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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 24, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): I wonder if there's leave of the House to proceed to Bill 216.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to proceed directly to Bill 216? [*Agreed*]

Bill 216—The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Amendment Act (Manitoba Hydro Ratepayers Protection)

Mr. Speaker: We'll call now Bill 216.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the MLA for Midland, that Bill 216, The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Amendment Act (Manitoba Hydro Ratepayers Protection), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: I rise today to speak to Bill 216, The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Amendment Act, also known as Manitoba Hydro Ratepayers Protection.

Manitoba Hydro is in a challenging position. When we look back to rulings from the Public Utilities Board we see that they detailed a plan to achieve a 75-25 debt equity position by March 31st, 2012, and this would be achieved by annual rate

of inflation increases put to Manitobans' cost of electricity.

Unfortunately, we now know that this is not the case. A higher debt-to-equity ratio, coupled with emergency rate increases show our Crown corporation with signs of trouble. Hydro's balance sheet shows progressive signs of a corporation that needs to reassess its business plan in order to remain viable.

There are many factors that cause these problems, from special payments or dividends to the Manitoba government to a declining export market. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the surplus energy program by which Hydro sells its, quote, electricity in excess of its immediate requirements, end quote, was originally said by the PU to be, quote, "... expected to 'break even' on an annual basis", end quote. We know that that is not the case and Manitobans have been forced into rate increases to pay for my—Manitoba Hydro's plans.

Hydro plans to double Manitoba's debt within the next few years and Manitobans need to be assured that there are solid economic plans in place to sustain that debt. Large capital projects must go through hearings with the Clean Environment Commission in order to ensure that the plans deal with the environmental impacts in a sustainable way.

Protecting the environment is not cheap; protecting the environment can be very costly, and in order to do so—and to—in order to that well and sustainably, Manitoba Hydro must be on a solid economic footing. Manitobans should have confidence that Hydro has a solid and viable capital plan, and this bill provides the method for independent review of that plan.

Mr. Speaker, I have been involved in several corporations and organizations that have been through similar circumstances to which Hydro now finds itself. These companies have been small, mid-size, large and, indeed, multinational. And I've seen it from the creditors' side, as a consultant and as an owner. Often, there is what I would call an 'envangelist' involve. When you're in the room with them, it all makes sense; the plan is perfectly clear, and you walk out of the room and you go, wait a minute, that doesn't make sense anymore.

The numbers tell the tale, Mr. Speaker. Look at the numbers, focus on the numbers and they will tell the truth.

There are few constants in these organizations, but the main one is the need for a viable plan. With organizations that are in trouble, they often seek a solution in the purchase of a large equipment or land or a merger. That's often a distraction from the real problem and usually means further expenditure to make the asset viable down the road. It's a never-ending process; it becomes a sinkhole that can drag the company down; there always seems to be a solution just over the horizon. In agriculture, we call this farming your equity. You know, Mr. Speaker, we're going to make you a farmer yet. It's brought down many, many companies and organizations.

Another constant is the if onlys: if only we'd not signed that contract, if only we had not bought that company. Again, it is a distraction from the real issue, which is having a solid and viable plan.

Mr. Speaker, many organizations review their plans on a regular basis, but, occasionally, there is a watershed moment that forces them to review the entire plan and ask for outside assistance. That is the spot that Manitoba Hydro now finds itself in. For a while, you know what the buzzword was? It was called a paradigm shift, and there are many, many stories of corporations that ignored the obvious and the market passed them by.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro would not build a dam or structure without having a solid base from which to start their construction. In order to allow Manitoba Hydro's expansion plans, Manitobans need to be assured that Manitoba Hydro has a solid capital plan. There is a method to do so, and that—that process has been presented in this bill: a process to evaluate the capital plan and make sure that it works for Manitobans, for Manitoba Hydro, and that it takes into account the rapidly changing world economics around us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): And I'm pleased to put a few words on the bill.

First, I'd like to say, this side of the House does believe in a publicly owned, publicly run Manitoba Hydro for the benefit of all Manitobans. And I think that's in stark contrast to the members opposite. And I also look at Hydro as a benefit for all Manitobans, a continuing benefit, and I look at it as

Manitoba's 'comparable' oil well, but a different type of oil well: one that's green, one that's clean and one that'll give forever. And so, I really like the—Manitoba Hydro being public asset. I believe that we can focus on it forever. I believe that it's best in that way.

And I'd like to compare and contrast our records. First, I'm pleased to be part of the NDP party that believes in building dams, building hydro and investing.

And I think that it's a important difference, where the former Conservative government actually mothballed some of the projects that were already lined up.

* (10:10)

There was a deal to sell power to Ontario; it was going to develop hydro earlier. Ontario was basically going to pay for the dam through a agreed-upon sale, and, again, the former Filmon government fumbled the ball, and that deal went away.

And I think that if it had have been built, we all know that you build the dams early, it makes a difference. And I look at the history. You look at Limestone; this is a dam that was called lemonstone by the Conservative party. And what they said was it was far better to use coal and gas, non-renewable resources to build electricity. And I'm pleased to say that contrary to what was said over that time and contrary to the comments from the Conservative party which called it the lemonstone project, that is one of the most effective, cost-effective ways of generating electricity. It's earned many hundreds of millions of dollars in profit for Manitoba Hydro and the public. And I'm pleased that we didn't listen to the Conservative party. We went ahead with that dam. We built the dam and that's really been a big positive boost for Manitoba Hydro.

I also find it strange that the members opposite are talking about the consumers. This is a party whose leader has said that they believe in going to market rates. Now, he has publicly said that. Now, it didn't get lots of airplay, but what that means is you'd go from 6.2 to 6.5 cents per kilowatt hour to 13 to 15 cents a kilowatt hour. So if they were truly ready to protect the average ratepayer, they're talking about an open policy spoken of by the Leader of the Conservative Party to over double the rates to the consumer, over double that.

So what we're saying is taking a bill of 70 to 100 dollars and going to 140 to 200 dollars per

month for a householder. So let—and another historical fact that the members might not know, and I agree the member's a new member, so I thought I'd give them a little history in this respect, but we actually equalized hydro rates.

At one point the rates for the city were less than the rates for rural and northern Manitoba. And we thought that would be very—very appropriate to have one rate for all Manitobans, to really signify that Manitoba Hydro was a benefit to all Manitobans. And I'm pleased that we passed the bill. Again, I can't publicly remember exactly how the Tories voted against it, but I believe I know. And the case is, is we equalized hydro rates to rural and northern Manitoba so they were equal to the city, and that dropped it. And it didn't drop it much. It only dropped about \$16 million a year for those consumers. That's a lot of money, and I think it made—is a difference for the average Manitoban.

The other thing that people don't—the members opposite don't understand is when we formed government, we were the last in the country on energy efficiency—the last, or we might have been second last, but I think we were last. The interesting part is that we are now the best in the country on energy efficiency. And, you know, those are independent of government. That's not just me saying it; it's actually independent groups that are saying it. So we've gone and worked with the public to have insulation programs, to have energy 'efficiency' programs, to make sure that there's a loan program. People can fix up their houses.

But that—what that does, Mr. Speaker, is it allows the average Manitoban to save money on their bill, save energy, and then Manitoba Hydro can take that energy and sell it. And so this is truly a triple win. And when you take the people who were employed by BUILD and BEEP, which are programs to help low-income people energy retrofit their houses, this was then four wins: a win for the poor who had the highest energy bills, a win for the energy efficiency, a win for conservation and a win for us, where we got higher income for Manitoba Hydro for selling the energy. I think it's fabulous.

And by the way, Mr. Speaker, the support for BUILD and BEEP and the energy efficiency was voted for by our government and voted against by the Conservatives. And this saves people money, because if they get this insulation program, they would save money, now and forever. And so I don't know why they would vote against it. I don't know

why they would vote against saving northern and rural Manitobans \$120 a month—sorry—up to \$120 a year; \$16 million a year total. I don't know why they would vote against building Hydro. I don't understand why, when we look at reliability and having a third bipole, they would vote against it and do nothing. And, you know, it was funny, because they had a report, back in the '90s, where they never built the line, and they were told—after a small tornado—the lines were knocked out shortly—and they were told by an engineering report that they needed to build a second line, and they did nothing.

