

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Gimli	
<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

I must inform the House that Peter Bjornson, the honourable member for Gimli, has resigned his seat in the House effective August 7th, 2015. I am therefore tabling his resignation and my letter to the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council advising of the vacancy created in the House membership.

And also I must inform the House that Erin Selby, the honourable member for Southdale, has resigned her seat in the House effective September 4th, 2015. I am therefore tabling her resignation and my letter to the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council advising of the vacancy created in the House membership.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Good morning and welcome back, Mr. Speaker.

First, on a matter of House business, I think there is a willingness to make a couple of statements regarding the federal election which happened yesterday. We are in a House of democracy. I believe the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and I'm sure that the independent member, the lone Liberal in this House, will be looking to make a couple of comments.

And while I do want to acknowledge Mr. Bjornson and his resignation, and we wish him well

in his future endeavours, yesterday was always a historic day whenever we have a democracy—

Mr. Speaker: Before we start, I have to check with the House if there's leave to allow for these statements to occur.

Is there leave of the House to allow the members mentioned to make brief comments regarding the federal election? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Whenever we have an election in Canada it's historic because it shows the strength of our democracy.

I believe that there were a few members and former members of this House who were running in the election yesterday. I hope I don't miss anything. I'm sure that the member for Kildonan, who has more history in this House than I do, will correct me if I do miss somebody.

But we want to congratulate MaryAnn Mihychuk, who was elected yesterday. We want to congratulate, of course, our former colleague Larry Maguire, who was re-elected; Jim Carr, who was elected; and, of course, Kevin Lamoureux. And Mr. Lamoureux and I had a brief discussion yesterday and I offered him our congratulations and I know that he'll continue to serve his constituents well in whatever role he is provided in the future. Also Erin Selby, who you acknowledged, Mr. Speaker, had resigned. Everyone who puts their name on a ballot does a service to the democratic process that we have in Canada, and she did as well. And so we thank her for running and for being part of that democratic process.

Of course, we also want to echo the comments that were made last night by different leaders of the national parties, and thank Prime Minister Harper for his service in office as the Prime Minister for more than a decade. I believe that his legacy will be one of open trade, not only the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which has been announced but not yet ratified, but also bilateral agreements over the last number of years and other trade agreements as well as a low-tax regime. And I think that history will treat him well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how people will view his legacy as our Prime Minister.

Also, to Mr. Mulcair and to Elizabeth May, we thank them for their leadership and their campaigns over the last few months in this long federal election, Mr. Speaker, and now, Prime Minister-elect Justin Trudeau. We all benefit when Canada does well, and so we of course wish him well and we wish well for his Cabinet and for his team as they go forward in forming a government.

Most of all we thank Canadians who voted, because our democratic process is made strong by those who go to the polls and those who exercise their democratic right. I think there was a good turnout yesterday. It was an improvement over 2011, and we hope that sets the pattern for the future.

So we wish all of those who ran success in their future. We thank all of those who put their name on a ballot. And, of course, we wish those who are going on to other things well in those careers, and those who will continue on in government success, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of Canada.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for providing leave to speak to this matter. I think it's very important that we acknowledge the fact that Canadians chose a different direction yesterday under the—as is wont, as is appropriate under democratic system. They chose a change towards something I think that is significant.

I want to thank all the leaders and all the people who have participated across the country. It was a true expression of democracy. Everyone who stands for election provides a public service. Everyone who participates and who works an election campaign is doing so out of a commitment to something that we cherish and which is very, very precious, and that is our democratic system and the right and the ability to take our seats and to leave our seats and to have a government transition that is peaceful and done without rancour and done in a very—in a fashion that has been part of the parliamentary system for centuries. It's always been very impressive to me that that can and will occur.

I want to also concur with the election, both successes and failures of all former members of this Chamber, all of whom I had the pleasure of sitting with, including Mr. Carr, Mr. Lamoureux, Ms. Selby, Mr. Maguire—[interjection]—oh, and Ms. Mihychuk, who I had the pleasure of sitting in Cabinet with as well.

And just—I just want to close by indicating that I think that Canadians voted for a different direction, one of compassion and one of inclusiveness, which I think all members of this Chamber would welcome as we move forward.

And to all of those in this Chamber now, and to all those in the future, I think we should look to the example of how change can occur and how we can be part of that change and improve the lot of all Canadians.

So with those few words, I'd like to thank the House for leave.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me extend a compliment to Peter Bjornson and Erin Selby. They have made, both of them, significant contributions in this House as Cabinet ministers, and I believe we should thank them for their contributions.

* (10:10)

Last night was a powerful statement from Canadians across the country. It was a tide of change, as we have from time to time in Canada and in other democracies, and I want to say, quite frankly, that I'm pretty excited about the change as a Liberal, and I welcome the approach that Justin Trudeau will be taking as Prime Minister to listen more closely to scientists, to being more open to new immigrants from places like Syria, which has been so badly affected, and looking to an environment where there are the additional investments in infrastructure and in innovation which, I think, are so important to making progress.

I also think that it is significant that when we have seen campaigns from time to time, and I think particularly recently, focus on negative advertising and things like that, that it was a welcome breath of fresh air to have a campaign in which Justin Trudeau focused more on the positive in terms of the vision for the future and less on trying to make personal attacks. And I think it's healthy that people were responding to that and I think that that's something, as we move forward, that it's always important to us to remember, as politicians, that we should be setting an example, that we should be open, inclusive and welcoming and presenting, you know, a positive vision of who we are and trying to enable voters to decide based on that vision rather than on attacks on others.

I think in Manitoba we have clearly had significant change. I want to congratulate

Kevin Lamoureux on his re-election. He has worked hard and barely scraped through before, but last night he piled up a huge majority and I think that speaks well for how well he is thought of in the north part of Winnipeg and the kind of job that he has done for many years, and I'm sure will continue to do.

I also want to congratulate the newly elected Liberals: MaryAnn Mihychuk has been mentioned, Doug Eyolfson, Robert-Falcon Ouellette, Dan Vandal, Terry Duguid, Jim Carr. Jim Carr, of course, particularly because he represents the area that I represent and I'm very pleased that Jim Carr was elected and I believe that his background in many years with the Business Council of Manitoba, his years writing for the Free Press, and his years in this Legislature, because he served here in this Legislature for a number of years and was deputy leader of the opposition for a while with Sharon Carstairs.

I also want to congratulate the others who were re-elected—Niki Ashton, Candice Bergen, James Bezan, Robert Sopuck, Larry Maguire and Ted Falk—and to congratulate Daniel Blaikie. I think the results are still fairly close, but probably at 50 I think it's going to stand up and I would like to congratulate him on being elected and wish all of our members of Parliament well because they represent our province and it's important for us to be working closely with all our members of Parliament to achieve the best that we possibly can for Manitoba.

So, having said that, I look forward to working with other members in the Chamber here and with the new federal government and see what we can do together for the benefit of people in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Now, on House business, following comments for the senator for River Heights, I would ask that the House call forward Bill 207 first and then Bill 204, and if we could split the time evenly between now and 11 p.m. on those two—*[interjection]* Sorry, not yet, we've got a long session ahead of us yet, but between now and 11 a.m., Mr. Speaker, we'd appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker: Is there, under private members' business, leave of the House to proceed directly to debate on second readings of public bills, starting with Bill 207, followed by Bill 204, and to split the time evenly between those two bills? *[Agreed]*

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 207—The Delivery of Goods and Provision of Services in Winnipeg Outside the Perimeter Act

Mr. Speaker: I will now proceed to call debate on second readings of public bills, Bill 207, standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has not—has been denied.

Is there any further debate on this matter? *[interjection]* Has been denied, pardon me.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured here to stand here today for The Delivery of Goods and Provision of Services in Winnipeg Outside the Perimeter Act.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be—to rise here to speak on this bill that is essentially a bill aimed for consumer protection. The bill prohibits persons from delivering goods and provide services in portions of the city of Winnipeg outside the Perimeter from charging delivery and service fees in excess of what is charged in adjacent parts of Winnipeg inside the Perimeter. The bill further prohibits persons from refusing to deliver goods and services outside the Perimeter for those same goods would be provided in Winnipeg inside the Perimeter.

On this side of the House, we are supportive to consumer protection initiatives and outcomes of benefits Manitoba consumers. Unfortunately, on this opposite side the House, there are members that are more interested in ribbon cuttings and announcements to do—that do not benefit Manitoba consumers.

In fact, the—roughly five years ago, the Consumer Affairs and now-Justice Minister, member of St. Johns announced, let's make a deal, what the NDP touted at the time as a plan to strengthen consumer and business confidence.

