So I'd like her to walk me through now. We've got 17,795 nurses in Manitoba. Now, she's agreed that according to her own numbers there's 11,611 working in the public system that the government actually funds, and then also from her own chart on page 5, there's actually more positions, if I am interpreting this correctly. There are actually more positions in Manitoba, but some of them aren't filled. So there's actually 13,388 positions, but there's 1,777 vacancies yet. So we're short 1,800 nurses from the chart on page 5. So if she looks down the right-hand column, can she confirm then, my interpretation that we've got over 11,000 positions filled in the public system. There's a vacancy of 1,700, and then the total number of positions is actually 13,388 in the public system where the government has the influence over the numbers, where they actually fund these positions?

* (10:50)

So, can she confirm, am I understanding that correctly?

Ms. Selby: Let me as clear as I possibly can be and as genuine as I can speak to this member, I am very happy to talk about nurses as long as she would like to. I'm very proud of the work that our nurses do, and as long as she wants to keep talking nurses, I can genuinely tell her that that makes me very pleased.

So I can tell the member that, yes, and as she's agreed, the statistics that the Manitoba's independent nursing colleges have released show that there—the number does continue to grow. We've been in a trend of more nurses working. As I mentioned in an earlier answer, we've added 143 more nurses and nurse practitioners in Manitoba in the past year. We, in 2011, committed to hiring 2,000 more nurses by 2015, and that was broken down into 1,000 to replace the anticipated retirements and 1,000 new nurses to put more nurses on the front lines where we knew that they could spend more time with patients at the bedside.

As of 2013, the data from the nurses' college shows that 1,907 of those 2,000 nurses are now practising in replacement of an estimated 1,230 nurses who retired, plus a gain of 677. We

know that those gains are being contribute—attributed to expanding nursing opportunities throughout the province. We've expanded the rotating nursing training through areas that we're looking at potential shortages due to either increasing population or because of upcoming retirements.

Of course, you've also got, always, ongoing recruitment and retention initiatives such as the nursing recruitment and retention fund. The member's right; it was established in 1999 to attract nurses to work in Manitoba. As of December of last year, it's provided a relocation cost assistance to 1,997 nurses who have moved here from out of province. That's 745 nurses who relocated to rural and northern Manitoba; out of those, there were 393 by—from the Philippines.

Certainly, we know that we want more nurses. I don't dispute that at all. There are more nurses practising, whether you look at the numbers who are totally practising in the province or if you look at the chart that the member's been referring to of ones who are directly funded by the provincial government. Both cases, the number goes up, a steady increase all the way.

But do we want to have more nurses? Absolutely. Do we want to make sure that every nursing position is filled? Absolutely. It's why we've increased the number of nurses that we're training. It's why we've brought training to rural and northern communities where it may be more difficult to recruit someone, so we know that if we recruit someone and train them close to home, they're more likely to stay there.

So, yes, there are vacancies, and nurses know when they train in Manitoba, there's a job waiting for them at the end of their training. I've been speaking to some graduates just coming out of University of Manitoba trading, and that's one of the things they spoke to me about is they know that when they finish their nurse training, there's a job waiting for them. And that's good news for them, and we'll just keep doing that. We've created more than 3,200 nursing positions across the health system since 2000. There are more than—well, as I've said, that number of 3,702 nurses practising in the province.

We're going to keep building better health facilities, we're going to keep creating new positions to better meet the needs of Manitobans, and we're going to keep recruiting. I mean, that's the difference between—if you do a freeze on health capital, then you—I guess you don't need more nurses. If

you continue to build new QuickCare clinics, ACCESS centres, if you continue to recruit more doctors—we're expanding ERs, we're building more personal-care-home beds. So, certainly, as we do that, then the need for more nurses increases, and we're committed to meet that need.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister did reference that the government made a commitment in 2011 to hire 2,000 nurses. As the government only has an ability to hire in the public system, can the minister just confirm that that commitment to hire 2,000 nurses was for the public health-care system? Because they have no hand in what happens outside of their own public health-care system.

So can she just confirm that the government made a—that commitment to hire 2,000 nurses within the public health-care system over which they have responsibility?

Ms. Selby: Mr. Chair, I believe that we have a responsibility to make sure that the people of Manitoba are getting the right care at the right time, that they're getting timely access, that they're getting good care. That does mean a variety of places that people will access that. It may be in a hospital. It may be in an ACCESS centre. It may be in a QuickCare clinic.

But, of course, plenty of people are going to a doctor in a primary-care clinic. We are moving towards primary-care networks, which are integrated systems of not just a doctor but a nurse practitioner, or there may be a dietitian, there may be a counsellor, a number of people that make up that primary-care commitment. So, again, we've committed to hiring 2,000 more nurses. We are, according to the 2013 data, well on our way of that. It shows that 1,907 of those nurses are practising. That is to replace—as I said earlier, there's about 1,230 who retired and needed to be replaced but a gain, as well, of 677.

So we are well on the way to having more nurses in Manitoba, whatever way you want to look at it, whatever chart you want to table, there are more nurses working in Manitoba now than there were under the previous government.

Mrs. Driedger: I don't think the minister understands, then, what that commitment meant because the commitment was very specific to saying that the Manitoba government made a commitment to hire 2,000 nurses. That means the commitment was to hire into the public system. Government can't

hire into doctors' offices or into private-duty businesses that offer private-duty nurses. The government can only hire into their own system.