But I'm not surprised with them doing nothing because they didn't build dams, they didn't build power lines, they didn't do energy efficiency, they didn't equalize the rates. So I understand what the members opposite did: They mothballed Hydro.

Now, they're throwing rocks at Hydro. Why are they throwing rocks? Well, let me see. Let's follow this pattern. In MTS, they talked about how they needed more capital. They talked about how the company couldn't exist as a public entity. They talked about how it could not possibly be done, and then they privatized it. Now, I understand how, in the past, if you believe patterns repeat—and I believe they repeat—I look at the Conservative Party over there. What they're saying is they are unsustainable debt.

Well, I'd like to let the member know—opposite know, he used to be about 89 per cent debt-to-equity ratio. Now it's about 74, 73 per cent. That means that the amount of money that Hydro owns has gone down. Its retained earnings went up to the—over a billion dollars. If memory serves me correctly, it was about \$2.1 billion of retained earnings. Between us, \$2.1 billion retained earnings means profit that's held within Hydro, which is positive. And then we also talk—so it's got a lower debt-equity ratio. It's got good energy efficiency. It's got good sales, and we're building hydro dams, and we've equalized the rates.

So I contrast that to the members opposite, whose leader has said that he wants to over—double the rates that consumers pay for hydro. I think that's crazy. I think it's an asset owned by the people of Manitoba. The benefits should go to the people of Manitoba, and I think that what we want to do is remember the past where they shot down Limestone, which is producing electricity—one of the cheapest in the whole country—and I look at where they want to go in the—what they've done in the past, as far as privatization, as far as driving down publicly owned assets.

I believe a publicly owned asset should be shared by the public. I think it should be retained by the public, and I look at how it's been run now and I do know that the debt-equity ratio is much better. The retained earnings are very good. It's a jewel, and I look at it not only for its public policy but its fiscal policy. I believe it's good, strong fiscal policy, and I just wonder the motives of the members opposite for trying to run down a jewel in our crown.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Manitoba Hydro does belong to the people of Manitoba. Absolutely no doubt it belongs to the people of Manitoba, but Manitoba Hydro does not belong to the NDP party. And that's what they've turned this Crown corporation into.

They've stacked the board with their political appointees. They've taken—*[interjection]* Well, how about Vic Schroeder? Oh, how about Vic Schroeder? They've now—Manitoba Hydro and the PUB have gone to court. We have two publicly—public enterprises, entities, going to court over rates.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would put some accountability back into Manitoba Hydro, and it would put some accountability back into the government that is now running Manitoba Hydro into the ground. And it's interesting, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) talks about equalizing rates for rural and urban Manitoba. I'm sure that he's aware of the fact that there are many farms now, in rural Manitoba, that are installing diesel generators to run their grain out—grain-handling equipment, because Manitoba Hydro cannot supply adequate hydro to them.

* (10:20)

What happened to this great company we had in Manitoba? You can't even supply your own customers in Manitoba, never mind the cut-rate rates that you're having to sell hydro to in the US now. No wonder this company is in trouble when you have people like this running the company. You need to put the public back into Manitoba Hydro.

And, of course, the biggest boondoggle of them all is the Bipole III project, the west side Bipole III. Here's political interference at its absolute worst. You're going to build a line that's 500 kilometres longer, through more boreal forest on the west side than there is on the east side—this government claims that they can't build a hydro line through boreal forest on the east side and, yet, we're building roads,

much needed roads on the east side. If you can build a road, surely you can build a hydro line. But they've said, yes, to roads and, no, to a hydro line. And, yet, we have this government that they have sunk themselves in very deep on Bipole III. All we've had is excuses; there has been no solid reasons for building it on the west side. There's no viable plan, as the minister—as the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) commented, that there should be viable plans; there's never been a viable plan.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) has said, we're going to build it on the west side so then we can sell power to Saskatchewan. He fails to mention that you'd have to build another converter station at a billion dollars, and how are you going to pay for that to sell power into Saskatchewan? No viable reasons, only excuses.

The route that they have picked for Bipole III goes right through the heart of my constituency. They have—this government has failed to address landowner issues. Landowners out there are genuinely concerned. I have dairy producers that—the hydro line, the proposed hydro line was going to be fairly close to them. Now they've moved it even closer and there is real concerns about stray voltage, about production in their dairy and, yet, this government refuses to even admit that there is a problem.

There's a lot of intensive agriculture in my constituency. We have irrigation projects, we have tremendous potential for even more irrigation. They want to put this hydro line through some of this land that's going to be irrigated—that is irrigated now and will be irrigated. For those urban members, I'd hate to break your bubble on this, but pivot irrigation and hydro lines don't go together; you cannot put a hydro line through the middle of the section and still put a pivot irrigation in.

So now we're talking food production. Potato production, you're going to affect potato production in Manitoba with this hydro line. You're talking about food production here.

They've offered a one-time payment to these landowners and the landowners have said, no, not interested. It doesn't matter what you offer; we're not interested. So now the threat of expropriation is standing over top of these landowners for a line that—it has no viable reasons for this.

This line goes near homes and this has affected—I can tell you, Mr. Speaker—this has affected the

health of a couple of my constituents, just a couple that I know of, because they are so concerned about this. It goes near their homes and they are—they phone my office quite regularly to ask me about what's happening, and I try to keep them up to date of what's happening. But if you're building a line and it's—it makes economic sense, it's for the good of the province and that, maybe that's different. But when you have no viable reasons for this, only excuses, only political interference, and now you're affecting people's health with this—just with the proposal, never mind you haven't even begun the line yet.

The extra cost, who is going to bear this cost? It's all Manitobans are going to bear the cost of this. This is not—again, this government tries to portray the expenses—extra expenses being paid by export customers. You're at rock-bottom prices on hydro sales in the US right now and hydro prices in the US.

The natural gas industry has greatly expanded. You need to stop and think about what you're doing here. Yes, we need bipole. We need it to keep reliability to the southern part of the province and for exports. But you cannot afford to spend an extra billion dollars on this so-called reliability because the line that you're building is not reliable.

We just had a windstorm last week that could've affected that line and it certainly—if it wouldn't have physically affected the line, there's talk about static electricity and there was a lot of dust blowing last week and we could've flashovers in there.

So, when you're across agricultural land, if you're going across non-agricultural land, it's different. [*interjection*] Well, I'm not sure that, you know, the member—there is, I don't believe that there would be a lot of dust storms across the east side of Manitoba unless they're coming off of the west side, and there was—it was a severe storm we had last week and that's—again, we've asked the questions. What about flashovers? And, yet, we're stonewalled. We get no answers from this.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, it's about having a public review about capital costs and it's about protecting ratepayers. And we—it's not just—the ratepayers are not just the people who—of Manitoba who buy hydro from Manitoba Hydro, the ratepayers in Manitoba are also the owners. We're protecting—this bill would protect the owners of this company and that's what we're after. We want to have some accountability. We want some protection for the ratepayers so that when rates are going to go up to pay for this

proposed Bipole III west line, because of the extra costs, the extra billion dollars.

But where is the protection for the ratepayers? Right now, there is none and that's what this bill does. I would urge this government to support this bill. This is just one small step in bringing Manitoba Hydro back into becoming owned again by the ratepayers, by the citizens of Manitoba and not owned by this NDP government. Thank you.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I'm very happy to stand and speak on this resolution, Mr. Speaker.

It occurred to me as I was listening to members opposite that the only thing constant coming from across the other side—the only thing constant is their inconsistency, Mr. Speaker. Just yesterday, we talked a little bit about their approach to budgeting in this province and their financial, their economic approach, and particularly, their kind of twisted way in which they approach the people of Manitoba on their position, or in many cases their positions on different—on the same issue.

Yet, yesterday, and over the period of the last number of weeks, weeks and months, I've been talking about the two positions they have in terms of balancing the books in this province, Mr. Speaker. You know, they've been in this Legislature with a resolution saying, they'd cut deeply—\$500 million, in excess of \$500 million worth of cuts all in one fell swoop. This is their response to the economic—this global economic downturn that every government has faced, and they said, they'd do that deeply, and they would cut into health care and education, family services. You know, they wouldn't be making the kind of strategic investments in infrastructure that we're doing on this side of the House.