Let's examine Manitoba's record of business confidence, Mr. Speaker. In recent months, Manitoba's small business confidence level has fallen nearly 20 per cent according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The province's currently small business confidence level has fallen

to a low that is currently rating as the lowest since 2010. It's kind of a coincidence since the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has come into office. According to the Manitoba Business Leaders Index, an annual poll of 200 CEOs and businesses owners across Manitoba, only 13 per cent of executive feels—executives feel that the NDP is doing a good job in creating and positive business climate.

Mr. Speaker, I was traveling many places in Manitoba this past summer, and one of the things that—the concern about this bill here is I just think it's sort of self-serving for the member who has brought this—member up from St. Norbert, hoping that, you know, when he gets delivery services from, let's say, buying a piece of furniture, he's going to get services. This is sort of self-serving individual, and that's example of what the NDP government's all about here.

And when you go across the province right now, especially in areas of the southwest to the central parts of—along the border of Saskatchewan, Manitoba-Saskatchewan, and even communities along the US border, I'm seeing that many of those business communities, centre of the—centres of these communities, business centres, are losing more and more retail business. I look down my street in Virden, Manitoba, and I've seen how many businesses have closed, especially in the retail side. Offices are opening, are replacing retail. And for small businesses, this is really hard for small businesses, especially when focusing on people who have opportunities to get free delivery services in the adjacent parts of outside the Perimeter.

But this government should focus on the greater picture of this province when it comes to the business climate. We're facing that many, many small businesses are closing along the border because of the PST hike that they have provided back in 2013. It's really hurting communities along the border, and, like I said, many of the businesses are actually closing down. And I feel that there should be a greater emphasis on what is best for Manitoba consumers.

This is not the best for consumers because now a lot of people in rural areas have to drive further and further to get their services. And you know what? They don't get free delivery services when they actually buy something from Brandon. Anything more than 45 minutes away, they have to pay for it.

* (10:20)

And I think we have to focus, really, on the greater picture. And if you guys are help—think that you're—this side of—the opposite side is actually protecting consumers, they're not. And I really believe that if we, looking at the consumer, you have to look at all the Manitobans. And not all Manitobans are being benefited from all the different bills that you have created for consumer protection. I think the biggest protection is having an environment that encourages people to buy locally, to invest locally and to create less red tape in our business communities in our province.

We really believe that by getting rid of red tape, this will actually help the business community, and if the business is thriving, a lot of times they don't have to charge delivery charges because, the fact is, now they're trying to get every collection possible just to stay alive now in business because the fact is, you know, it's dictating from this current NDP government what has—what businesses have to do to follow laws and bills that are being passed in this House.

I really believe that we need to really focus on the greater picture. And with respect to the delivering goods and provisions of a service in Winnipeg outside the Perimeter, I'd put on the record for the members of St. Norbert a few questions deserving answers.

One is in terms of incidents of occurrence. I'd be interested to know what data and statistics the member can provide related to many times services is refused with the city of Winnipeg but outside the Perimeter, the various goods and services. In terms of industry perspective, both on the commercial and consumer side, what is the viewpoint of this group shared in respect to this legislation? The reasons that it's important to be asked these questions is that with the Premier and the government that is habit of both not making evidence based on decisions, and saying one thing and doing another.

On the subject of not making evidence based on decision, Manitoba's one of the highest taxed jurisdictions both for the businesses and individuals in Canada. If the NDPs were to—government was focused on evidence based on decision, they would focus on the low-tax approaches focused on growing businesses and personal income and creating prosperity for all Manitobans. No such luck, though, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to conclude on my words for record here, and I'll pass on to the next speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Welcome back this morning. And I'm going to have to say, go, Jays, go, as we saw the blue wave last night hold off and live to play another couple games, Mr. Speaker.

So it gives me great pleasure to stand up and put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 207, which was brought forward from the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), The Delivery of Goods and Provision of Services in Winnipeg Outside the Perimeter Act. Now, taking a look at the explanatory note, Mr. Speaker, the member from St. Norbert is basically saying that a lot of the delivery of goods and services that are happening within the city, the various companies that are electing to do business outside of the Perimeter are being—are, with this bill, going to be prohibited from charging some additional fees and charges.

I do have to say that on this side of the House, we are very much supportive, as my colleague from Arthur-Virden has stated, of consumer protection initiatives and outcomes that benefit Manitoba consumers. However, Mr. Speaker, we have seen many examples from the current government, the NDP government, standing up in this House and making certain deals and promises for small businesses that we're still waiting for some of those results to come forward.

The—we know that recently the province's current small-business confidence level has fallen so low that its current rating is at its lowest since 2010. In fact, according to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce CEO, Mr. Dave Angus, the shenanigans, and I quote, the shenanigans surrounding the NDP leadership race are hurting Manitobans' reputation. Dave Angus, who I just mentioned, went on to say, and I quote, when stories of our political dysfunction hit the front page of The Globe and Mail, it sends a very negative signal to other jurisdictions around the country in terms of Manitoba as a place to invest and do business.

These are things, Mr. Speaker, that I know that since we had heard loud and clear from the federal election last night that we're looking at, you know, some positive change throughout the province. And I know that Canadians spoke quite loudly last night about some of the more positive ads and promises that apparently the Liberal leader, Mr.—now the Prime Minister-elect, Mr. Justin Trudeau, had said that they're willing to do some—to bring forward certain promises and initiatives. And I guess time

will tell whether that's going to—those promises are going to come to fruition.

Now, again, we've already heard, I mean, from the current NDP government and all 57 candidates in the last 2011 election on various promises that they had stated, and I know that specifically the Premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), when he was asked and stated in the 2011 election about the fact that he was going to raise the PST. After the 2011 election, the Premier back then, during the campaign, the member for St. Boniface called that idea, that he would raise the PST, ridiculous. And, in fact, what did we see after that 2011 election? Within the next six months we had seen that they actually expanded the PST onto various products and services that each and every Manitoban absolutely needs, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about home insurance, we're talking about car insurance, we're talking about birth and death certificates, these are expansions that have hit Manitobans quite hard and I know that often they, on that side of the House, the NDP side, pat themselves on the back to be standing up for the less fortunate.

But what they didn't realize when they expanded that PST to all those goods and services is that they're actually hurting absolutely all Manitobans. They weren't hurting just the people who are making six-figure incomes; they're absolutely hurting everybody because what's ending up happening is with home insurance and car and auto insurance and various other insurances. The PST, by increasing it, is actually, some of the less fortunate are maybe thinking, you know, can I take that chance and maybe go without those things, which is a dangerous, dangerous precedent, Mr. Speaker, because if an unfortunate accident happens, whether it's at a small business or it's at a home or whatever else, and they don't have that insurance to help them out, then they end up either bankrupting or then taxing other Manitobans.

So with this I find that a lot of this—the notions behind this bill I'm not quite sure how exactly the member for St. Norbert had devised this bill and where these—this thought process had come because when you're looking at products and services being delivered outside of the Perimeter there's an added cost. And we know because of this government expanding the PST on the various goods and services throughout this province of ours, and then, of course, the following year by raising the PST by 14 per cent, 7 to 8, that's hitting Manitobans—Manitoba families. So when small businesses decide that they want to

take their goods and services outside of the Perimeter, I mean, there's additional costs.

Mr. Speaker, I know the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) had stood up in the House on more than one occasion, speaking of his past occupation as a tradesperson, and I commend him for that. But when he does, you know, say, leave the Perimeter to do some of those—to do his business, was he not charging additional fees? I mean maybe out of the goodness of his heart maybe he wasn't charging those additional fees.

But, so, Mr. Speaker, what I am going to say is I do have a few questions for the member from St. Norbert, and hopefully he will be able to provide those answers in written form to me. So I'm going to put the questions on the record.

In regards to this bill, Mr. Speaker, in terms of incidents of occurrence, I'd be interested to know what data or statistics the member can provide related to how many times service is refused within the city of Winnipeg but outside the Perimeter for various goods and services.

* (10:30)

Second question: How many occurrences and the specifics of a few of those the member is aware of in relation to charging different amounts for delivery of good or service outside the Perimeter but in the city of Winnipeg?

Third question: What groups or organizations has the member consulted with in developing this bill?

Fourth question: In terms of the industry perspective, both on the commercial and consumer side, what viewpoints have those groups shared with respect to this legislation?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reason why I am putting these questions up on the record is to give the member for St. Norbert some time, and I would appreciate a written response to those questions in a timely fashion, especially the data which would be backing the first two questions related to incidence of the matters addressed in this bill.

It is important that we ask these questions as we have a Premier (Mr. Selinger) and a government that has a habit of both not making evidence-based decisions and saying one thing and doing another. I've already referenced the PST promise on the Premier feeling that it was a ridiculous notion that he was going to raise the PST, and then six months later

expanded it, and then a year after that had raised the PST by not the 1 cent or one penny on the dollar as they continued to say; it's a 14 per cent increase. And that's another penny on the dollar, Mr. Speaker. And I think Manitobans have absolutely had enough, and I know that they're looking forward to a change, and a change for the better is coming.