So does the minister understand what that promise actually means, then? By her answer, she doesn't sound like she knows what that meant, and I think she needs to be clear that her commitment by her government was to hire 2,000 nurses. That being the case, I am wondering, if the minister looks at her own public system, since 2011, they've only filled 341 positions. They aren't anywhere close to 2,000 and, yet, both the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and other MLAs are out talking and taking credit for all these hirings that are going on in the private system. You can't take credit for that because that wasn't the promise. The promise was the government was going to hire—the government was going to hire—in its own system. So this NDP government is misrepresenting in a very, very colossal way, these numbers, trying to make things look better than what they are.

So I would like to ask the minister to explain to us why they are misrepresenting this one chart, when they cannot take credit for—well, it's not even meeting the commitment, I guess. Let's say that. It's not meeting the promise that the NDP made to hire 2,000 nurses within the public health-care system. If you hired them, I guess you could fill the vacancies that are there. That would be good. But, certainly, I think the minister doesn't—

* (11:00)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

As previously agreed by the House, the hour being 11 a.m., the time for the consideration of the concurrence motion this morning has elapsed. The committee is now in recess, to resume this afternoon.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Before we start private member's resolution, I just want to draw to the attention of honourable members, as I have for the last several days, that this is last day for our page Cara McCaskill. Cara is presently in grade 11 at River East Collegiate and will complete her grade 12 next year. She's—her grade average is 90 per cent or over. She will attend a university, not quite sure yet exactly what part of university, but she plans on going to university this fall.

Cara loves to cook and bake, and as members of the Chamber Branch can attest to the great cookies that she has provided to the Chamber Branch. Perhaps that she can have some cooking for members of the Assembly one time as well; that would be much appreciated, I'm sure. Her other interests include singing and playing the piano.

And Cara may be back next year to help out at the end of the sessions, and we very much appreciate her help through this session.

Thank you very much, Cara, and wish you well in your future endeavours.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS RESOLUTIONS

Res. 26—Northern Manitoba Mining Academy

Mr. Speaker: So now it is 11 a.m., and it's time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution under consideration this morning is entitled Northern Manitoba Mining Academy, sponsored by the honourable member for Spruce Woods.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko),

WHEREAS children and youth in Manitoba's North face many barriers that prevent them from entering the workforce; and

WHEREAS the mandate of the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy is to provide northern Manitoba residents access to mining-related training with the objective of creating a knowledgeable, skilled and sustainable workforce; and

WHEREAS the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy fills the skills gap by providing much-needed training for mining professionals who will support economic growth and mining development in areas like Flin Flon, Snow Lake and Sherridon; and

WHEREAS a partnership between the federal government, the City of Flin Flon, Hudbay Minerals, the Northern Manitoba Sector Council, the University College of the North and the University of Manitoba helped build the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy in 2011; and

WHEREAS the academy has enrolled 12 students for this term, ranging in ages from 18 to 30, coming from such diverse places as The Pas, Pukatawagan, Opaskwayak Cree Nation and Norway House; and

WHEREAS the academy provides industry-specific training, support for research in northern Manitoba and outreach activities to develop the next generation of the workforce for the mining industry; and

WHEREAS more than 600 participants took part in outreach activities of the academy in 2013 which will substantially benefit Manitoba's mining industry and contribute to a qualified workforce in the mineral resource sector; and

WHEREAS the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy serves an integral role in the province teaching northerners the specific skills that the northern economy needs to grow and prosper.

THEREFORE bear it—BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba congratulate the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy for graduating students who will be an—a tremendous benefit to northern Manitoba's mining sector.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Spruce Woods, seconded by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet,

WHEREAS children and youth in—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense. The resolution is in order.

Mr. Cullen: Certainly happy to bring this, I think, important resolution to the floor of the Chamber today. Certainly will give us an opportunity to talk about not just the mining academy in particular but an opportunity to talk about some of the, I would call them, challenges and opportunities in the mining sector, and certainly opportunities for Manitoba in general.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of comments in terms of how important mining is in Manitoba. Mining in Manitoba employs directly 4,500 people, 3,200 of those are employed directly with the operating mining companies, so certainly employing quite a number of people in Manitoba. On average, in fact, there's some of the highest salaries are in the mining sector. Certainly people starting in the sector can earn upwards of \$80,000 to \$100,000 just starting out. So it certainly is some tremendous opportunities for all Manitobans in that sector. Just looking at some of the salaries, for instance,

generated in the—in that sector, average per-year salaries are over \$300 million per year in salaries in this particular sector. So it certainly is very important to Manitoba's economy.

Just go back to 2013 production, production in the mining sector generated \$1.1 billion in terms of production, and that represents about a 3 and a half per cent of our gross domestic product of the province of Manitoba. So certainly very important—and to the province of Manitoba, certainly, it's an opportunity for the Province to generate some income as well. In fact, from the period of 2007 to 2013 the payments to the government out of the mining sector were just under \$650 million. So certainly the resource is a good resource to the government of Manitoba as well.

In terms of the mining academy itself, I think the industry saw a need for development of skilled labour for—more the industry and, certainly, in talking with the companies, I think they still face challenges in terms of bringing people into that sector and keeping—training them and keeping them in that sector. So they've had to try to develop some innovative ways to make sure that the people were qualified for the sector and then the next challenge was to keep them in that sector. So I think what they're trying to focus on now is trying to bring in northern labour, people that are living in those communities and bring them in into the workforce and get them trained and then bringing them into the workforce. And they're finding that those people are more apt to stay in those jobs as opposed to bringing somebody in from, say, southern Manitoba or other jurisdictions where they're somewhat not accustomed to the northern living and the northern environment, and the track record has been somewhat questionable in terms of bringing in what I would call foreign workers to northern Manitoba.