And they hung tightly to that position for a period of time and then on the eve of the last election, the very eve, the Monday evening before the election was called on the Tuesday, back in September, voila, they changed their position.

Now they were going to come back into balance in 2018. You know, way down the road, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think, kind of, to be frank, a cynical attempt to try to get votes in the election which they in this House say, oh, they're so self-righteous. They wouldn't do something like that—you have—give me a break.

* (10:30)

But here we see it again. Today, this morning, in the Legislature, I listened very intently to the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) as he talked about the resolution he brought forward, and he's talking about—get this, Mr. Speaker, he's talking about raising rates—raising hydro rates in Manitoba to the level of increase of the cost of living.

Gosh, Mr. Speaker, how many times are they going to change this position? Raising rates to the level of the cost of living increases for Manitobans.

That's another position on this, because very clearly, their position of at least part of their caucus has been to go to market rates. Now, unless members opposite think market rates are the same thing as the cost-of-living increases, let's dispel that right now, so that you—so that there's no claiming of ignorance on this. Oh, we didn't know, we thought they were the same—maybe that's their rationale.

That's not the case, Mr. Speaker, I hate to inform you. Cost-of-living increases that you're talking about today are vastly different than going to market rates, which you have stated to the people of Manitoba time and time again.

So again, it must have been one heck of a discussion in caucus before this resolution came forward because there are those in that PC caucus who dearly believe that we should be raising rates to match the market rates. And I know that there's some very principled people over there in the Conservative Party who really believe that, and they really, truly, honest to good—and I—and you know what, Mr. Speaker? You know what? I have a great deal of admiration, I have a great deal of admiration for people on that side of the House who can take a brave position, like moving towards market rates, and sticking to that position and being honest with the people of Manitoba and saying, we will go to market rates with hydro and we'll do it for this, this, this, this reasons.

But now they come in, some other members of their caucus, who I guess get the floor once in a while in the House, Mr. Speaker, and they talk about raising rates to the rate of the cost of living, or is this yet again another attempt of our friends across the way saying one thing to the people of Manitoba and then trying to soften their position to get—to gain favour with the folks out there in Manitoba.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the answer to that question. I don't know if members opposite know the answer to the question. But the fact

remains, on this issue as in so many issues, they have two positions now. They can go out into the coffee shops all over this province and pick one of the two positions to suit their purposes for that day. I don't think that works.

When it comes to Hydro, the members opposite have no credibility. They're not trusted with Hydro, they're not trusted with Crown corporations, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? For good reason, they're not trusted.

I was real proud, a number of years ago, to stand in this House and vote in favour of equalizing hydro rates for my constituents in rural Manitoba, my constituents in rural Manitoba who benefited from us doing that. And, you know, I've—I lived in—I lived—my first teaching position in Norway House, I lived in northern Manitoba for four years. I know there are people in that community who benefited from our equalization of hydro rates across this province. But what was amazing, I thought, Mr. Speaker, was, you know, I thought some rural MLAs from across the way would see the value of that and maybe they would consider standing with me and my colleagues. My colleagues, who represent every region of this province, stood and voted in favour of a benefit for my rural constituents.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite were AWOL. The members opposite—you know what, I'm—I got to—I retract that. They weren't AWOL. They stood and voted against that particular move.

The members opposite have a history when it comes to Hydro. Without even me getting into the debate over privatization, and not even, you know, reminding people that this is the same group that privatized the telephone system, who would privatize Hydro, and I think my colleague from Assiniboia outlined that pretty well.

My perspective on this, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to make decisions in Hydro that ensure its long-term viability. We have to make tough decisions, like building generating stations, to begin with; signing deals, as we have done with our markets—Minnesota, Wisconsin.

Members opposite, earlier in our discussions, were talking about, oh, maybe Ontario, maybe Saskatchewan, and they downplay that as kind of small potatoes in their minds, Mr. Speaker. Hydro, to us, is what oil and gas has been to other provinces. And if we're not up to making the big, tough decisions, like investing in hydro stations, like

investing in transmission lines to get that power to market, like having the tenacity to sign agreements with our export markets, with our partners, we won't realize those revenues for the next generation. We will let down the next generation and we will saddle them—members opposite talk about this all the time—how we saddle the next generation with tax burdens and all the rest of it. Well, if we don't make the big decisions these days in terms of investment in Hydro, in generating stations, in transmission lines, if we don't have the courage to make the tough decisions—not the easy decisions that members opposite tend to get into and then rationalize about bipole coming down the east side, and kind of make up reasons why we have to bring it down the east side, that's the easy stuff. That's taking the easy way out.

This government didn't take the easy way out. This government made the right decision, the tougher decision, to come down the west side. We're going to invest in that bipole project. We are going to have that project go through the Clean Environment Commission and get its environmental licensing done as it should, and then we will be able to sign agreements, more agreements than the 7 billion we've already signed. We will be setting ourselves up to have a revenue stream come into this province, Mr. Speaker, to grow our economy, to make sure that Manitoba's economy grows rather than retracts. This is a—our approach to Hydro, as opposed to members' opposite narrow-minded approach, is visionary; it'll work, and it'll provide Manitoba with a bright future.

So, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member bringing—opposite, bringing this resolution forward, but I can't say that I agree with it, and I really do think our approach to managing Hydro, and not just on a day-to-day basis, but a long-term, is much better than what we see in this resolution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this morning to stand in support of Bill 216, The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Amendment Act, the Manitoba Hydro ratepayers protection act, and I thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) for introducing this bill. And it's a good bill, and I'm pleased to be able to speak this morning and demonstrate a little bit further why that is the case.

But first, I just wanted to mention the fact that the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) across the way ended his presentation this morning by questioning the motives for the introduction of such

a bill, and he said: Why would the opposition introduce such a motion? And I just want to answer that question and explain to the member opposite that the bill was introduced for the purposes of accountability, for the purposes of providing transparency, for the purposes of bringing about fiscal responsibility, and that's why we're pleased to stand in support of this bill because this bill accomplishes all those things, that there is a remedy in this bill for a problem that faces us as a problem, and this is a—it's a reasonable accommodation. It's a reasonable safeguard that protects Manitoba ratepayers, and, indeed, it's something that I would imagine that the government would get behind inasmuch as it protects them, too. It makes sure that when we're spending money on capital expansion projects for Manitoba Hydro, that they're going to be protected, that ratepayers would be protected.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're at a place—we're at a juncture where the NDP is forcing Hydro to embark on a 10-year, \$20-billion capital development plan that we believe is, quite frankly, based on uncertain and weak economic fundamentals. And it's important to keep in mind, we believe, that the global economic picture has completely changed in the last number of years since the time when Keeyask and Conawapa generating stations were first proposed. And no one really disputes that fact, the fact that, when it comes to exporting energy, that there are new players, that there are new factors, and that it's having an effect on our projections of profit. New sources of renewable energy and expanded natural gas supplies mean Manitobans should be asking whether these projects are still viable.

* (10:40)

So, Mr. Speaker, things like the deposits of natural gas that are accessible through fracturing, there's new oil sources in the Gulf of Mexico, there's continuing effectiveness of the coal lobby in the US, and there are greater efficiencies in energy consumption that have made the United States capable of being more energy self-sufficient. And although the members of the government would chirp from the other side, really, at the end of the day, we cannot tell the Americans what power to buy. We cannot tell them that they must buy our power instead of looking to domestic sources. It's not our decision to make.

So we can jump up and down and tell our neighbours to the south that they should be buying our power, but it is incumbent upon us to make the

case to them, and I know that's been a big part of the efforts of Hydro and this government is to make that case to the US. Unfortunately, that case has been less compelling than this government would like to believe that it has been.

And I should mention, even ethanol initiative, despite taking agricultural land out of food production, has also had an impact. And so all of these things continue to frustrate Manitoba's electrical exports. We know that, for the fiscal year that just ended March the 31st, Hydro estimates it has earned a profit of \$73 million. It's down \$52 million from the \$125 million it first projected. And, just recently, it received approval from the Public Utilities Board for a 2 per cent hike to all customers that has now come into effect.