So, with that, I'm going to give opportunity for other members in the House to speak. I know, so far, that members of the government side have been silent today, especially on this first day back into session. So, I look forward to hearing from other members in the House on what they have to say in regards to the bill that was brought forward by the member for St. Norbert and, basically, bringing undue hardships onto other small businesses and trying to curb those—curb those potential expansions, Mr. Speaker.

So thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): It's always a great opportunity to stand in the Legislature and speak to legislation. It's a great system we have and a great democracy. We saw that take place yesterday. It's a great opportunity for people to have their voice heard and now a whole bunch of individuals like us will be going to Ottawa and being able to debate legislation, stand in the House of Commons, and have their say on behalf of the people and that's one of the privileges I have for at least the next few months until the next provincial election to stand and speak on legislation.

We're debating Bill 207, and it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, the bill prohibits persons who deliver goods or provide services in portions of the city of Winnipeg outside the Perimeter from charging delivery or service fees in excess of what would be charged in adjacent parts of Winnipeg inside the Perimeter. And it's always intriguing to watch the NDP across the way trying to atone for their sins. And this is a party that, in the last election, uniformly went door to door, knocked on every door, and said, trust us, we will never, never raise taxes to pay for all the excess of promises that we're making. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition at the time indicated at a debate that the only way they would be able to pay for all the promises would be by raising the PST, and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), Premier of Manitoba, walked out of the debate and he said nonsense. He basically said that would never happen.

And each member across the way said the same thing, went door to door and said, never would we

raise taxes, No. 1; No. 2, never would we raise the PST; and No. 3, we would never take away your right to vote on it in either case. They came into this Chamber and, one strike, two strike, three strikes, they went exactly opposite of what they said. They absolutely did the opposite of what they had committed to in the last election.

So you can see that Bill 207 is trying to get back into some kind of good graces with the people of Manitoba. That's what they're actually trying to do with this piece of legislation. What they're saying is that on the one hand, we absolutely punished individuals who go out and buy goods and services, put PST on—first they started with a 7 per cent PST on home insurance, and then the next year raised the PST up to 8 per cent. And they went throughout the economy, broadened it in one year and then increased it to 8 per cent the next year. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what is so gratuitous about this legislation because what they're trying to do is direct people's attention not from what they did during the election, committing to things that they knew they could never live up to.

In fact, the PST, Mr. Speaker, had been discussed and was contemplated to be brought in before the 2011 election. And it was decided at Cabinet, and we happen to know this because it was discussed openly in the last six to 12 months when there was the rebel five and the dissension within the NDP Cabinet and the caucus where they actually told Manitobans what had taken place, that the PST had been discussed before the last election and it was considered far too risky politically to actually do. So they waited until after the election.

Now, what's unfortunate with that is that they should have told Manitobans the truth, and Manitobans are very upset and, you know, we don't want to get into the tea leaves of what happened last night because that's all going to come in time. The pundits and the professionals and all the politicians will have an opportunity to go through those tea leaves and figure out what actually did happen. But the NDP in the civic election, the NDP in the last federal election, as you went door to door you could tell there was an animosity towards that PST and the fact that it had—the commitment had been to do exactly opposite of what they did after the election.

So Bill 207 is one of these bills we know that they're trying to get back into the good graces of the electorate. I would suggest that it's not going to work. I would suggest that they have a long way to

go before they're going to get back into the good books. I know that there is all kinds of promises being made, but, again, when you break that trust with the electorate it's very hard to get it back, and it usually takes a party some years in opposition and then the public will forget again.

Because, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation does not go far enough. If it had a component in it that would apologize for the PST increase and would actually reduce PST back down to 7 per cent, would actually take off some of the onerous taxes that were brought on after the 2011 campaign, you know, this actually could be a piece of legislation that Manitobans would say, yes, you know, this isn't too bad of a piece of legislation, at least they're going back and saying it was a mistake.

In fact, during the last NDP leadership campaign there were individuals who admitted that the PST was a mistake and they—as they were running for office they were very—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) will have four minutes remaining.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 204—The Cyberbullying Prevention Act

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, we'll now move on to second readings of public Bill 204, sponsored by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, and the title of the bill is cyberbullying prevention.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 204, The Cyberbullying Prevention Act; Loi sur la prévention de la cyberintimidation, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ewasko: It gives me great pleasure today to stand up once again and bring forward a very important piece of legislation that I as well as many Manitobans, in fact, Canadians, Mr. Speaker, feel would be very beneficial and would actually put Manitoba on the map as a potential leader in regards to dealing and dealing with cyberbullying. We're not just speaking about kids; we're actually talking about all Manitobans.

* (10:40)

The Bill 204, The Cyberbullying Prevention Act, really, in a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, is going to enable the protection order to be made when a judicial justice of the peace has determined that a person has engaged in cyberbullying. A protection order may contain a number of provisions to protect the person who is subjected to cyberbullying.

The bill also creates the new tort for cyberbullying. This victim may sue the person engaging in cyberbullying, Mr. Speaker. And I'm not certain that the government is going to be supporting this today, but I'm sure hoping that their research staff and people within on their side of the House has taken a good look at this bill and have seen that the worthiness of it, and let it go through second reading today, let it go to committee, and let the public, Manitobans, all stakeholders within this province, come forward to committee and put their two cents on it.

And, that being said, I mean, if we do have a committee on Bill 204 and the public basically comes forward and, you know, shoots the bill down, type of thing, or speaks about the displeasure of the bill, Mr. Speaker, then so be it. But I'm looking at the government side today to move this bill forward to committee, and let's have the public input into the bill.

One other point of the bill that I would like to bring up and basically highlight, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that when a parent deemed to be cyberbullying—so, when a parent is aware of this, and here's the few points from the bill that I'd like to read into the record. So, if the parent is deemed to be cyberbullying themselves, for the purpose of this act, a parent of a minor is deemed to engage in cyberbullying if the minor engages in an activity that is cyberbullying and the parent (a) knows of the activity, (b) knows or ought reasonably to expect the activity to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation or other damage or harm to another person's health, emotional well-being, self-esteem or reputation, and (c) fails to take steps to prevent the activity from continuing.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, as I've stood up in this House over the past, you know, four years, speaking of my history as far as being an educator and guidance counsellor and dealing with many students who have gone—who have been either on the receiving end of either cyberbullying or at the opposite end as far as the person doing the cyberbullying, and so when originally the

member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) brought forward this bill, I know that it was not looked upon very favourably from the government's side. But when I was given the—I guess the appointment, or given the responsibility to be the critic for Education and Advanced Learning for the opposition, I took a look at the bill and I thought, you know, here's something that is not only going to help with students, this is a bill that is going to strengthen federal legislation. It's going to fill the gaps of some of the legislation that we have here in this province. It's actually going to help and try to deter a lot of the cyberbullying that happens, again, not only for students or youth, but also with adults, with—also with some of our more senior people as well.

I know that just recently the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) was quoted in one of our local media outlets saying that cyberbullying based on intimate images is even worse than traditional notions of bullying. The impact is instant, he said, and he goes on to say it's more devastating psychologically than physical bullying. So here's a minister in the government side basically saying, and I already had read the quote, saying on how cyberbullying is quite instant. And because it's not a face-to-face exchange within social media, I mean, this is—the students, the people who are doing the cyberbullying, the adults, the seniors, they're not running it through the filter, Mr. Speaker. They're typing it out; they're taking pictures—whatever they're doing, and they're sending it. It's immediate, it's instant and I think right now that there's not enough, I guess, not enough legislation in the province right now to enable the judicial system, the lawyers and the police to be able to handle these situations.

He goes on to say—the member for St. Johns says that social media has made it easier to harass and shame a person with an intimate image.

So these are things that a veteran minister on the government side has stated. He is the Attorney General for the province and so I don't see why this wouldn't go forward, and I'm actually hoping within the next few minutes that the government side is going to get up and surprise us all—hopefully, a good surprise—and send this on to committee so that the Manitobans can come and speak towards the bill. Because I don't feel that we're doing enough, Mr. Speaker, and I think of, you know, Amanda Todd, who was a 15-year-old in British Columbia who killed herself in 2012 after being sexually exploited and harassed online. I mean, she eventually put her

heartbreaking nine-minute video online detailing her torment before her death.

The suicide of Rehtaeh Parsons, another sexually exploited teenager in Nova Scotia in 2013, turned the spotlight on cyberbullying and prompted the federal government to change the Criminal Code to make it illegal to distribute intimate images without consent.

This bill, Bill 204, will strengthen those pieces of legislation that have been brought forward federally, and I know would be helping try to curb cyberbullying, bullying in general. Are we ever going to eradicate bullying and cyberbullying, Mr. Speaker? We possibly won't, unfortunately, but we have to continue moving forward and making sure that we're putting things in place so that we can at least start moving towards it.