So, clearly, the industry saw a need for the training and development, hopefully, of the northern workforce, and this is where the concept of the mining academy came to light. So back in 2012, in that area, this was a joint venture. A real impetus on this was from HudBay Minerals who actually provided some land for the academy and also provided a fairly substantial capital investment in the facility as well. Certainly, HudBay are very committed to this particular college, and I had the opportunity, actually, to visit the college just not too long ago, and it's on property right adjacent to HudBay, the facility right there in Flin Flon. So it's a very nice facility and certainly glad to have the

opportunity to tour that particular facility. So in terms of the academy itself, HudBay certainly was involved.

Both the Province of Manitoba and the federal government were involved in the establishment of the college. The University College of the North plays an important role then and still does in terms of the mining academy. Clearly, the Northern Manitoba Sector Council was involved and continues to be involved, and I should say they are—a—certainly, an organization that understands the importance of training people in the North for opportunities in the North and they—I just want to acknowledge the good work of the Northern Manitoba Sector Council.

Clearly, the town of Flin Flon, the City of Flin Flon was also important in developing the mining academy and continues to be to this day, and the University of Manitoba, as well, have played a role in developing the mining academy.

* (11:10)

So it's kind of a unique venture, and I think it highlights the opportunities and things that can actually be done in terms of training, where we have the business side of things hands-on. We have the education system involved, and then we have the students involved. So I think it's a real opportunity and something that we should be maybe looking at in other sectors, as well, in terms of a model where we can bring people in, train them for a specific skill set and then target them right into the business.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few more things about the academy. It's great to see we have students from all across Manitoba and a lot of First Nations students, as well, there. I think that this is a real opportunity for our First Nations students, and it provides them some real classroom and hands-on training, as well, so they get to know about the geology. They also have the opportunity to get some hands-on training. There—actually, the academy there has a simulator room, which certainly gives students the opportunity to get some real hands-on in terms of operating equipment. And, certainly, with the geology and the wet labs that they have at the facility, they have video conferencing facilities, mining and geosciences library, it's certainly interesting, the opportunities that people will have there at the academy.

And I think it's certainly a very worthwhile venture. And the academy, I think is a 'fantastic' example of a program that has successfully trained

skilled workers, expanded career opportunities and reduced the economic and social barriers that northerners encounter in pursuing an education in the geological and environmental sciences, Mr. Speaker. It's so much better when you can do some schooling when you're very close to home as opposed to having to travel great distances.

Having said that, I think there is opportunities in the mining sector in Manitoba. I'll just maybe point out a few of the challenges that the sector is facing at this point in time. Clearly, the markets are, certainly, for the most part, down from where they have been, and that's certainly—the companies are facing some economic challenges in that regard.

In looking at some of the numbers here, as well, Mr. Speaker, we just saw the RBC report come out this week where the output in the—in that sector was actually down 11 per cent in 2013. That reflects both a decrease in the production and also a decrease in, to some extent, in the value of those commodities. So 11 per cent reduction in output in 2013 is certainly not a good sign. If we look back from where we were in 2010 until today, our total gross sales are down 33 per cent in that sector, so that certainly has an impact on not only the workers there, but also the economy, and the economy of Manitoba will have a negative impact with that reduction in sales.

And that also will impact, to some degree, the income of the provincial government, so it's something that the government certainly has to look at as well. And, certainly, the Province plays an important role in terms of making permits available on a timely fashion and, certainly, permitting delays can cause problems with the companies as well. We have a lot of policy issues that have to be addressed by the provincial government, not the least of which is the, of course, the duty to consult, which has to be ironed out, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing I could just point out in closing is that, certainly, the exploration is the future of mining in Manitoba, and we've seen the dollars decrease here in the province of Manitoba, so those are certainly challenges in the industry.

But I do want to take the opportunity to thank the mining academy for the great work they do and wish them all the best in the future. Thank you.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Thanks for allowing me to say a few words on this PMR.

Little confusion: I have always been talking about the love train going north, and it's almost like

the member from Spruce Woods has maybe hitched onto the caboose and realized the potential—potential—in the North. And there are some great things he brought up, which I want to clarify.

The Northern Manitoba Mining Academy is a result of a great team effort, and I want to make sure that we all know who is on that team: the mining industry, the college—University College of the North, the Northern Manitoba Sector Council, the federal government, the City of Flin Flon, the Province of Manitoba, the University of Manitoba. And, believe it or not, we even had Saskatchewan in there because some of the people taking the courses actually resided in Saskatchewan at the Northlands College. So there was kind of a partnership there. We're working on something maybe through the Flin Flon hotel, which is in Flin Flon, to some accommodation there.

But like the member from Spruce Woods says, it's an opportunity for northern youth, for Aboriginals, to take advantage of one of the few industries in the North, and mining, of course, is the industry I'm talking about. It's a great industry that pays well, and the future looks good for mining in the North. Along with Lalor and Reed Lake, many mines have been opened up. I know in the Flin Flon area, there's over 20 mines have been opened up in—or probably more than 20 in the last 80 years. Of course, with mining, there's always an end to some of these mines, so you're always looking for new ore and to find things.