All of these things are factors that we should, in this Chamber, consider, that, in light of the shifting energy market conditions, it's not just our party, it's not just this opposition; there are many stakeholder groups that are, indeed, calling for a review of this—of looming multi-billion-dollar projects such as the proposed Keeyask and Conawapa dams. And, just recently, still, the Minister responsible for Hydro has said, no, they've decided they're pushing through, they're going ahead, they're going to go forward and not take notice of those who express opposition to their plans. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what gives us cause for concern on this side of the benches.

I equate it to this: If this government were a small business going into a local bank to make the case for a business loan or a personal loan, I think they would be surprised at the opposition they'd face in sitting down in that chair and saying they're not really interested in revealing where they're going or what they want to spend the money on. They don't want to actually disclose any of that information. I think they would be surprised at the reception that they would actually receive from that local loans manager.

We know that recently, the government announced the contract to Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Public Service to import energy from Manitoba through our hydroelectric production. We also know that the Wisconsin Public Service scaled back that previously announced sale; it's smaller now than it was initially agreed at. And so that's why I say that it seems that Hydro's enthusiasm, or this government's enthusiasm about the proposed Keeyask dam and the proposed Conawapa dam have

not simply been shared by the prospective customers for most of the last few decades.

And, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't actually that long ago—I think it was only in 2008 that then-Hydro CEO Bob Brennan reported to American officials, right now is definitely a bad time to build anything. And we're only four years later down the line and yet, members from the government say, oh, this is the time to build. And it certainly isn't the time for a sober second thought. It certainly isn't the time for transparency. It certainly isn't the time for fiscal responsibility or a prudent measure that would—that this bill talks about.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are complications to the export of our power. They include things like limited transmission capacity on both sides of the border. There are things like the US being less interested in long-term contracts than the utility is.

But, Mr. Speaker, in the end, it all comes to this: This is a very reasonable bill, it's a very reasonable accommodation, and it's one that is prudent and acts in the best interests of Manitoba ratepayers. So if you want to talk about protections of Manitoba ratepayers, this bill does exactly that. As a matter of fact, just recently in the *Free Press*, this quotation appeared: If our government, upon whose shoulders these decisions ultimately rest, lets its politicized optimism override sober evaluation of the risks of new export-dependent development, future Cabinet ministers may again be admitting that ambition got the better of judgment.

Mr. Speaker, we don't want to let ambition get the better of judgment. We want to make sure that these projects are feasible and viable, and this bill says to the government, prove it. Prove that it's feasible; prove that it's viable. And that's why this bill simply states that Hydro should not construct any major hydro project without first having filed an application with the board and received approval.

Mr. Speaker, we want to protect Manitoba Hydro for future generations. We want to make sure that it's affordable for Manitoba's—for Manitobans. And we believe that large capital projects require study and approval, and that this project is no difference—different. We need a viable plan. We need to prove a business case to the Public Utilities Board. We need to say why it is still important to go forward with these megaprojects, and the method to do so is in this bill. This bill is reasonable, it is prudent, it is necessary, it is rational and it is valuable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): And, you know, if there was an award for chutzpah in the session, I think it would be to this member.

Bringing in a bill that talks about—and you know, great in the—you know, this will be on the Internet 'verly' surely, but, you know, if you do a keyword search here, and you type in "conservative" and then "Crown corporation" and then "protection", I think most people would be—you know, they'd be just amazed that a Conservative would bring in a bill talking about protecting anything to do with Crown corporations.

Because I've got news for the members opposite: one of the reasons that we've been elected four times in a row is because when it comes to protecting our Crown corporations, people trust the New Democratic Party. And after the 1990s, with the sell-off of MTS, they don't trust the Conservatives anywhere close to a Crown corporation. You know, you might as well call this, sort of, the fox bringing in a bill to protect the chickens act.

But, you know, it's not only that they had this penchant for getting into government and selling off Crown corporations to their friends. It's also, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that they have no credibility whatsoever when it comes to Manitoba Hydro. Quite apart from the ownership issue, let's look at the development issue of Manitoba Hydro, and I'd like to ask this question wherever I go in the province, and it's: Name me one dam that the Conservatives built since 1969. The answer's zero.

I can name you the ones they shut down and mothballed. I can name you Limestone, which they shut down and mothballed, and we, in the New Democratic Party, constructed. I can tell you about Conawapa. This was brilliant on their part, Mr. Speaker. You know what they did; they went and they shut it down. They ended up with lawsuits with Ontario Hydro. Yes, they might have got a little bit of compensation out of it, but to this day, we're still not in any meaningful way dealing with Ontario Hydro. Can you imagine if we'd had that long-term connection? They could have taken a delay in the building of it, but no, they ended up suing them—you know, brilliant way to develop customers.

But, you know—give you some sense of just how bad their record is: now, I talked about the mothballing. You know what their alternative in the

1980s to building Limestone was—and, by the way, it wasn't the Conservatives, to be fair, that called Limestone, lemonstone. It was the Leader of Liberal Party of the day, Sharon Carstairs. You may remember Sharon Carstairs went on to be a senator—not an elected senator, but that's another story. But she called it lemonstone. But you know what they suggested at the time? They suggested that we should buy power from the US instead of building a dam. Now, I mean, I notice that this bill talks about looking at alternatives to proposed projects. Well, you can see that they're really back to where they were in the 1980s, where they were in the 1970s. You know, they just simply do not get the importance of developing Manitoba Hydro.

And I want to put on the record, by the way, I'm really proud of the fact that we've developed Keeyask; it's started up—and the development process. As we speak—I was just at the Delta Hotel, there's a meeting of the Keeyask-Cree partnership, which is building in participation right from the start—and ownership—right from the start, Mr. Speaker, of the Keeyask dam. And it builds on the model of the Wuskwatim dam. We've built it in consultation with the—with partnership with the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, NCN, and it is almost fully complete—first dam ever developed in partnership with a First Nation.

*(10:50)

By the way, they criticized that as well. That—ironic, but they called it privatization. I don't know how government-to-government partnerships are privatization. I know what privatization is. Just—well, I mentioned it before with MTS. But you can tell, Mr. Speaker, that what it really comes down to in this particular case is they still don't get it on all of the key issues involving Manitoba Hydro.

I notice a number of them mention the bipole, and I'm always interested—by the way, member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), you know, I'm tempted to send out a map of their constituencies and ask their constituents where they—you know, maybe we'll send a crayon, a blue crayon out—and ask their constituents where they want to put this east-side bipole, because they're rather silent on that aspect of it.

But the reality is in the last election, in the previous election, we ran on the bipole, and no matter how much the members opposite, they huffed, they puffed, they went after this issue, the people of

Manitoba re-elected an NDP government in 2007. And I don't want to rub this in too much to the members opposite, but we were elected with a record majority in the last election. And what did we run on? We ran on keep Manitoba Hydro public and we ran on ensuring that the bipole was built in a way not to damage the last untouched boreal forest in North America, probably in the world, and I think Manitobans spoke to that.

Now, you know, I look at some of the other provisions here, by the way, and, you know, I respect the role of the PUB. I've been minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board, but what really we're seeing here, Mr. Speaker, it's nothing to do with the PUB. It's nothing to do with review. It really is to do with, you know, I think what the members opposite have a real difficulty with in terms of Manitoba Hydro.

And, you know, I've mentioned what happened in various different historical elements. I remember the Trichler inquiry. Anyone remember that? You know, where they went out of their way to try and discredit one of the most constructive, you know, examples of building this province in Manitoba history. And that was with the Schreyer government and the work that was done and, by the way, the work that was done to bring in alternative to high-level flooding at South Indian Lake which would have devastated that community and much of northern Manitoba.

But what they really haven't understood in this particular case, and I saw it in some of the members opposite and their comments, they have this aversion to building, okay. They just can't stand the idea of building and I can understand why. Because, actually, if you look at it—go back to 1969. You'd have—you have to go back to the 1960s to find a Conservative government that did any building. You know, Duff Roblin, to his credit, he built this province. Duff Roblin, to his credit, invested in the floodway. Duff Roblin's government invested in education, in health in this province. And it was a very different era because if you look at Conservative government since that time, the Sterling Lyon government was a cutting government, acute, protracted restraint.