So I thank you for some time this morning, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to allow some of my other colleagues in this House to speak to Bill 204, and, again, I encourage the government and my own members on this side to allow Bill 204 to proceed to committee stage.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for St. Norbert, and in keeping with our new provisions of the rules, the House rules, rule 23(8) in particular, where questions are permitted after the person sponsoring the bill has had a chance to do second readings of the bill, are there any questions for the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko)?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, point of order—on this point, Mr. Speaker, in discussions I had with the Opposition House Leader we had agreed to waive the questions this morning based on the new rule, and I think I have leave of the House to do that.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to waive—I don't believe that leave is required if there are no questions and that's the agreement of the House, and that will be the will of the House and will be reflected that way.

So if there are no questions, then we'll move on to continuation of debate of this bill and we'll recognize the honourable member for St. Norbert.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I'd just like to take this moment to congratulate all of the MPs across the country of all political stripes for putting their name forward and all the candidates for doing that. We all know in this House that it's a really big

task and all of our families take a toll on that, so I want to congratulate them all.

I want to especially congratulate Daniel Blaikie and Niki Ashton. I was at the Blaikie campaign last night and I'd like to congratulate him for his hard work in winning back the seat that he had—his father had so diligently served in the past. And I want to congratulate the MP in my area Terry Duguid. Terry and I have had some wonderful discussions and I know that we're going to work very well together for the betterment of our area and all the people in the province. So I just want to take the moment to say that.

* (10:50)

And now, back to Bill 204. I'd like to say that I think the member for Lac du Bonnet has got his heart in the right place on this. I know he's definitely looking at, you know, protecting the children and protecting people with cyberbullying.

But there are already some things in place and we've introduced some stuff last June like, if you look at the Bill C-13, the federal bill that was passed last year, it's now a law and it's received royal assent. And it improves the police investigation powers for cyberbullying to address that, and it raises the level of criminal conduct including uttering threats and criminal harassment. The bill creates a new Criminal Code offence in non-consensual distribution of intimate images, which is what we're talking about today.

Bill C-13 does not provide protection orders or tort remedies such as what Bill 204 does, but the proposed legislation that we put forward in June actually does have a provision for that. The Intimate Image Protection Act would apply in situations like this and—but built on the recent federal changes to the Code, it would make it an offence to distribute intimate images without consent. And it would allow the victims to pursue legal action and sue for damages in civil court.

It also establishes a framework to help people resolve the matters out of court or contact the police to pursue potential criminal charges. The Manitoba government is also planning on supporting out-of-court assistance for victims with \$110,000 from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund, that this year is about \$175,000, and in the future years for victims' services. That's something we've brought in where we've, you know, seized the assets from the

criminals and we use that to help people who are having crimes committed against them and had crimes committed against them in the criminal justice system.

We've also done things like supplying materials for schools, and when—in 2012, when Amanda Todd unfortunately took her life, which was extremely sad and it moved the whole country to recognize how terrible cyberbullying can be, and how it does affect everybody from, you know, youth to adults. Everybody's affected—can be affected by this.

And what we did is—the former minister of Education, the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), took on a tremendous bill and championed it right to the end, and I applaud her for that because it was—is such an amazing bill that other provinces looked at us and, you know, other provinces actually took our bill and implemented it underneath their own system. The—you know, they took—Manitoba was the lead again.

And they took that bill and they made it theirs in their provinces, so it was a fantastic bill and the schools—and the safe schools and inclusive act, which also addressed cyberbullying, was put into law and, you know, unfortunately the members opposite did vote against it. I applaud them for recognizing that cyberbullying is an issue and that they're bringing this forward now.

But our bill did do great strides towards helping cyberbullying and helping children be bullied in schools, and it really has had a profound effect on all of the schools, when you look at what's happening in them, where there's GSAs being formed and support groups being formed. And there's supports now from all levels of administration and it's across the province. And everybody is working together to ensure that the students in our province are well aware of their rights, and also to try to make sure that they're not being—feeling bullied and pressured, and to keep them safe within the school system and outside.

Because it doesn't just stop. You know, when we were children—you know, I don't want to date myself too much but when we were children, bullying was at school and when you went home it was shut off because there was no Internet. And there was no means of somebody to come and continue to keep bullying you in your own home. And now bullying happens—it can happen 24-7 because of social media, you know, with Twitter and Facebook and Tumblr

and all of the other things that go on, you can literally put an attack on someone in their own home.

And, you know, the pressures that children face now are very different than what we faced when we were children because they can't get away from it the same way. So, you know, we took that on and we put in a code of conduct, we put in some supports and if the bullying happens outside of school, the student needs to report it and then it needs to be acted on. That's part of the safe and inclusive schools act.

The province has taken a lot of initiative on this, and we were at the western premiers' meeting—conference; this was on the agenda, and they discussed this. So we've taken a big lead on this. And it's going to continue on with Bill 18, and it's going to continue on with our new legislation that is looking at making it The Intimate Image Protection Act. That's going to be another piece of legislation that's also going to be a weapon in fighting back against cyberbullying and against some of the pressures that our youth feel and adults. I mean, the cyberbullying doesn't just go to just to youth, but, I mean, it's more specific to them. They're more vulnerable to it than adults in some ways.

And, you know, like I said, I think that the member opposite has got a—his heart in the right place, but when we did put forward a bill that addressed this, they didn't support it. So I'm not quite sure why they didn't support it. Maybe the members opposite will stand up next and they'll expand on why they didn't support Bill 18, which actually does much of what this Bill 204 is proposing. And then we also have The Intimate Image Protection Act which covers the other part that isn't being discussed in—under Bill 18. This—the intimate images act actually covers the rest of what we're talking about here. So I'd like to hear why they didn't support Bill 18 when it's clearly doing this and more in the school system.

You know, the Bill 18 also met with the principles of the Human Rights Code, and I think that it's something that we have to recognize, that when they—when we drafted that bill, we worked with the minister of—or the member for St. Vital, she worked with experts across the province; she consulted with many people in the school system and in the Human Rights Code. And with all the people that she worked with, she came up with a very substantial piece of legislation that helps to protect our youth.

And, you know, it was a long debate and a lot of heated debate, and I give her absolute credit and an amazing props for taking that and championing it across the line because it's really made a difference. I hear about it in my schools that the kids feel very safe about bringing forward their issues now and being able to form groups and support each other. And that's what it's—this is about.

And then I think that, you know, if we look at that and then we look at our Intimate Image Protection Act, with those two pieces of bills, of legislation, together along with the federal C-13 we're looking at something that's going to really take on this issue.

So while Bill 204 might be—the heart might be in the right place, I don't think that this bill is going to work with the way that we have it set up because our bills go further. With the intimate images act—protection act and with Bill 18, we actually take it to the next level. And then you couple that in with the Bill C-13; we've piggybacked on the federal legislation, so that it takes it even further than that.

So with all of the—what we've been doing in our schools since 2004 with introducing new legislation, making the Safe Schools Charter, all the way through to 2013 when we introduced Bill 18 to last June when we introduced the intimate images act, there has been progress. We're moving forward on this stuff and we're looking at protecting all Manitobans, especially our most prized resource which is the youth and the students in our province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Yes, I'd just to like to put a few words on this, Mr. Speaker. I just have to say that when you look back at the hard time that we had passing Bill 18, I mean, the member from St. Vital worked hard, and we worked, as a caucus, hard to make sure that as a team that we went over everything, some of us former teachers, some social workers. And I respect the member from Beausejour having formerly been a teacher, but I just wondered why it took them nine months to come together for something that was benefitting all children in Manitoba—nine months.

You know, that's—and then when I see they want to pass Bill 204, what is their, you know, what is their—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Flin Flon will have nine minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 14—Government Action on Parks and Protected Spaces

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution under consideration this morning is entitled Government Action on Parks and Protected Spaces, sponsored by the honourable member for Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon,

WHEREAS Manitoba is known for its natural diversity, including lakes, rivers, forests, tall grass prairies and more; and

WHEREAS many species and ecosystems within Manitoba are in need of protection to ensure their continued survival; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is taking bold, pioneering action to protect precious natural resources and ensure a healthier environment for future generations of Manitobans; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has recently announced that it is taking steps to protect five Manitoba animal and plant species as well as two ecosystems, tall grass prairie and alvar; and

WHEREAS protecting entire ecosystems is an approach that is the first of its kind in North America and only the third in the world overall; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has taken critical steps in preserving the natural ecosystems, habitats and species of the province by improving Manitoba's parks system and creating ecological reserves and other protected spaces; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is therefore—sorry, is furthermore taking decisive action to protect Lake Winnipeg by preserving wetlands, reducing nutrient runoff, fighting invasive species like zebra mussels and investing in Lake Winnipeg research like the U of M Watershed System Research Program, the Lake Winnipeg Research Vessel and the Experimental Lakes Area, a program the federal Conservative government chose to cut; and

WHEREAS the official opposition has aggressively opposed the provincial government's

water protection and climate change prevention measures that would gut water protection laws in the province.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Manitoba Legislative Assembly affirm its support for this first in North America protection of entire ecosystems; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to continue its aggressive plan to protect Manitoba's vulnerable natural resources for future generations.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), seconded by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen),

WHEREAS Manitoba is known for its natural diversity, including—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

The resolution is in order.