I just want to say, give you a little history lesson on what it was to be a miner. To be a miner, all's you had to be is 175 pounds, and you went underground. There was no education. There was no training. When you went to HudBay, and that's where I went, HudBay, if you were 175 pounds, then they looked at you for going underground.

When you were there, you were working with some of the senior miners or older miners to learn the trade. And that's the way it progressed for 80 years. Some of the equipment we used, Mr. Speaker, was unbelievable, unbelievably small, because now—like, the table that we have in the centre there would be your machine that you use to load up the ore and all that—now, the machine that goes underground are huge. There's—their grade or whatever can haul, like, you know, tons and tons of ore.

So, now, there's training. And the Manitoba mining school offers that training. And it takes

students, whether they're Aboriginal or just northern youth, and train them in the art of going underground. And believe me, it is an art. Every day when I went underground there was always—you always worried, are you going to come back, because the mining techniques back then were not safe, of course. At one time, you didn't wear earphones, and it was so loud down there, many of the older miners lost their hearing. You didn't have safety glasses. You didn't even have a safety rope. You just went down there.

So, through the unions and the work with unions, safety became a priority. You had to put rock bolts up in areas of—when you were underground, to make sure that it was safe. A rock bolt can go anywhere from two feet to 16 feet that would hold or stop the rock from caving in. We still have cave-ins and we still have injuries, but, of course, they've cut down.

The mining school trains these students in what to look for when you are underground. It trains you in the machines. And some of the training programs have are exploration technical program, a certificate program preparing the students through—to experience field work as they conduct exploration activities and geophysical surveys; drill coring, these are people that work out with prospectors or the geologists out in the field; field skills camp, a practical field course providing introductory skills in forestry and other natural resource management field work. This is making cut lines. All this is related to mining.

Mineral science technology, a secondary school student introductory program in mining and mineral exploration industries whereby students obtain credit towards high school graduation. Some of the students we get at the mining school have to be upgraded, so through UCN, the great UCN program, we then take these students and upgrade so their skills can understand the computers that they might be using.

Safety-related training, arrange a stand-alone course including fall protection, WHMIS, tag, ATV, snowmobile operation, winter safety driving, H₂S awareness, first aid and others. These are all courses to make the environment safer. Underground mining, a program accessing the ThoroughTec underground mining simulator in the MMMA with HudBay Minerals training of new operators for work underground—I've been on the simulator and, believe me, I would have caused thousands of dollars if

I was actually training on the actual machine. But with the simulator you get a really hands-on experience and how to drive these things underground.

* (11:20)

Mining academy students receive hands-on applied learning in geoscience, environmental science related to mining and mineral processing. Manitoba training programs regularly offer industry-focused contact training. This year, for example, nine students of NMMA are expected to graduate in exploration technology. The Province is also moving forward with a \$180,000-grant to UCN to create even more opportunity for students, including exposure to the simulators.

I just want to talk about—I guess, the great philosopher Yoda once said, there's no trying, there's only doing, and our government has taken it upon themselves to make sure that the students of northern Manitoba, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students have this opportunity. They have done their homework. They have done courses that will help these students and I—like I say, the minister from—or the member from Spruce Woods has taken me aback in that he's also saying the good things about the mine school, which I thank him for doing, and I just have to say that our government is always thinking about the North, always thinking about the possible, always thinking about the opportunities.

When we look at the Golden Boy we see him holding wheat, but remember the Golden Boy is made out of solid gold made from the North—I mean, that's what I was told—and so I please everybody for recognizing that.

I also want to say that it's always an honour to speak about my constituency, and the mining school, yes, is a feather in our hat; yes, is a great opportunity for people in my constituency and, yes, it's about mining in the North. And we're looking for other opportunities, whether it's gold, uranium, copper, silver, we're all looking for all the minerals up there so that we can all benefit. We're working with First Nations so they, too, can take part in this great resource.

We also got to remember that the environment is important and, like I say, Yoda said we're not trying; we're doing. Yes, we're doing everything possible to make sure the environment is first. We've made some mistakes in the past; we've got to correct those, and we are. I know the mine reclamation fund is working

on different mines throughout the North, that things went astray and tailings and that were just—there was no law or rules about the tailings. So we're trying to clean that up so I really applaud the government for doing that.

Also, I have to say that there is a bright future. I know in Lynn Lake, Carlisle mines is thinking very optimistic about gold mining there. I know in Leaf Rapids they're searching. We're looking for things in that mining town. Thompson, as you know, with Vale is continuing working and continue an agreement that they will continue with the smelting.

So I'm very optimistic about mining in the North.

I really applaud the government for standing up and saying we are going to do some training in the North, not in the south, for miners, for the opportunities. And thank God, like I say, that when we sit here and our little minds are thinking about what we're doing for Manitoba, we can stand up and say we're not just looking at parts of Manitoba, we're looking at all of Manitoba and, like I say, the great philosopher Yoda said, we're not trying, we're doing.

Thank you.

Point of Order

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Point of order.

Mr. Goertzen: I want all my colleagues in the House this morning to welcome the many young students from Southwood school in Steinbach here today and wish them well as they head into their summer holidays and they enjoy their tour of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Steinbach, while I can appreciate his sentiments, I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: But on that note, before we proceed to the next speaker on the resolution, we do, indeed, have guests from Southwood school with us this morning. We have 80 grade 4 students under the direction of Lana Daley, and this group was located in the constituency of the honourable member for Steinbach.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome all of you here this morning.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure today to put a few words on the record to the private member's resolution, Northern Manitoba Mining Academy, brought forward by my colleague from Spruce Woods.