The—in the 1990s—I always ask people, by the way, and, you know, since you're interested in terms of legacies, some of the members opposite were a part of the Conservatives, the caucus, in the '90s, but one of the questions—it's a bit like the question on

Hydro. It's a bit of a trick question. And then it's naming what the Conservative government built between 1988 and 1990. You know what? Nothing. I mean they didn't build—you know, they lost the Jets. They didn't build an arena. You know, we as a community got them back and we helped build the arena. They didn't agree with that as well. You know, if you look at what they did in terms of health care, they froze capital projects. What did they do in terms of education? They cut, cut, cut. So they didn't build anything, Mr. Speaker.

And one of the reasons we were elected in 2009 is because we are a building government. What are we building? We're building our Manitoba Hydro, it's potential. We built a dam and we're moving ahead in terms of the Keeyask dam. We're building our highway system, our infrastructure.

I spoke at a transportation conference this morning, and I was really proud to be able to talk to—we had the American consulate there. There are delegates from Mexico about the fact we quadrupled the capital budget since 1999 when we came into government. The work we've done in terms of building up our hospitals in terms of this province—you know, they shut them down. We've been building hospitals in terms of capital.

The record expenditures in terms of our education construction budget—how about our universities? We have massively invested in the University of Manitoba in terms of—University of Winnipeg, Brandon University, and I'm really proud we're now building a new campus for UCN in Thompson and an expanded campus in The Pas. Now, what's the common element with all of these things?

Well, you would like the New Democratic government. We understand one thing, and that is the huge potential of this province. And I can tell you that members opposite, you know, they—I know they have a problem with the vision thing, okay? They have a problem with seeing the great potential of this province. But maybe, I'm inspired by the fact that this is the 100th anniversary of northern Manitoba becoming part of this province. And maybe, just maybe, I see the huge potential that we have in this province. But I can tell you where a lot of that potential arises. And I know I'm biased, but I'm from northern Manitoba and there's a reason the Golden Boy faces north, Mr. Speaker. It's the huge potential.

Now, not coincidentally, a lot of the hydro development that we're talking about is located in

northern Manitoba. And I know members opposite, you know, they—I think they still—their maps are still—I was going say one of the old highways maps, but I think their maps don't go much further than the postage-stamp province prior to 1882, Mr. Speaker. They have a problem with seeing the broad potential of this province.

I want to put on the record that the Schreyer government and the Pawley government devolved hydro; it was the right thing to do. Conservatives mothballed Limestone and Conawapa; it was the wrong thing to do. I want to put on the record, we're protecting Manitoba Hydro from privatization. I want to put on the record, they sold off MTS; that was the wrong thing to do. But I also want to put on the record that they're, suddenly, again going after the same thing; after Keeyask, after Conawapa, all of those hydro dams.

And, indeed, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) said, that is our oil. The question then, Mr. Speaker, is: why would we support a bill that speaks to a narrow vision when we have the broader vision of the new—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): It's always interesting following the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I think my ears are still ringing and I'm hoping to gain my hearing back sometime soon.

But I do want to just rise and put a few words on the record with respect to this bill, Bill 216, the Manitoba Hydro ratepayers protection act, that was introduced by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer). And I want to congratulate the member for Brandon West in bringing this very important issue forward in the Manitoba Legislature for us to debate today.

And I hope that all members of this House will support this bill, because it is extremely important. It's something that the Public Utilities Board has asked for and it's something that is very appropriate for us to be debating here in the Legislature. It's the right thing to do. Now is the time to do it; let's pass this bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I honestly—this might surprise folks, but only for a few moments. Give me a break here, but I actually want to thank the honourable member for bringing this legislation forward. If I'm a Tory strategist—wait, they don't have any. Okay, if I'm a Tory sitting in the caucus room

with my crayon and a napkin, and I'm trying to think, what issue do I want to bring to the Legislature? Let's pick the one where the public has kicked us in the head two elections in a row and said, no way are we going to let you have our Hydro. Let's bring a piece of legislation forward which repeats all of the idiotic things that they've been saying for years, which nobody believes, and give our side a chance to set the record straight yet again on the side of Manitobans, on the side of the future, on the side of Manitoba Hydro, on the side of the planet, Mr. Speaker.

I almost feel like I'm at the Ex. I don't know if you've ever had a chance to go the Red River Ex. There's that game where—you have to pay for it, but the gophers pop up and you get to whack them on the head. That's one of my favourites. That's what this is like, except we get to do it for free.

There really is so much for us to talk about in this. I'm sure all of my honourable colleagues on this side of the Chamber are going to have a lot of fun debating this or any other issue related to Crown corporations that the other side wants to bring forward for us to have a nice intellectual debate about. Let's think about what hydro is for this province, Mr. Speaker, and what it would not be if members opposite, heaven forbid, ever got their hands on the crown jewel of our economy, our society, and our future.

I honestly do want to thank the members for bringing this forward. I really enjoyed the—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Wolseley will have eight minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Speaker: Time for—11 a.m., it's time for private members' resolutions.

House Business

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next

Thursday is the resolution on freedom of information request fairness, brought forward by the honourable member for Morris.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on freedom of information request fairness, brought forward by the honourable member for Morris.

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Mr. Speaker: Now, 11 a.m., we'll deal with a private member's resolution, and the resolution that we'll be considering today will be one on recidivism in Manitoba, brought forward by the honourable member for Steinbach.

Res. 7—Recidivism in Manitoba

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that:

WHEREAS the provincial government has changed the long-standing method of reporting the reoffence rates of criminals released from jail as a way to hide their failure on rehabilitating criminals; and

WHEREAS for years the provincial government has recorded recidivism as criminals who were charged with a new offence within two years of being released from jail; and

WHEREAS the previous method of recording resulted in reports of 90 per cent of youth being classified as repeat offenders and 70 per cent of adults being classified as reoffenders; and

WHEREAS a new definition for recidivism was created which only counts individuals as repeat offenders if they are convicted of a new offence, not charged, within two years of their release; and

WHEREAS as a result of the provincial government's change in recording methods, there was a seemingly magical drop in recidivism for both youth and adults in Manitoba of between 30 and 40 per cent;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial government consider requiring the Attorney General to apologize to Manitobans who have been the victims of crime for having given up on the problem of criminals leaving jail and reoffending and trying to make the problem look less alarming by changing how recidivism is calculated.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Steinbach, seconded by the honourable member for Lakeside:

WHEREAS the provincial government has—
dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Goertzen: It's a pleasure to speak to what I think is a very important resolution for Manitoba and for Manitobans this morning in the Legislature.

The issue of recidivism, I think, and I've said this publicly, if there was one thing that we could do to reduce crime and to make Manitoba a safer place—and I'm often asked that question, Mr. Speaker—it would be to reduce the reoffence rate. Because if we could change the way offenders who are leaving our provincial jails behave when they leave those jails, we certainly would have less victims in society.

As it is, Mr. Speaker, and this has been a long-standing debate in this House about recidivism, currently in Manitoba, when you look at adults leaving provincial jails, about 70 to 75 per cent are recharged with a new offence within two years after having left that jail. When you look at youth, the statistics are even more alarming; anywheres between 90 per cent and 100 per cent of youth who are looked at in a particular time are recharged with another offence after they've left our provincial youth centre or a like facility.

Those are shocking—shocking—numbers. It essentially means that what is happening in our jails, what is happening within the youth correctional system, is almost a complete failure when you look at the inability to stop somebody from committing a crime.

We know that there are hard-working men and women within those facilities, and in fact they've expressed to me, Mr. Speaker, their frustration that they've been unable to see programs or to see the sort of things happen in those facilities that would prevent somebody who's leaving a jail or a correctional centre from committing another crime. They know that what is happening within these institutions isn't working, and the numbers have borne that out over the last number of years.

Now, since this has become a public debate, the issue of recidivism, of course, it's been embarrassing to the government. It should be embarrassing, because those numbers are horrendous. When 70 per

cent of adults—or 75 per cent and 90 to 100 per cent of youth simply leave the correctional centres and commit another crime—which is behind that statistic, Mr. Speaker—another victim—when they create another victim, and that's really the way to say it. That is a failure, and a failure that's hard to compare anywheres else in our country.