The honourable—is there agreement of the House to consider the resolution as printed on today's Order Paper? [*Agreed*]

WHEREAS Manitoba is known for its natural diversity, including lakes, rivers, forests, tall grass prairie and more; and

WHEREAS many species and ecosystems within Manitoba are in need of protection to ensure their continued survival; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is taking bold, pioneering action to protect precious natural resources and ensure a healthier environment for future generations of Manitobans; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has recently announced that it is taking steps to protect five Manitoba animal and plant species as well as two ecosystems, tall grass prairie and alvar; and

WHEREAS protecting entire ecosystems is an approach that is the first of its kind in North America and only the third in the world overall; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has taken critical steps in preserving the natural ecosystems, habitats and species of the province by improving Manitoba's parks system and creating ecological reserves and other protected spaces; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is furthermore taking decisive action to protect Lake Winnipeg by preserving wetlands, reducing nutrient runoff, fighting invasive species like zebra mussels and by investing in lake research like the U of M Watershed System Research Program, the Lake Winnipeg Research Vessel and the Experimental Lakes Area, a program the Federal Conservative government chose to cut; and

WHEREAS the Official Opposition has aggressively opposed the Provincial Government's water protection and climate change prevention measures and would gut water protection laws in the province.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Manitoba Legislative Assembly affirm its support for this first in North America protection of entire ecosystems; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the Provincial Government to continue its aggressive plan to protect Manitoba's valuable natural resources for future generations.

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, I also want to begin this morning by congratulating all those folks who put their names on ballots yesterday and put their names forward for election. It was certainly an exciting time, and all of us in this Chamber certainly understand the importance of having folks willing to put their names forward and it certainly speaks to their commitment to public service and to this country.

I do want to especially congratulate Daniel Blaikie, who is the newly elected Member of Parliament for Elmwood-Transcona, and it was an especially hard-fought and hard-won campaign, Mr. Speaker, and so I just—I did want to say, you know, if my speech is a little more disjointed than usual, I apologize to the Hansard staff because it was a long day pounding the streets and encouraging people to exercise their democratic rights yesterday. But I will do my best to make it easy on them and congratulations once again to Daniel.

I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, to stand today to speak on this private member's resolution on government action on parks and protected spaces, and it is something I feel that is an important way to talk about our province and a way to talk about our heritage and our legacy in this province. The natural environment, I believe, is something that we can all be proud of, that we can all certainly understand and respect and it's something that it—certainly when we talk about it in terms of legacy, and in that terms, of

course, I think of my own family and my own children and their heritage that they will be inheriting and certainly, I hope, seeing as part of their sense of pride in this province and their heritage and legacy going forward as well.

I certainly grew up understanding that and something that I certainly appreciate from my father and from my family, an appreciation for the outdoors and for Manitoba's unique natural spaces. And it's something that I'm passing now along to my children. And I see it in a very direct way, Mr. Speaker, in the sense that this, you know, over the last number of years, with my children growing up and spending more time in the outdoors, it's been something that's been a real sense of pride for me to be able to expose them to and to encourage in them the appreciation and respect for our natural spaces in Manitoba.

I also—I—you know, it's no secret, Mr. Speaker, I've—I spend a lot of time in our provincial parks and in other protected spaces. It's—you know, I'm a bit of an outdoorsman, and I do appreciate the chance to get out in our wonderful spaces as much as possible, whether that be in the Whiteshell or Nopiming, out at Moose Lake—I've spent some time out there—Sandilands Provincial Forest, which is a great hidden gem in the province, and, of course, Grand Beach, which many of you know I spend quite a bit of time with young children. It's a great space and a place that we've invested heavily in, and I believe that we're seeing the results in terms of families coming to enjoy that space. So it's a place—it's a thing that I appreciate, and it's something that I appreciate—I—learning from my family and something that I can now pass along and carry on.

And now, as a member of this Legislature, I can talk about this as—in terms of what our government has done to help protect these habitats for our children's future. And, you know, it's a well-known fact, of course, Mr. Speaker, that we've either created or expanded 11 provincial parks since 1999, a legacy, I think, that will live on and, of course, record investments in those provincial parks. And now we're taking this to the next level, and that's what I want to talk about this morning here in the Legislature, and that is the designation of entire ecosystems in this province as endangered. And this is a first-in-Canada designation and I believe something that certainly goes a long way in protecting at-risk species and across the spectrum. So we are committed to long-term investments to protect the environment, and this, we feel, will

ensure that our unique parks, our habitats, our natural resources stay healthy for generations to come.

So I wanted to talk a little more about this designation. It's five more animal and plant species, which is significant, I believe, and two entire ecosystems. Now, the first ecosystem is something that I think most of us have some knowledge of, or at least an appreciation for, and that is, of course, the tall grass prairie ecosystem and is something that is endangered in Manitoba, has seen a resurgence, and there have been a number of protected spaces. By protecting this as an entire ecosystem, Mr. Speaker, we can take that to the next level. And it is a—something that's unique to Manitoba and, certainly, I think, speaks to our identity very easily.

One that's maybe not quite as well known, of course, is the alvar ecosystem. Although, if you live in Manitoba, you certainly know it; you may just not know what it's—that it—how it's designated or what it's called. But it is very unique, in that it's a very sensitive and a very delicate ecosystem: very, very thin soils over limestone, very dry in parts of the year, very flooded in other parts of the year. And it's home to a—quite a number of endangered and protected species, species at risk. And we feel that this designation will help protect those and will help take that and give profile to that specific ecosystem and protect those places, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we're looking at creation of a roughly 2,600-hectare ecosystem protection zone in the Interlake area. And this would be, again, first of its kind in Canada and something that I think we can all be very proud of in terms of talking about ecosystems and how they impact our environment as a whole.

So I'm very excited about this, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's worth talking about, and it's worth talking about in the sense of our overall commitment because it has been significant and it has been something that we have been very proud of.

* (11:10)

There is work to do. You know, we certainly see the value in the Lake Friendly Accord and believe that ongoing work there is needed and in something that we want to prioritize. But we have put a lot of emphasis, Mr. Speaker, on looking at our natural habitats in a holistic way in this province. For instance, the boreal forest and the agreement that we signed with Ontario, and the partnerships with the First Nations to sustain the province's boreal forest

which is part of the—North America's largest intact boreal forest stretch between Manitoba and Ontario, and including expanding and creating new parks. This is an ongoing effort to protect spaces, up to 10 new parks that have been proposed, and investing \$15 million in Budget 2015 to modernize and enhance certain provincial parks. So we feel that there's certainly work to be done. There's certainly, you know, there's work that we can continue to do as a government.

What I do believe, though, Mr. Speaker, is that we can be proud of what we have done. We can be proud that we do see our natural history as something that forms the identity of our province, that continues to be our heritage, and that if we continue to prioritize and invest and protect those spaces, that future generations in Manitoba be well served into the future.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise this morning and speak to the honourable member's resolution and, like the honourable member, I'd like to put comments on the record at the front end.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we've just concluded the 42nd national election, and I'm very grateful that I live in a country where ballots and not bullets are the tool of choice when it comes to choosing and changing governments in our country. And I think all of us Canadians should be proud of that legacy of a willingness to use our democratic rights and to effect change to elect our representatives, whether it's to the House of Commons, whether it's to this Chamber or any other elected level of government.

And so a lot of people put in a lot of time and effort over a considerable lengthy amount of time. I know the former member of Southdale threw her hat into the ring and I—while she wasn't successful, I do acknowledge and I—that she was willing to put her name forward and, again, be part of that democratic process, albeit at a different level.

Now, as part of the democratic process, Mr. Speaker, it's having opportunity to rise in this House and share ideas and make comments on—whether it's bills or resolutions or question periods and that. And again, unlike some other legislature, there is no throwing of books and items and such, although that may spice things up and maybe we should talk to the House leaders about maybe tweaking the rules on a go-forward basis.

But, Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) talked a lot about family, and his family enjoying our provincial parks and obviously our protected spaces. And I am—I'm no different than the honourable member. I spent a great deal of time this summer with my family hitting and getting around to a number of provincial parks and enjoying everything that they have to offer.

And we appreciate the fact, Mr. Speaker, that we have a province that has that opportunity available to us and, you know, there are a few components and a few whereases that I can agree wholeheartedly with the member for Concordia. You know, his first WHEREAS, that Manitoba is known for its natural diversity, including lakes, rivers, forests, tall grass prairies and more, absolutely, and this is something that we have enjoyed and we continue to enjoy.