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely interesting that the member from Flin Flon stands up and he talks about how his government is busy thinking; they're thinking about the North, they're thinking about this, they're thinking about that. But the fact is that a lot of the—whilst this member is busy thinking, there's not enough action going on, and as the member from Spruce Woods pointed out many, many times—and I know that the Minister for Jobs and the Economy is looking forward to getting up and putting a few words on the record, so I guess she'll have her chance in a little bit.

As far as the action goes, we're talking our mining. I mean, Mr. Speaker, we were first in mining. Now what are we? We're 23rd or 26th, somewhere down there, and it just seems that we're sliding fast into a great big shaft and—or a hole, and not the ones that we should be developing, and that's in the North or even out my way.

So, we're going to get going on the Manitoba mining academy right away, and I know that the member from Gimli sounds like he wants to put a few words on the record, so I'll just take a few minutes and then allow them to do so.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy plays a pivotal role in our province, teaching northerners the specific skills that the northern economy needs to grow and prosper. Through the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy, students have the opportunity to achieve their potential by attending a world-class educational institution within the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's mining industry plays an important role in our economic growth and development as a province. We know that the mining industry employs roughly 4,500 people in this wonderful province of ours, and it attracts people from all across this country and internationally as well. Our mining industry employs, again, as I said,

thousands. They've got—in the various fields across the whole industry, we've got mineral extraction, camp catering, transportation, site service, aircraft support and contract mining, to name a few.

Manitoba's mining industry has many competitive strengths and much untapped potential, especially in the North where large areas of high mineral potential remain underexplored when compared with similar regions elsewhere in Canada. This represents a potential avenue for considerable growth in Manitoba's mineral sector and may provide significant employment opportunities for northern and Aboriginal communities near new mineral exploration and development projects.

The Northern Manitoba Mining Academy fills a gap in skills training by providing northerners with academic instruction, hands-on experience and resources to achieve their potential and contribute to growing our northern economy.

Opened on October 1st, 2012, the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy is a joint venture of HudBay Minerals Inc., one of the largest miners in the province of Manitoba, the University College of the North, Northern Manitoba Sector Council, governments of Manitoba and Canada, the City of Flin Flon, the University of Manitoba and many, many other hard-working stakeholders. It is a unique example of what can occur when governments, business and the post-secondary sectors join to create positive social and economic change in our province. Many of the equipment and expertise at the academy is provided by industry and government resources, Mr. Speaker.

Since its inception, the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy has attracted students from all across northern Manitoba, from places as diverse as The Pas, Pukatawagan, Opaskwayak Cree Nation and Norway House.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that I've been working quite diligently with the First Nation communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to tap into this wonderful resource in our province as well, because we also have San Gold on our side and we've also got Tanco, which also I know for many, many conversations with them, they are constantly seeking skilled trades, skilled workers in their industry out on the east side of the lake as well.

* (11:30)

The academy has groundbreaking tools and resources that students can use to aid their education.

Geology and wet labs, video-conferencing facilities and a mining and geosciences library and the first underground mining equipment simulators in the province are just a few examples of the innovative learning materials available at the academy. The unique topography of Flin Flon is the perfect location for students to research and understand the geological formations in the area. The mining academy will attract explorationists, academics and researchers across Canada and the world, as I mentioned before.

The mining academy is committed to being flexible in terms of instruction with courses to be developed in response to industry needs. For example, if HudBay or another company to set up another underground mine in a new location, relevant training will be offered at the academy to prepare students for new work opportunities.

This program is inclusive of all students from diverse ages and racial and economic backgrounds. Some students are self-supporting their education while others have received scholarships from their band councils. The Northern Manitoba Mining Academy uniquely blends practical and academic training to help students achieve their full potential. Students spent 12 weeks in a classroom followed by a work experience at a mining firm up north. Most of the work for the program is done outside and starts in January when the frozen tundra and water make it easier for exploration teams of students to get around outside.

The academy has also helped to inspire a new cohort of students from the career-track Children Rising Program based out of The Pas and surrounding communities. This program exposes 120 students to a wide range of occupations and professions.

Before I conclude, there are a number of people and organizations who I'd like to recognize for their dedication to developing the northern mining—the Manitoba morning—I apologize, Mr. Speaker—northern mining academy in Manitoba. First, I would like to acknowledge HudBay Minerals for their generous financial contribution that helped make this program go from dream to reality. I would also like to thank and congratulate the current president of UCN, Mr. Konrad Jonasson, and his staff for their continued investment and efforts in supporting the program.

The Northern Manitoba Sector Council also deserves recognition for their commitment to

expanding employment opportunities up north. And, lastly, I would like to recognize the students for their hard work, their dedication, and this is why this program exists, and we wish them the best of luck as they continue their education. And, again, it was a great pleasure to put a few words on the record, Mr. Speaker, and so I will allow some other people to stand up and put a few words. Thank you.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): It's a great pleasure for me to rise and put a few words on the record for this resolution brought forward by the member from Spruce Woods.

It's really a surprise to see that the resolution is trying to praise the University College of the North, which I understand, at times, they were not really happy with. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that Northern Manitoba Mining Academy is a collaboration of University College of the North, Northern Manitoba Sector Council, Government of Canada, University of Manitoba, City of Flin Flon and our government here in Manitoba.