By comparison, Mr. Speaker, when I look at a jurisdiction like Illinois, at a time a few years ago, they had a recidivism rate of between 55 and 60 per cent. They declared it a state emergency, that the recidivism rate was so high they declared that this was emergency that they had to deal with because there were so many people who were being revictimize.

Here in Manitoba, how did the government respond? Had they declared it an emergency? Well, it wasn't requesting that, Mr. Speaker, but I was hoping that they would look at those numbers that were brought forward and react in a way that would change what is happening within our provincial institutions, so that when people are leaving those institutions, they have a chance not to commit another crime. They are doing something completely different than they—when they went into those institutions.

But that's not how this Attorney General, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), or his predecessor, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), or his predecessor, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh)—that is not how they responded to this problem. Instead, they decided to fix the numbers; they decided to try to make the problem look better than it actually was.

So they changed the definition, and now instead of having individuals who commit a crime or charged with a crime within two years after leaving the institution be recorded as a recidivist, now you have to be convicted of a crime within those two years. And you can see, Mr. Speaker, and you'll know very quickly what this results in. It results in the numbers dropping significantly, not because the people who are often charged aren't convicted. In fact, the vast majority of people who are charged with a crime end up being convicted of that crime. Why the rate drops is our court system is so slow that they don't even get through the court system within two years, so they're not recorded as a recidivist.

So if, in fact, you were—and I brought this up to the minister in Estimates and he confirmed this for me—if you were charged with an offence, say a

violent offence, 18 months after leaving the Manitoba Youth Centre, under the old system, you are now somebody who is recorded as a recidivist. You had reoffended. Under the new system, you likely wouldn't be because it would take you a year to go through a trial and it would go beyond that two-year period. So magically, overnight, Mr. Speaker, the numbers dropped 30 to 40 per cent. Now Manitobans, you know, if they're watching the debate intently, they might say, well, it seems like a great thing. Reoffence rates have dropped 30 to 40 per cent, but the number of victims won't drop at all.

The number of victims will be—remain the same. All that's happened is they've made it much harder to be labelled as a recidivist, because now you have to fall within that two-year window and get through your court date. In fact, Mr. Speaker, in a very perverse way, what it does now for the government is actually give them an incentive to slow down the court system, because the slower the court system is, the less chance of you being convicted of a crime within that two-year period. I mean, it's absolutely ridiculous that they would make this kind of a change, and it's symptomatic of the larger problem and the larger problem is this government doesn't want to deal with the issue of what is happening within our jail system.

What is happening that is not changing individuals behaviour? I've often said, in this House and in the public, Mr. Speaker, that we believe that individuals who are a danger to the community, who are a danger to society, should not be in the community. They need to be somewheres away from the community in our correctional centre. But doing time doesn't have to be a waste of time, and we've repeatedly said that. That is actually valuable time.

It's an opportunity to do things to change behaviour, whether it was a therapeutic drug centre within the prison, whether it was activities within the prison or the jail system that would change behaviour. Mr. Speaker, I've toured many of the jails in Manitoba and I've seen a lot of interesting things, but, certainly, the thing that I'll focus on today in terms of what I saw, was prisoners essentially sitting around, playing cards, watching television, waiting for their time to expire. That's all they are doing, is waiting for their time to expire. They've expressed, in many ways, frustration, when I've talked to some of the individuals. They've said, boy, we wish we could get, you know, a treatment for the addictions that we're dealing with. When I talk to the guards

there, they've expressed frustration because they know, essentially, we're just simply holding people who are going to go out and commit the same kind of crime again. Why aren't we focusing on changing things that are happening within those correctional centres?

Protecting society, on the one hand, by ensuring that individuals who are a danger to that society are not in the community, but on the other hand, further protecting them by ensuring them that what's happening in our jails will ensure that people who are leaving won't just go and victimize somebody else again. If we could that, if we could make a real substantive change there, that more than anything would reduce the criminal activity in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:10)

And so, I've given suggestions to this minister in the past. We've talked about different ideas. He always takes things as notice; he always says we're looking at it. We're always having another study; there's a perpetual study going on. I don't like to make predictions of the minister, because I don't want to, you know, steal the surprise for the members of this Legislature, but I'm sure that the Attorney General will stand up and say, ah, we're having another study, we're doing another tour, we're going to a round table, we're going to look at it again. Well, they've been there for 11 to 12 years. What is it that they've been doing for those 11—other than watching the crime rate go up, violent crime rate, and other seeing the recidivism numbers get so bad that they had to change the definition, what is it that they've been doing?

So, now, they're presumably going to have another study and have another report. All it is, is delaying and delaying, delaying and not taking any real action. I think Manitobans very clearly understand, and are frustrated by the fact that it's a lot of discussion but no real action. And we look at other jurisdictions, and I discussed this with the minister in Estimates, when I looked at Saskatchewan, they've instituted a wing of one of their prisons which is dedicated to drug therapy. In fact, they've seen a reduction in their recidivism rate from the people who are within that prison in Regina, within that jail in Regina, Mr. Speaker, of 35 per cent, a reduction of recidivism by 35 per cent. Brought the idea to the Attorney General—oh, well, you know, you know, we'll think about it, we'll look at it, we'll have a study.

Talked about what was happening in Saskatoon; the fact they have an urban camp, where prisoners actually go out, and they'll clean up public grounds, and they'll clean up public yards and ditches and that sort of thing. The prisoners, actually, in many ways, looked forward to the fact they can go out and, sort of, do something in a—with a—in a manual sort of way, Mr. Speaker. And they're also doing something to better society. Talked to the Attorney General and previous attorney generals about that over the last number of years. Oh, it's a great idea, but it wouldn't work in Manitoba.

Well, how can it work in Saskatchewan but it doesn't work in Manitoba? Like, I know we're not part of the New West Partnership so maybe nothing that happens anymore in Saskatchewan, in British Columbia and Alberta can work in Manitoba anymore. But I think it's ridiculous, and I think most Manitobans would see it as ridiculous, because it is ridiculous. If it can work in Saskatchewan, it can work in Manitoba.

Perhaps the difference is they have people who are motivated in Saskatchewan to try to do that, who care, who want to actually not just, you know, have studies and round tables, but who put in place programs that actually have a meaningful result. And that is not something that we have here in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the government will see the error of their ways, realize that changing the recidivism rate, or the way it's defined, doesn't do anything to lessen victims in Manitoba, doesn't do anything to make anybody safer. All it does is try to make this government look better when, in fact, they've done nothing to protect Manitobans.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, it's with a sense of irony, I suppose, I stand up to debate this resolution today: maybe not irony on the magnitude of concertive MLAs who, of course, with the party that sold off our public telephone system standing up in this House and complaining about cell service where private industry feels they can't make a profit; maybe not irony on the level of MLAs who wouldn't lift a finger or raise their voice to save the Canadian Wheat Board, and the 400 direct jobs to 2,000 indirect jobs and, of course, support for producers who now lament the threat of the loss of components of our Manitoba grain industry; or not even on the, I guess, the magnitude of the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who's never voted to fund a police officer, a Crown attorney or corrections officer in his

life, who asks his questions and issues his sheaf of press releases every year, criticizing the very work of police and Crown attorneys and corrections officers.

But it's close, and why's that, Mr. Speaker? Well, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, for the first time ever in Manitoba, Manitoba Justice has put on its website, publicly available to anybody who can turn on their computer, public disclosure of recidivism. I repeat: For the first time ever, Manitoba Justice has on its website, accessible to any Manitoban, information on its recidivism rates. You can't be more open, you can't be more transparent than that.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever, Manitoba Justice took steps to answer the real question that we accept Manitobans want to have answered. And that's what percentage of people who've received a consequence, whether it's time in a correctional centre, whether it's a conditional sentence, whether it's probation, whether it's graduating from drug court, what percentage of those Manitobans actually reoffend?

The old measure, which, we agree, has been in force for some time, didn't answer that question. It didn't actually count that number, provide that percentage; the member knows it. We explained it when we changed the measure. We went through it in Estimates. The member well knows what the old rate could not do and why we've made the change, and yet he brings in his resolution today.