The challenge, though, Mr. Speaker, when you look at this resolution, and maybe if the honourable member spent less time trying to pat himself on the back and actually dealing with the failures of his government, they would actually be—have a more reasonable resolution that had less grandstanding and more formative action, that we could, again, debate and have that conversation on.

I don't remember the Mars Hill wild—management area coming up, in any of the comments. And it wasn't—and what's interesting, Mr. Speaker, wasn't until that issue was brought forward in this Legislature, pictures were tabled showing discarded mattresses and TVs and electronics and shell casings and just garbage strewn all over what's supposed to be—and, again, according to this government, their words exactly—a near-natural state.

Now, as I've said in this House before, I don't believe that discarded electronics and couches and such thrown into the forests really qualifies as near natural; at least, they don't in my view, Mr. Speaker. And, despite that, it took, essentially, public shaming to get this government and this minister to take action and to initiate some cleanup. And that's only on one site, but we obviously have provincial parks throughout our provinces, and wildlife management areas, again, throughout our province, and many are faced with similar situations that just haven't had the light of day shone on them.

And, again, it—the issue as to why situations like that have occurred is, again, one of resources. And we continually see, across the way, members opposite with budget after budget reducing those front-line services, cutting those front-line services

that Manitobans rely on. In this case: conservation officers. In fact, since the 2011 election, the Conservation and Water Stewardship budget as a whole has been reduced by 10 per cent.

I remember, recently, during a committee hearing one evening, Michelle Gawronsky, the president of the Manitoba government employees' union, chastised the NDP for the numerous cuts to the Conservation Department's budget over the last number of years. And, again, not that I don't agree with the president of MGEU in this case, but it's quite interesting that even they have joined that chorus of voices suggesting that this government's cuts to front-line services is hurting Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I don't recall, in the member for Concordia's (Mr. Wiebe) comments, his even referencing the fact that Lake Manitoba in 2013 was declared the Threatened Lake of the Year by the Global Nature Fund. Hardly a designation that you want to boast about, but it is simply a fact, and this is what debate and conversation in this House should be about. It should be fact-based and, again, the member opposite seemed to somehow miss that.

Speaking of items and factual items the minister—or the member for Concordia failed to note on the record, was this government's own self-imposed Kyoto targets. And, again, with great fanfare and such the government's brought in legislation and targets and that, and even went so far that, you know, should we fail to meet these targets we should be thrown out on our ear by the public of—by the voters of Manitoba. And, of course, we all know what happened, Mr. Speaker; they failed to meet those targets.

So, again, not unlike what they did with the PST, when this government finds legislation that seems to not coincide with their actions, instead of amending their actions and actually trying to meet those legislative requirements or targets, they instead decide to change legislation. So they did it in the case of PST, they did it in the case of their own Kyoto targets. So now, apparently, we're supposed to stay tuned, the government is busy behind the scenes working on another climate change proposal that they'll be bringing forward. Hopefully some in between they'll be able to get that done in between all the infighting that goes on across the way and the shouts that emanate from their caucus, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the other point that the member really failed to acknowledge in his comments was that of zebra mussels. And there is probably no

single greatest ecological and economic failing that so symbolizes the NDP's failure when it comes to Manitoba's parks and protected spaces. In this case: our water system. In 2009, zebra mussels, a very invasive species that—a single female can lay over one million eggs and have the ability to significantly alter an ecosystem, was discovered in the Red River basin.

* (11:20)

There's no secret that Red River—that zebra mussels were on its way. Our neighbour south of the border have been battling this infestation for years, and in the six years that zebra mussels were first identified in the Red River basin, this government did absolutely nothing on the file. In fact, it wasn't until zebra mussels were discovered in four harbours in Lake Winnipeg that the government again, as they like to do with much fanfare, announced their rapid response protocol and initiated their high school science project and dumped hundreds of tons of chemicals into the harbours and there stood the minister on the SS Minnow declaring victory and that they have successfully fought back the zebra mussel infestation, Mr. Speaker.

But fast forward, here we are 18 months later and the lake is literally been written off and the government, which 18 months ago was raising the victory flag, is now waving the white flag. And again, this is—never should have happened, it's a complete and utter failure on part of the current NDP government. They knew full well when zebra mussels were discovered that eradication wasn't feasible.

Eva Pip, a University of Winnipeg biologist who specializes in lakes and the health of our lakes noted as much, Mr. Speaker, and it's really containment, that's the only option when it comes to zebra mussels. And just recently, the importance of containment came to the forefront of the news when zebra mussels were discovered—

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

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): It is my pleasure to rise today to address the resolution brought forward by my colleague from the constituency of Concordia. I want to acknowledge his kind words and his interest in this particular topic which is indeed a topic of interest to us all, and investment in our parks and protected areas across

this province is truly one of our prime objectives as a government and is incredibly important so that, as the saying goes, we can leave to our children a province in a better condition than we inherited ourselves from our parents.

So this is a move in that direction, and I want to acknowledge the actions of this government in a broader perspective in this regard, Mr. Speaker, because, at least on this side of the House, I know that we pay particular attention to our parks. Just the fact that we committed \$100 million over an eight-year period of investment into our parks I think says it all compared to the record of members opposite. You know, talk is cheap. They can talk the good game all they want while they sit on the opposition benches but their time in office, their investments pale miserably in comparison to what we've done.

So, you know, I stand here with pride today to speak to the resolution based on our record. Very shortly after I was appointed minister it was my pleasure to introduce a regulatory amendment to The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act. The key points being ecosystems there, because in addition to adding to our list of threatened endangered species a number of—well, we had the olive-sided flycatcher, for instance, and the little brown bat, which is very important to many people around the world, but we went a step further, Mr. Speaker, in that we are now designating the ecosystems themselves as threatened and endangered and by doing so we are putting in place protections for them so that not only do we focus on the animals or the plants that are endangered, but the places where they actually live and grow. So this is unique to our country. We're the first province to go down this path, and I'm especially proud that one of the first designations of a protected ecosystem was the alvar area in my own territory, the Interlake.

The alvar is very unique in the sense that it's—we call it ridge country out in the country—but it's where the limestone basically comes almost to the surface. There might be four or five inches of topsoil over top of that, as a result being that forest is very stunted and sparse, but when you've just pushed through some of that Interlake swamp and slash and heavy poplar bush and willows, when you actually come out into one of these alvar formations, it's like a breath of fresh air. That's the only way to describe it and now, of course, we are recognizing this as a unique ecosphere and protecting it. I think a 26-hectare—2,600-hectare area in the Marble Ridge area north of Fisher Branch has now been designated

and I recommend it to all to come out. If the members opposite like coming out to look at parks and so forth, come out and view the alvar. And while you're there, look on the ground and you might find an example of Gastony's cliffbrake, which is another thing that is unique to that alvar ecosphere, Mr. Speaker.

But I'm going on overly long on alvar; I'm already down to five minutes. There is so, so much to talk about. You know, the \$100-million investment, as I just said. Some of the premier park locations in our province have benefited in large part as a result of this. I look to Birds Hill park, the most popular park in Manitoba, named after my great-great-great-great-grandfather, as a matter of fact, James Curtis Bird. Spruce Woods park in the southwest of Manitoba, a park that was profoundly damaged by the flood of 2011 is like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Mr. Speaker, in terms of not only the repairs that have been done to that but the additional investments. We're talking, I think, seven or eight million dollars—\$7.5 million last summer and allotting a further \$5.2 million. So you're talking a 12-, 13-million-dollar investment into this park to bring it back up to that world-class standard that Manitobans deserve and expect and are getting from this government.

Parks, well, let's talk fire prevention and protection, Mr. Speaker. One of the first duties, again, as the new minister, I got to go out to Lac du Bonnet and cut the ribbon on a new fire control centre—regional centre. It was almost \$10 million invested to protect that southeast area where some of our finest parks are—Nopiming, Atikaki, for instance. Not to mention, looking just further north to Pimachiowin Aki, the—you know, we're seeking UNESCO World Heritage Site designation, and just had the evaluators here a couple of months ago and were told by them that they will be recommending it for inscription, so we're very happy with that and we anxiously await that. Members opposite, of course, opposed that, because, you know, really, when it comes down to it, their commitment to parks is superficial at best, shall I say.

They—the member opposite mentioned conservation officers and, you know, we're the government that just introduced The Conservation Officers Act, recognizing those individuals that put their lives, literally, on the line in defence of our natural resources. This government put in place an act specific to them, recognizing their powers, acknowledging their contributions as peace officers,

and so forth. So, you know, we're stepping up for our conservation officers, opposite of what members on the opposition seem to think. And there are some vacancies, but we've not reduced positions. We are seeking individuals to fill those positions and, perhaps, it's because we have some of the highest standards in the country for our conservation officers, that might be slowing the recruitment process. But we will settle for nothing but the best and we will achieve that.