And I think since I joined the government in 2003, I remember the excitement of building the North. And if you look at how do we build the North unless you have academic and practical training facilities right where you want to build. The tremendous amount of Aboriginal population living up in the North needed some kind of a college, some kind of a training institute that trains them and makes them fit to go back to the—or go to join the workforce. So this is the concept, Mr. Speaker, that I was very pleased with, and I remember every hour of that excitement when the college was opened, the university college was opened in the North. And I had, at one time, visited The Pas, and I remember that particular institute that didn't have too many students, but today, I understand they're doing very well because it is now going to work with the local population plus, as well as, from people from other areas of Manitoba go and attend.

Mining is, as the member from Flin Flon said, a very, very risky business in terms of if you are not trained, you could hurt yourself. I was born in a state, Mr. Speaker, in India that's called Jharkhand that primarily is a mining state. It has a lot of mines, a lot of mineral resources. And last year when I went and visited, met the chief minister who is himself from an Aboriginal community, and his theme was also, basically, to try to build and develop mining and mineral resources development including building some institution technology colleges to support that.

So this is a very good example of seeing how developmental lands are very focused on what you want to achieve. If you want to build an industry, you need a workforce and you need, naturally, you need the resources.

So I understand our government has taken a very proactive and very encouraging motivational approach to encourage people who want to invest in mining and build the mines. But it is mostly in the North, and some are, of course, in the south area here—border of Saskatchewan.

But, I think, we look at this particular institute which is the northern mining-Manitoba Mining Academy and see what they do is train people for exploration technician program, field skills camp, mineral science technology, safety related training, underground mining, and these are very, very important.

At one time I remember when my friend who went to work as an engineer in the mining school, which was one of the most prestigious institutes in India at one time called Indian School of Mines and geology, that was very tough to get admission into. Once you graduate, employment was hundred per cent guaranteed, and it was very challenging to see when these engineers go underground. At that time there was no communication; you are trapped inside and then you could, perhaps, lose your life.

But today's wireless technology and, kind of, communications and rescue technology is helping the industry to be as safe as it could possibly be. So I am happy to see Manitoba's northern strategy is working on building the mining industry supported by the mining institute technology training, and this particular academy is doing a great job. Yes, we need to congratulate them for doing a fantastic job.

As I mentioned to you, that—earlier I think I had mentioned this. When our minister and I went to—four or five years back—in one of the functions in Toronto which is the developmental conference of various—no, international conference, and mostly there are mining people that they come and speak. And at that time I took very serious objection on the Ontario host who were trying to really get—there were four ministers and they were talking about Ontario and Toronto. And so I got a little excited when I spoke, and I said to the guest visitors that Canada is not only Ontario and mining is not only in Ontario. If you know the Inco mines and nickel, Manitoba is equally if not better than other provinces in some sort of mineral resources. So I was very—but

surprised to see that they knew about Inco mines, but they did not know as much about Manitoba's North and the future. And I mentioned that we have resources underground in the North that need to be explored, and I think our government has built an initiative that if people want to explore, there are funds available to do that. And I think here we have—like, it's called Mineral Exploration Assistance Program. It will double in 2013-14 to \$3 million. It's the most generous mineral exploration assistance program in Canada.

So these are some of the things we should take great pride in. We are building the North and we are building this on this particular philosophy of making the natural resources grow with the people who are there, train them, and this academy is doing their job.

* (11:40)

I think another thing was when we were talking—still we are talking about manufacturing batteries here for the electric cars, and we have got resources here; we have got cadmium, we have nickel, we have zinc, we have lithium. So all these mineral resources are right here, and we are very fortunate that we have even potash reserves.

So all these ideas to make sure that the mining industry grows, you need a professional institute to train people who are future employees. And I think one of the advantages which we have here is to train our Aboriginal youth who are going to be much better utilized by working in that industry which is right there in their backyard.

So with these thoughts, Mr. Speaker, I will give opportunity to other speakers here. So I like to (a) thank the member from Spruce Woods to bring this and (b) thank our government to get the great support we are doing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): It's my pleasure to rise to this House today to put a few words on record to support the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy, and bringing it up by the member of Spruce Woods.

The Northern Manitoba Mining Academy plays a pivotal role in our province, teaching northerners the specific skills for the northern economy needs to grow and prosper. Through the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy, students have the opportunity to achieve their potential by attending world-class

education institution within the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba mining industry plays an important role in our economic growth in the development of our province. And unlike the member of Flin Flon said, that the—all the miners are up in the northern Manitoba, there's actually miners here in southern Manitoba, too, unlike the members of opposite don't realize; they don't realize there's a flood going on in southwestern Manitoban either, with our energy industry at crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in the Roblin-Russell area in Langenburg. I lived—grew up in the three—the tri-area of that—of these three towns. And the Esterhazy mine employs many miners from Manitoba; many Manitobans who play taxes, they work at the Esterhazy mine.

When the Esterhazy mine was first built in 1960, my dad was one of the first employees to work at the mine, and he worked there until he decided to run a dairy farm. And many of my relatives who live in the area, of the Russell area, have worked at the Esterhazy mine; some were accountants, some were electricians, some were miners. And it was a—very important for the economic growth in the Russell, Langenburg, Churchill-Churchbridge, Esterhazy area, and it brought—it kept a lot of people into the area. And it's very important for the western side of Manitoba too.