The old measure counted the number of charges—total number of charges, no matter what percentage of individuals were offending, not the percentage of people actually reoffending, which is what Manitobans want to know. And let me give this House an example. Let's say that, in a given month, there's 10 youths who come out of the Agassiz Youth Centre; of those 10 youths, nine youths do not reoffend. Nine youths get on with their lives; they return to school, they enter the workforce. Yet, one of those 10 individuals does run into problems. He's charged with five counts of mischief and assault and, ultimately, four breaches. So he's convicted of 10 different charges.

Well, what is the recidivism rate? Well, under the old measure, which the member for Steinbach wants to cling to, the recidivism rate would be 100 per cent. Ten charges, one individual. The new system, of course, would do what I think most Manitobans would want it to do and says, the rate

would be 10 per cent because there's been 10 individuals, one has been convicted of offences; that's the recidivism rate.

Now, the third point, Mr. Speaker, is that in coming up with a new measure, there simply is no national standard in determining how you calculate recidivism. Maybe there should be, and maybe that's something we'll continue to discuss as Justice ministers around the national table, but there is no standard.

The standard we've used is, convicted within two years. And what's very ironic for the member for Steinbach, who will call this—I believe his word was, absolutely ridiculous—the measure we've adopted is strangely similar to the measure used by the Correctional Service of Canada, and, in fact, the Correctional Service of Canada, their measure is, somebody convicted of another offence within two years and returned to a federal prison. The federal system doesn't even count individuals who may be reconvicted if they're sent to a provincial prison to serve out their sentence.

So we are, actually, you know, quite a bit tougher than the federal standard, but it is interesting to—when the member opposite sometimes goes on his flights of fancy and puts a lot of words on the record, sometimes those words can come back to haunt you.

And what's interesting in his resolution, of course, the member for Steinbach complains of a seemingly magical drop in the recidivism rate, and, you know, I think the member would have a point if anybody in government or the department had tried to suggest there was a, in his words, seemingly magical drop. Neither I nor anyone else on this side of the House nor any member of my department that I'm aware of has ever suggested this, and, unless I've missed something, the media hasn't suggested that either. The only one who sees a seemingly magical drop in recidivism is the member for Steinbach.

Now, the fourth irony, of course, is that it's the member for Steinbach—more so, I think, than any other member of this House—who makes statements inside this House, outside of this House, that have misled Manitobans on our justice system, and I'm sure he has his misleading press release all fired up and all ready to go. You know, a friend of mine, just a couple of weeks ago, won the prize for fiction writing in Manitoba, and I'm very proud of that. I think, next time, I may nominate the member for Steinbach when I read over his press releases.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, most Manitobans don't buy his rhetoric and don't buy his statements. Most didn't buy it during the campaign and they sure don't buy it now.

Now, I know that many of my colleagues are very anxious to speak about our efforts to prevent crime and our efforts to rehabilitate those who are involved in criminal activity, and I won't steal all their thunder because I know there's so many members that want to speak about the good things that we're doing. But I just want to talk about a couple of issues.

Just yesterday, I was very proud to attend a ceremony, an opening ceremony, at a new transitional home on Ellice Avenue, and I was joined by the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson). It's a new home operated by the native women's transitional centre, and we heard stories of celebration and stories of rehabilitation.

I'm very proud that our government has put up \$3.6 million of the \$4.4 million cost to provide a transitional home, largely for women coming out of correctional centres, to help them reintegrate with our communities, to help them reintegrate with their families and thereby reduce their chances of being dragged back into a life of crime.

I know the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) wants to worry about TVs and countertops in the Women's Correctional Centre for federal inmates; we'll spend our time working on restoring families, restoring our communities and giving people the tools that they need to succeed in our society.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot at Estimates and otherwise about the member for Steinbach, who seems to have liked talking about pornography an awful lot, and I know, you know, we can spend a lot of time—he can spend his time talking about mistakes made by cable providers and satellite providers. You know, we're going to go ahead and keep working with organizations like BUILD-BUILD and BEEP that give people a future by helping them retrofit homes, by learning skills, by getting engaged in the workforce and becoming productive members of our society. That's what members on this side of the House spend their time working on and doing, and I'm very proud of that.

* (11:20)

And I know while the member for Steinbach wants to criticize the Winnipeg Police Service over photo radar, while we're busy opening mental health courts in this province. We're busy working on the federal government to try to expand drug treatment courts, to make sure we have problem-solving courts across this province that help people get the treatment they need so they don't reoffend.

And I should add, of course, that the recidivism rate under that—the Winnipeg Drug Treatment Court, even under the old system, is only about 12 per cent. And I'm hoping—I know I've got the support of my own members—I'm hoping, actually, I have the support of members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, to convince our federal government that this is a program that we can partner on, that we can continue to expand to get better results for Manitobans. So perhaps it's not a surprise, Mr. Speaker, to let you know that I won't be voting in support of this resolution.

You know, the member for Steinbach, I know he'll be issuing his press release shortly; that press release should contain a number of other things. He should be apologizing to Manitobans for misleading them on justice. He should be apologizing to Manitobans for opposing prevention measures that this government brings every single year. He should be apologizing for opposing rehabilitation. He should be apologizing for failing to support problem-solving courts that we have operating now in the province of Manitoba. He should be embarrassed to be opposing public disclosure of reoffence rates. He should be apologizing for failing to notice that the very measure he's opposing, both answers the question Manitoba wants—Manitobans want to know. And secondly, I guess, I don't know how they do things on their side, I think he'll have to be issuing an apology to his federal overlords for criticizing Manitobans' move to a standard that actually looks quite a bit like that operated by the Correctional Service of Canada.

So, I'll look forward to his press release. I know what it's going to contain, but I sure know what it should contain, and I know that Manitobans put their trust in a government that invests in our communities, that invests in our young people, that invests in rehabilitation, that invests in problem-solving courts.

And for that, Mr. Speaker, I will not apologize. As a matter of fact, as a member of the New Democratic Party, I'm very, very proud.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do want to thank the member from Steinbach for bringing this resolution forward. In fact, it brings in a grand opportunity for me to put a few things in the records about crime.

In fact, I want to start off by correcting the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan). He said that the member from Steinbach was criticizing the police and those working in the justice system. Farther it be from that the case, Mr. Speaker, as we know that the member from Steinbach has done an outstanding job in bringing issues forward in regards to the justice system.

And whenever we talk about crime, when we look at crime around the province of Manitoba, we have to look at, first of all, what is causing it and those that reoffend. And what is the responsibility of government is to give those people in the justice system the opportunity and the tools to be able to make that right, wrong—the wrong, right. And its effects are families, individuals, homes, our automobiles, and of course those communities that are impacted as a result of those crimes in their particular area.

In fact, the city of Winnipeg is suffering immensely because of the high crime rate here, in the city of Winnipeg. And I know, being part of the capital region, a large part of my area that touches on the city of Winnipeg boundaries, I get calls quite regularly about different offences taking part within my particular constituency.

In fact, we've had autos that turn up at the sports ground just on the outside of the city. A large part of those number of vehicles are found in my particular riding. Also, some of the deaths that occur, the murders, we've had a few bodies turn up in part of our region. And that brings alarms to each and every one of us in this House.

We need to make sure that those are—that are reoffending have the tools, and the member from Steinbach talked briefly about addictions and those things that make people reoffend, and what are we doing in our justice system to right those wrongs.

And what tools are we giving them for the ability to be able to straighten their lives out, to be able to go back into life, back into society, and back into making this country and this province a better place to live?

I know that when we look at the justice system, and my previous life is a—as a owner of a business, I

did hire some inmates, and I had a great opportunity to speak to a number of those inmates while they worked for me on leave. And their No. 1 concern was coming back into society. We abandoned those people and, unfortunately, when we abandoned those people, who will give them the tools so they're ready to go back into society, leaves us somewhat responsible.