* (11:30)

I also got to essentially create the first provincial heritage trees program in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and actually went and, I don't know, unveiled, or what do you call it when you designate a tree? We—whatever, we designated the Point Douglas School cottonwood as the first heritage tree in our province, the Waterloo Street American elm as well, and not to mention the Souris old oak which is conceivably one of the oldest trees in our province, estimated to be in the neighborhood of 550 years old, is my understanding.

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is running short. I would just like to conclude by saying that this government has nothing to learn from members opposite. Members opposite have shown their disregard for the environment, their disregard for our waterways in our province, really nothing at all to learn from them. And I think the people of Manitoba are cognizant of that fact having sat them across the way for the past 16 years. Their position across the way is well deserved and will remain so, I'm sure, in the days to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I would first like to congratulate and thank all the people that ran in yesterday's federal election. I know it's a difficult thing to put your hat in the ring, sometimes to be successful and sometimes not to be. But I think we really should thank all of the people that came out and voted. I suspect when the numbers are all crunched, we're going to be something very close to a record turnout in modern times, and I think that speaks well to our democratic system.

As for the minister who thinks that he should take no example from us, I think he should go back and carefully reread the resolution because the opening comments which lists the natural biodiversity, which includes lakes, rivers, forests, tall grass prairie and more, well, the and more includes

wetlands which are absolutely critical in many habitats especially wetland habitats not only for the local wildlife and flora and fauna but actually a critical element in the health of rivers and lakes in this province. And clearly, this government does not appreciate them as part of that whole process.

I think it's very important that they get the recognition they deserve because they actually are the critical interface between land and water, and that's where a lot of the nutrient load can come from; it's also where the nutrient loads can be dealt with. And nutrient loads have a significant impact on the productivity of ecosystems, especially aquatic ecosystems. And to not recognize and not understand, frankly, shows a huge gap in the understanding of how ecosystems work.

It's great to designate an area and say, well, you're protecting a whole environmental habitat. Those are really microclimates that he is protecting, by definition. He's not creating a parkland like a whole national park or a whole provincial park; he's taking little pieces and saying, well, that's an environment we're protecting, that whole ecosystem. He's just taking a piece of the puzzle and saying that is what we're protecting. The whole—you have to understand the whole system, and clearly, they have failed to do that. And I think based on the programs that we have seen and the policies we have seen coming from this government, it's quite understandable that they would not understand it. They do not see the big picture.

I've had the pleasure my whole life of living in a rural environment. And it's not typical of all of them; I know that, but I do appreciate the value of the ecosystem that I live in, and I do understand that, and I've worked very hard to do that. Our family enjoys taking advantage of it. Yes, we do a little hunting and fishing which is a form of harvesting those ecosystems. But we also live in them.

And during the time that I was involved in agriculture I had the pleasure of recreating a very significant number, even on my own farming operation, of wetlands and special ecosystems. But I'm not calling them a whole environment that we protected. I just created a little piece of the puzzle. I understand how they all link together and how they all work together. And every one of us has an obligation to do something to try and protect that, not create a little area and say, oh, I've done everything I need to do. I think, frankly, it's a very short-sighted view.

And I cannot touch on this issue without going back to the issue of what happened to Lake Manitoba in 2011. Frankly, I still remain convinced today that that is Manitoba's biggest environmental disaster. And, yes, they've fixed a few pieces along the lakefront, but the whole lake is still in a downgrade position. It is not in good condition. Finally, we've got the water levels down so there's actually some rebuilding of the beachfront in terms of the dunes and the beach ridges actually starting to happen. This is basically six years since the first time that we saw the flood damage begin to happen and it got worse for the next year and a half.

And we have in many areas actually destroyed an environment there, a whole unique ecosystem along those lakefronts, including many species that are no longer recorded there, that were recorded there prior. Piping plover is a simple example, one that's on—been on the endangered species list a number of times in Canada, including in Manitoba, and was fairly prevalent around Lake Manitoba before that—the last three years where there have been no recorded breeding pairs on those beachfronts. Really, by-product of the inability of this province to manage their water.

And it's—they can't manage their water because they don't see it coming. They don't understand the system. They don't know that, you know, if you manage your water storage further back in the system, you actually can do something to manage the whole system and reduce the amount of damage that will happen downstream. So they just pull another plug and they let it run somewhere else, and in this case it was Lake Manitoba that was the plug and it took huge damage. There are millions of trees around that beachfront that'll be a generation before they return. And whether they'll even be of the same species remains to be seen because, certainly, there's been a species shift.

And I must finish the comments that my colleague from Morris made earlier about zebra mussels, the invasive species that we all know have great potential to cause a lot of damage in lakes and all aquatic ecosystems. How far back they go into the ecosystem remains to be seen, whether they become an additional problem for wetlands is a possibility, in all frankfulness. But we yet—have yet to determine whether that'll be a problem here for Manitoba. We knew they were coming in the Red River system for six years and we did very little to prepare for it. We had a limited number of facilities to sanitize boats and to reduce the risk and do whatever we could to

try and slow it down. And in the basis of one year, Mr. Speaker, we have let zebra mussels leap Manitoba. Now they're found in Cedar Lake which is in the Saskatchewan river system. So they have crossed Manitoba in one year. If you look at how the progress of them as they became an invasive species in North America, you will find that no one else has done a poorer job as this government did. In one year, they let it leap the whole province. So now it becomes Saskatchewan's problem.

And, yes, we still have some waterways to protect here in Manitoba. And I can't help but think, I spent a little time at Selkirk with the family at an event there. And I was watching the float planes go in and out during the day, and I couldn't help but think, now, who's making sure those float planes are clean because they're going into pristine lakes. And the answer is no one is making sure those float planes are clean. The risk is huge that they will take zebra mussels into very isolated and very unique environments that will be—probably would have been years being contaminated any other way, but they're going to leapfrog it in there as quickly as possible. So I would encourage the minister to actually go back and think about a policy for the float plane situation because I don't think we have anything in regards to that.

Comments were made about conservation officers, and we know that they have been cutting conservation and in-field effect of conservation for some time. And I know that I've talked to a number of conservation officers who are, frankly, very frustrated that they have no ability to actually enforce the rules that are out there and that the impact of not enforcing the rules has been a huge burden on the big game species. In fact, we're down to the point now where in some regions the sighting of a moose is right up there with the frequency of the sighting of a sasquatch. They're just so seldom seen anymore, and yet the environment isn't degraded. It's basically, in many cases it's parasites—invasive parasites, by the way—and overhunting in many areas. And we continue to put more and more hunting pressure on, and then we designate an area—once it's hunted out, we designate an area as a no-hunting zone, try to hope for some recovery. But, you know, most farmers can explain to you if you throw away the seed, you're not going to have a great crop for next year. So we have taken the populations down to points where recovery will be generational. So we will certainly not see a significant rebound in any time soon.

* (11:40)

I'm very disappointed in this government's ability to manage the wildlife and manage the ecosystems in this province. We see repeated examples: the management of Shellmouth and the impact on that river downstream. Somebody should take a little bit of a boat ride down there and see how much damage has been done in that river. It is an eroded shell of what it was. There's simply no greenery anywhere in the flood plain anymore. It's been flooded so frequently, it looks like a habitat—I can't imagine too many places on earth that would look that bad, it just—completely devastating. And, certainly, it's a repeated misuse and inability to manage Shellmouth that has contributed to that in a major way.

And the farmers downstream who are impacted by that have supposedly had compensation programs for 2012 and 2014, and nobody's seen a nickel yet. There's been some offers made that are, frankly, cents on the dollar. It looks like a ridiculous offer, but, you know, perhaps farmers will get desperate enough to get satisfaction. What they really want, Mr. Speaker, is they actually want water management from this government. And we have seen very little of that.

Now, I realize my time has gone by before I've gotten anywhere near, but I would dearly encourage this government to go back and rethink not only this resolution, but rethink their position and include a little bit on wetlands in their plans, because without which, they are doomed to failure.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few comments on the record on this resolution.

The first thing that I want to comment about is the fact that parks and protected areas are pretty important, and it's really important that we protect natural habitat and have good examples of ecosystems that people can visit, and see, and learn and are protected.

I think at the same time it's important that the government not try to exaggerate what they are doing. In this resolution, the claim is made that protecting entire ecosystems is an approach that is the first of its kind in North America.

In fact, the protection of ecosystems has really been part of the mandate of the development of national parks in Canada for many, many years. And this is not something which is new to North America.

It is not the first in North America, but it, you know, it merits some praise for what the government is doing, but to make this kind of exaggerated claim really, you know, misleads people.