The other thing is that—the big thing is here is my brother actually is a miner, and he lives in Dropmore, Manitoba, and he goes to work and works 12-hour shifts at the Esterhazy mine. And I—after having conversations with him, I have a respect of what miners go through, and when he tells me the stories of, you know, how they go into the mine every day for 12-hour shifts—and they have a very good safety record, and I think in Canada we do have a very good safety record and I think this program that we're talking about today really states that how important safety really is and to mines.

Back in the—or, 2005, I remember there was a quite a few disasters, mining disasters, coal mine disasters in the United States and—we also heard about that one in Chile that was—that the—all the miners were saved.

But one weekend I came back from Bismarck, North Dakota, and when I came back from Bismarck, North Dakota, I got a phone call from my mom. She was telling me that there was a fire at the

Esterhazy mine, and my brother was one of the ones that were in the mine trapped. And we sort—they sort of had some indications that they—most of them got to the safety room that they were provided. And I think in Canada it was so good to have that safety room because it was important for the safety of our miners. And for 48 hours we didn't know what the fate of my brother was. And it was important to have that room.

Finally, after 48 hours, my brother resurfaced with everyone; everybody survived, and it was so good to see that. And I'm here today to talk about that because I think this is so important to train all our miners how important it is, the safety and—of our mines, and the opportunity that we have in western Manitoba to develop our potash mines here too, and not just in northern Manitoba but in southern Manitoba too.

But it's important to develop that northern Manitoba, too, because I think it's so much opportunity in northern Manitoba. That's why our Golden Boy is actually facing north because there's big opportunities out there. And we're underdeveloped, and I think there could be more opportunities, like the member from Spruce Woods, who is our critic for mining, says there's opportunities there for development. I think, in this situation here, we have a lot of red tape that this government has right now, and I think there's an opportunity that we can open that up and prosper here in this province.

And, like I said, it being that I have family members who are in the mining industry, I really do believe that the schooling is so important for the North and how it diversifies the opportunity to employ the First Nation people and diversity of including women. I think they're a pivotal role when it comes to the mining sector too.

Building up the communities of the North, like Flin Flon and Thompson and Snow Lake, I had a good friend who worked in the Snow Lake mine. Unfortunately, there things were not so—were bleak, but he actually went to Saskatchewan to work at the diamond mines. But now Snow Lake is coming back, and that's good. I think there's more opportunities for iron ore, for gold, for nickel. And I think as we are—globalization right now, I think there's great opportunity to reinvest in our sector here.

And it's so good that the actual private sector actually put money in, too. And I think that's an important understanding that it is so important to

work with our private sectors, work with companies to embrace that because the government can't keep on spending money like we are right now to develop, to reinvest. I think we need the private sector to do that for us, and we believe that that's the important thing on this side of the—of our—of this Chamber here.

And, again, I just want to finish it off by saying that this program we truly support and it's so important, again, for the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): As most people know, I was a student of UCN and, actually, I consider the North my second home. It's the place I've lived second longest in my life, was up North. The first place is, obviously, down south in my riding. But I've been up north and I've been to 4,200 feet below ground. I've operated a bolter and screened on a ceiling in a mine, and I was—actually, when I was down there, there was a cave-in in the next room next to us and over a huge chunk of the ceiling came down, about the size of an F150, actually, came down in the room next to us and we all had to move out while they made sure everything was safe.

So I think that mining is super important to our province, and, I mean, we've seen all the people that were employed there, I've talked to them, and they do get paid very well. And I think it's fascinating. I definitely support this resolution in principle, but—and I definitely support the mining academy. I mean, I think it's—they're a fantastic thing. But I think it's interesting that the member brought this forward, and in his WHEREASes, I guess maybe he just forgot to include the provincial government when he thanked everybody under the sun but doesn't include the provincial government for their role in establishing the mining academy. But, you know, I'm sure that was just omission on his part.

You know, I look at what's gone on in the North and in the mines with HudBay and Vale and the regulations that we've helped bring in and form and how the safety has really turned. It used to be that they would have dozens of deaths in a year, and now they're one of the safest industries to work in. So I really commend HudBay and Vale for working with our safety folks and making a really safe program. When I was down there I know that was paramount. Safety is the No. 1 thing that they look at. So, you know, I think that's a great example of a partnership between a government and companies is working on

safety to make sure that the workers come home safely every day so they can end up enjoying their lives and spending that wonderful income they make down there in the mines.

Now, the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen) talked about challenges on skilled labour. Well, then I wonder why on earth would he vote against the increases for our education funding and why on earth they would vote against the apprenticeship bill that we just brought in.

So it's kind of hypocritical to talk about one aspect and then another. And we just heard from the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk) saying, you know, that it's important about the private sector and that the government can't do everything. And then we heard from the member for Spruce Woods saying that, well, we need to help them out.

Well, which is it? They don't like subsidies. We've seen that with the Canadian Tire. When we give them some incentives to build and expand here, they spoke against bringing in those jobs. When we helped E.H. Price with some great MIOP loans and some expansions, 175 jobs, they spoke against that. But now they want us to throw money at the mining industry. Oh, wait, but we did put more money into exploration and the mining industry by doubling it last year, and what did they do? Oh, they voted against it. So it's really interesting to hear them flip-flop and talk about where they stand because you know what, Mr. Speaker? That's a question I actually have lately is where do they stand. We don't really know where they stand.