Let me give you an example. There are many national parks in Canada and many are based on protecting ecosystems, but one of the fairly good examples, and it's relevant to what we're talking about, is the Grasslands National Park in southern Saskatchewan. And right here, from the national park and those who know its history, that this was designed to protect the prairie ecosystem. And it's so, you know, advertised in the material about the Grasslands National Park, you know, with over 70 different species of grass and over 50 different species of wildflowers—I'm quoting this—Grasslands has an important role in protecting the prairie ecosystem.

So it is many other activities in different ways have worked to protect different ecosystems. And indeed, the national parks system undertook an effort to look at different ecosystems across the country as a way of trying to make sure that different ecosystems were represented in the national park and protected in the national park system.

So the first point that I would like to make is that, you know, although protecting ecosystems is important, this is not something which is really particularly new. It is something which goes back quite some time and is something that has been part of the Canadian heritage for many years.

Second point that I would note here is the reference to fighting invasive species like zebra mussels. And, you know, as we're all well aware—the it's not just important to fight zebra mussels. It's important to actually be effective in making sure that they don't spread. And there are many who I talked with and, indeed, believe that, you know, this government was rather slow in terms of protecting our province from zebra mussels, that much more could have been done early on. We're now into 16 years of this government. There was an opportunity to be much more active early on in preventing. The government has not been all that effective, it would appear, in preventing spread, because we had the recent announcement that there are zebra mussels now in Cedar Lake. And that, from what we know, would not have been able to happen by the zebra mussels or the early forms of zebra mussels spreading upstream, but that this almost certainly happened because individuals who are boating or

fishing or what have you were taking things from, presumably, Lake Winnipeg over to Cedar Lake. It's not but more than a few miles. But it's an example of an area which, you know, there could have been quite a bit more diligence paid in terms of preventing the spread, and many of us have a lot of concern about the thousands, tens of thousands, maybe 100,000 lakes that we've got in this province and how many will be affected because there hasn't been as good protection as we should have.

So the government has a considerable amount to answer for, and I just wanted to put those comments on the record.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Nice to be back in session again, and interesting to watch the election last night and the results. The voters are always correct and it's always great to see the participation from the voting public across Canada and as the results rolled out last night. Certainly, change was in the wind last night and we'll continue to work here in Manitoba listening to Manitobans as they seek change here also.

And in regards to this resolution, government action on parks and protected spaces, actually, it's a bit of a misnomer. It should be government inaction because all through the resolution it talks about protection and natural diversity and preserving and protecting, and then they also in the same clauses where they have protect Lake Winnipeg, they talk about zebra mussels.

And what has this government done to protect Manitoba, Lake Winnipeg, the river systems from zebra mussels is—well, they made a press—did a press release. They did a photo op. They dumped tons of potash into the harbours of Lake Winnipeg and then declared that they had beaten back the zebra mussels. And we know that that's not true, that there—the infestation has continued to spread.

My colleague from Portage brought up some very good points about the more that the zebra mussel becomes entrenched in our water systems, the more difficult it's going to be to control that and, in effect, perhaps eradicate if it's not too late already. So it's going to have to be something that will be looked—needs to be looked at in the future. And this government, in spite of the press releases, in spite of the photo ops, really have no management plan in place.

And there are so many examples of how this NDP government really has no appreciation and no

understanding of environment throughout Manitoba and throughout—really, throughout Canada and North America. They have no understanding of what is involved in enhancing environment. One of the examples is our moose populations are at dangerously low levels not only on—they're spotlighting—and not only on the moose populations, but also on the white-tailed deer.

* (11:50)

Spotlighting is dangerous. This government has been unable or unwilling to stop nightlighting, and it not only endangers the game populations, it also endangers private property, it endangers people, it endangers livestock, and it continues to happen across Manitoba. And this government has turned a blind eye, so to speak, to nightlighting and the detrimental effects that it has. Just one—just another example of how this government refuses to be proactive on protecting our environment here.

This government has raised cottager fees across Manitoba without explanation of where these fees are going. They are going into general revenues, and we know with the mounting debt and the mounting deficits that this government is so enamoured with that cottagers have every right to be frustrated with paying more and getting less because that's what Manitobans continue to do in every aspect of their lives these days. It's Manitobans are paying more and getting less from this government, and that is just another example of how the mismanagement of this government continues.

In terms of managing our waterways, our lakes, of flooding, this government has a terrible record on understanding what causes flooding, on being proactive to minimize the effects of overland flooding. The—one only needs to look back to the 2011 flood: unprecedented amounts of water coming but this government has still continued to this day, has continued to not be proactive about this. They have not reached out to Saskatchewan and North Dakota where the watersheds are coming through. They refuse to deal with this, and I know the member from Burrows apparently is a water management expert, but she'll have her turn to tell us on this.

Just a—the—and this is not—environmental issues are not unique to Manitoba. If members were to talk to other organizations, they'll know that this happens—environmental issues are across North America and, indeed, around the world, but there are very proactive groups out there. This government seems to have the idea that they can pay—they can

spend money and solve problems, but the problem is that it ends with the photo op and the announcement, and it's not carrying through on doing—enhancing projects that are brought forward by local groups.

Agriculture is near and dear to my heart. There is no better stewards of the land than our farm community, and yet this government fails to recognize that. And we only have to look at going back to the flood of 2011. I remember being in the summer—spring—summer of, I believe, it was June of 2012, being on some pasture land along Lake Manitoba that had been flooded, severely flooded, after the 2011 flood. There were refrigerators; there were tires washed up on what used to be very productive pasture land and hay land, and the local landowners were having to deal with this. The cattails were growing now where it was productive pasture land and hay land, and this government caused the flooding, intentionally flooded Lake Manitoba, and this is the fallout from that.

And yet this government fails to realize that pasture land and particularly cattle operations are actually very good for the environment, and they enhance the productivity of the land. They actually provide some very good nesting grounds on properly managed pastures, nesting grounds for the upland birds, for songbirds. If you do not pasture this land, it becomes overgrown with bush and weeds, and that is not conducive to the nesting grounds for a lot of these birds.

So with proper management and—the livestock producers, our livestock producers across this province know that, and their livelihood is based on proper management, and yet there is a real disregard from this government in regards to the added benefits of pastureland which, as I said, really do enhance the environment that we have here in Manitoba.

They—the very fact that they're building this bipole west waste line 500 kilometres longer. They're destroying—and all you need to do is drive up Highway 50 and you will see the slashing of the boreal forest that they've done to build this. And if—it is totally unnecessary to build it 500 kilometres longer. They've expropriated private land without due notice. I can share pictures of land sitting idle now that was producing food, but this government has decided that they know how to run it better than the landowners. And so now we have weed-infested farmland which was growing food previous to this, and yet this government—so if that's their idea of

environmental management, then Manitoba really is in bad shape here, because this government has no idea what they're doing. They have this attitude as at—they know better they do not talk to the local organizations, the local landowners.

There is so much we could be doing. There is so much potential that we have in this province, and yet this government is fixated on only making announcements and pretending to care for the environment when they really have no idea what they're doing and it's just—hopefully, in the future that they will begin to see the errors of their ways and start to listen to local organizations who really do know how to manage our environment.

Thank you.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I'd like to put a few words on the record with regard to the NDP's private member's resolution on government action on parks and protected spaces.

I don't have a lot of time, but what I would like to share is a personal story about this government's incompetence with regard to running the provincial parks within our province. I was approached by a woman who is 85 years old. She and her husband had some—prepared a picnic, were going to the Asessippi Provincial Park for a picnic probably about two or three weeks ago when the weather is so beautiful. And they get to the park with their friends and they set out their picnic, and along comes a park staff and indicated to them, you know, you're going to have to take your picnic outside the park—this is, like, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon—take your picnic outside the park because we're closing the gates. And they said, well, can we finish our picnic? And they said, no, the gates are closing, you're going to have to get out of the park.

You know, this is really interesting. This government who's trying to brag about their government action on park supports are kicking seniors out of provincial parks on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. So this group, this family of—took their picnic and went to the boat dock area that was outside the park and sat at the picnic table there, not anywhere near the beauty and tranquility of being inside the park, had their picnic. So around 7 o'clock that evening they're driving back. They're driving along the road and they look and the park gates are still open. Mr. Speaker, come on. Like, really, there was such an urgency to get these seniors out of the

park because the gates were closing, and they get out of the park. They follow the rules and when they come back by the park, the park gates are left open.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one example of how this government continues to say one thing and does another. Accessibility to Manitoba parks is something that a lot of people take for granted and they would assume that this government would manage that file and manage the parks in a better manner.

So to have an individual come to me and say that this—and share this type of a situation just speaks volumes to how this government continues to say

one thing, does another and continues to mismanage this file.

We've seen a number of things happen within our provincial parks. There was a time when the government had indicated that, you know, we're going to let people have free access to the parks. We're not going to charge—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) will have seven minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

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