* (11:50)

You know, the member opposite, we're talking about jobs. Well, in 1999 there was only 4,800 people employed in the mining sector, which now employs 6,300. So, you know, they're talking about jobs. Well, yes, that's—our government has helped with the exploration. The biggest mine in the history of this province, Lalor, when I was up there, actually, they were talking about developing it, and now it's a reality and it's one of the biggest explorations in the history of the province and it's going to implore more people—employ more people.

You know, the member from—for Lac du Bonnet talks about wonderful supports from post-secondary—I think those were his exact words—that the post-secondary industry supports this. Well, then why wouldn't he include in the resolution the supports from the Manitoba government? Because if

post-secondary is supporting the mining industry—or the mining academy, who supports the post-secondary industry? Our government, the one that they voted against when it came to funding increases for post-secondary. So it's kind of this flip-floppy thing that they go on. They say that, you know, we're not supporting it, but then they vote against it when we do support things that they want us to support.

He spoke about scholarships. These are the same scholarships that weren't available in the '90s when they were in government, the same scholarships they cut out. Now you can have them. So there's another support because we actually support people in school with scholarships.

The member for Lac du Bonnet wants to put his—put money up. Well, why don't they vote for the funds? When we increased funding for education, they voted against it. When we increased funding for safety, they voted against it. When we increased funding for mine exploration, they voted against it. I think that we're seeing a pattern here.

In fact, for 2014-15 we're going to be increasing the funding 2 per cent, and 2 per cent's a really important number here because that's the number that the opposition has thrown out that they want to cut across the board. Now, I know they like to run from that number and they backpedal and they say, no, it's only 1 per cent and some job cuts. And then they backpedal even further and they run from that number, and then it's 1 per cent with no job cuts. And then they backpedal and say, we're going to get rid of the GST, and then they—or PST, and then they run the PST 1 per cent. But then they run from that number, and now the PST might have to stay.

It seems like they're doing a lot of running on that side. They must be in really good shape because they surely like to run from their record a lot. I know they like to run from floods too. You know, when I was down at 4,200-foot level, I talked to those guys that worked down there, and you know what? They appreciate our safety initiatives. They like what we do. They don't believe for a second that the opposition is on their side and going to be voting for anything that's going to help them out.

You know, the minister tabled costs just yesterday in the House. He tabled costs about mines. You know what the biggest cost driver for a mine is? Energy. Mr. Speaker, you know what we have? Low energy prices because we have a publicly owned Manitoba Hydro system. You know who he said the

only people that were actually lower for energy? Kuwait.

Now, as the members opposite voted against everything we've done, they voted against—they want market rates. Well, guess what that would do to the mining industry? It would devastate it when it doubled its prices. They want to send that mining work to countries that don't have the same safety regulations as we do because they're saying, well, you know, all these companies, these 20 countries—well, look what's happening in those countries: cave-ins and deaths.

We have—it might be a little higher of a cost to mine here, but that's because there's safety involved. We have safety for people. We don't allow those mines to do what they're doing in other parts of the world, which is just drill recklessly and have people die. But we know that the members opposite don't care about safety; they voted against it.

The member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen) talked about how important it was for education to be close at home. Well, why didn't they build the UCN when they had 10 years in power? They didn't build it, we did, \$82-million investment in Thompson. Oh, and we're going to see another pattern here; they voted against that as well. They voted against the UCN campus up in The Pas where I took my schooling. Mr. Speaker, they voted against it. It's all lip service from them. They want to talk about supporting the education system. They want to talk about all of these wonderful things that they claim that they would do, but the reality is when you look at their record, they didn't do it and nor will they do it because they voted against all of our funding initiatives to do the very things that they claim that they would want to do.

The member for Spruce Woods talked about funding exploration. Well, why did he vote against it? Why did he vote against us doubling the funding exploration if it's so important to them? I'm not quite sure where they stand. You know, they don't want to help Price Industries. They don't want to help Canadian Tire, but they want to help mines, but they won't vote for the credits. What is it? I mean, we need to nail them down on a position. Is it 2 per cent cuts across the board? Is it 1 per cent and job losses? Is it 1 per cent and no job losses? Is it getting rid of the PST 1 per cent? Is it not getting rid of the PST 1 per cent? Is it funding colleges? Is it not funding colleges? All of these things are questions that

Manitobans want to know. Obviously, they don't know where they stand. How could anybody in their right mind vote for these people when they have no idea of where they stand? They vote against safety, they vote against apprentices, they vote against funding for colleges and for universities. It's just mind-boggling, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I just—like I said, I support this resolution but I have to say that I'm really disappointed that the members opposite took the chance to write something like this and not include the provincial government. But, I guess, it's just like their leader; they like to run from the truth and the facts. They run from it because they don't want to admit that we actually are doing things that are helping because this industry is supported by us, by the provincial government. You know, they want to run from all of the stuff that they talk about all the time. They run from their labour. They like to walk in the labour walk, but then they'll vote against it. But then they want to run from that, that they voted against it.

It's a pattern with them, Mr. Speaker, and I'm really hoping that Manitobans will wake up and see what the Leader of the Opposition is really about and realize that he is about nothing. He's willing to say whatever he can to get elected, and the mining industry and this academy would suffer underneath the Leader of the Opposition because their reckless cuts of 2 per cent across the board to education would make sure that skilled trades are not educated in this province—that would make sure that they're going elsewhere. That is the reality.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on the resolution?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: House ready for the question?

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

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, will you canvass the House to see if there's agreement to call it 12 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to consider 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, June 12, 2014

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