Whenever we look at the justice system, we have to make sure that whatever we do for those particular individuals that are 'incarcerated'—quite frankly, they've been proven guilty, and that's where they need to be. But while they're there—while they're there we need to make sure that, in fact, we train them; we help them; we make sure they cover off those inabilities that they have been given, sometimes through no fault of their own, we need to make sure that they're given the tools so they'll reoffend and come back and impact on those families, those homes, those individuals. Whether it's an auto theft, or a break and enter—whatever the case may need, we need to make sure that they are, in fact, given the tools to make sure they don't reoffend.

It also—part of this—this thing we need to look at is—is some of the other provinces and what they're doing. And the member from Steinbach talked a bit about what's happening in Saskatchewan, Truly—truly there's enough bright minds out there, Mr. Speaker, that—that's been dealing with issues. We need to make sure that, in fact, we explore all the avenues.

What are we doing right? What are we doing wrong? Perhaps the Minister of Justice is right. Maybe they are doing everything right. If they are, which we don't think they are, they can sell that to the other provinces and states that border us in this great province of Manitoba. If there is an opportunity to learn something from these other provinces or state, we need to take an opportunity to make sure that happens.

Perhaps what we're doing is, we need to look at a group of people that—that would be able to put a task force together, whether it be interprovincial or the western provinces, or our neighbours to the east with Ontario. Perhaps we need to make sure that we are, in fact, having the best tools for those people that need to be rehabilitated.

What we need to do is make a difference. What we need to do is recognize, first of all, what the problem is. We need to recognize, in fact, what we're going to do to rehabilitate these individuals. And I

know that the Minister of Justice talked briefly about what's happening within the—the women's criminal institute and I know he's very proud of that facility, and it's great that we're able to do those, but it's not the facility that's so important. It's the task of rehabilitating these people.

So I think the member from Steinbach is on the right track. I'm proud to second this resolution, and we look forward to more debate on this, and, hopefully, members on that side of the House will take the opportunity to stand up and admit that sometimes we don't do everything right and sometimes we need to take a second look.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to, of course, put a few words on record on the motion brought forward. Now, I don't know if the members opposite know—I hope they know that I've been travelling the province of Manitoba doing crime prevention consultations all throughout the province. In fact, later this evening, I'll be driving out to Dauphin. We've had great turnouts from people wanting to come and talk about the things that we're doing on safer and stronger communities.

There's a few things that I would like to mention in terms of—one of the—one of the groups that have come out at every consultation we've had has been the actual police coming out, and I'm very proud to say, you know, we invested in 274 police officers funded by the province, investment to the police helicopter, the police cadets. In fact, I'm going to be doing some cultural training with some of the police cadets on working closely with our new Canadian Aboriginal community.

Of course, major investments around prosecutions—69 new prosecutors; 32 more coming by 2016. We have a weekend court, first of its kind in the country. You know, we've introduced tougher penalties for breaking the law. You know, we—we're pushing forward with Ottawa making gang recruitment illegal, and we understand that. We understand that part of safer communities is the idea of suppression. We also understand that there is a role for the idea of intervention. How do we reclaim people once they've been touched by the law?

And then, of course, you know what we're hearing, Mr. Speaker, from hundreds, if not thousands, of people now, is the idea of prevention. What are the kinds of things that we are doing in the

province of Manitoba to make sure young people and people are not committing crimes in the first place, and if they have been touched by the law, how do we reclaim them? How do we support them in transitioning them back in a very safe way?

Well, there's a couple of values I want to talk about that our government understands, along with the investments we make. One of the values we understand is that of belonging, Mr. Speaker, that if a young person doesn't have something positive to belong to, someone will seek them out to get involved in something negative, and we understand that—how powerful the belonging can be. So we've made investments. In fact, in 2001, we launched our Lighthouses program: 71 Lighthouses throughout the province of Manitoba, a safe place for young people to play and participate, get involved in community activities, get a deep sense of belonging for something positive.

* (11:30)

You know, in the '90s, one of the places that I get to be part of and do a lot of great things is at our friendship centres. Now, they weren't open in the '90s, but of course, when we came back into government we re-established the funding to all friendship centres throughout the province of Manitoba. If you want to see young people, if you want to see families come out and recognize that they belong to something positive, you just got to visit any of the friendship centres throughout the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

So we understand that value, and we continue to make investments on the idea that we're going to support young people in the classroom. We're also going to make investments so young people have something positive to belong to outside of the classroom.

The other thing—and I'm very proud, I just came from the grand opening—a grand opening celebration of the Social Enterprise Centre in the area I represent in Point Douglas, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) talked about the BUILD program. Well, I want to talk a little bit about that, the BUILD program, because we understand that every person needs to know that they're good at something, that all people have talents; all people have skills. And so we got to make investments with our partners to make sure that we're developing the talents, we're developing the skills of children, of youth and of adults.

Well, BUILD is a prime example of a—of an organization that is building on the talents of some of the most vulnerable people. Many of these people have grown up on social assistance; many of them have many challenges and barriers; a lot of them don't have high school diplomas; they've had—they have had troubles with the law; there's struggles with poverty. And with the investments we're making in partnership with them, they are building the skills of these individuals, men and women.

Now, what are they doing? They're building skills in the area of trades; they're working in low-income neighbourhoods; they're retrofitting many houses and buildings in the area. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, six months—there's a—here's a wonderful stat on good investments on reclaiming people that have had touched by the law. Ninety per cent of the people—the participants in this program—90 per cent that finished the six-month program go on to get educated, to get their GEDs. They get trained and they get employed, and then they inspire other people to do the exact same thing. That's a good investment; that speaks directly to the idea of 'recidivism'.

If the member opposite who brought the motion forward—I know that he actually got to visit the BUILD program, and they were very—they were happy to see him there. You know, it's interesting that he brings this forward when we're seeing great things going on in the community every day.

The other thing that we recognize, Mr. Speaker, is that everybody needs to have a sense of contribution. These are the values. This is how we keep our community safer, that everyone needs to know that they can contribute. Everyone needs to feel that they are being generous, right? Now, how do we do that? Well, I think we have to define what generosity is.

Now, our government understands that, that everyone deserves to feel generous. Someone who's really rich shouldn't be allowed to be more generous than someone who's poor; someone who's older shouldn't be allowed to be more generous than someone who's younger. We understand that, and you just got to go down and see those participants.

Many of them that grew up on social assistance, continue to be on social assistance, are contributing back to their community. We see this all the time. So, I'll give you a good example of this: In Lord Selkirk Park, we made an investment in terms of housing—truly affordable housing. As part of that

investment, we started a child-care centre. As part of that investment in child-care centre, we recognized that 100 per cent of those children, zero, one, two, three, four years old, are going to be on social assistance. So we understood that we need to make additional investments to help these young people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the investments we made on that comes from a 30-, 40-year study. First of its kind in the country, we launch it here: it's called the Abecedarian Approach. These children are there—and I've already mentioned once, between my wife and I, we have five university degrees. My son is 17 months old. The young people that are on social assistance in this program and part of the Abecedarian Approach program, this curriculum, are at the same level as my son, if not a level above in terms of literacy, language and numeracy.

So we know that that investments, on the short term, are going to get them very ready for school. The long-term research says that addictions go down, teen pregnancy goes down. Their ability to get a high school diploma and access post-secondary, all of those things go up. Those are the kinds of investments we're making. That's the idea of prevention.

Here's the great thing about the Abecedarian Approach, Mr. Speaker, is that—is the outreach that those early-childhood educators do with families is they go to their homes and they teach these parents different skills and activities that they can do with their children. So they use these—they do these activities with their children. These parents become inspired by the learning of their children. So what do they do? They start to participate, get more involved in their community. They get more involved in their neighbourhoods. They go and volunteer. They get that sense of generosity in their child's daycare.

The next step, they go back to school. They go back and they get their high-school diploma. They go back and they get trained. They go and get employed. Those are good investments, and our government, we're not doing it alone, we're doing it in partnership with many different organizations. All—the majority of these organizations didn't exist before we got elected in 1999, you know. And so we're seeing how innovative and how creative we can be when it comes to the idea of keeping our community safer.

The idea of generosity, we're not stopping there. We're saying, young people, outside of the classroom, let's try to find ways to give them jobs.

Let's get them in mentorship programs. We hire hundreds, thousands of young people every summer to get employed. You know, Mr. Speaker, I was at an event last night, actually, the University of Winnipeg, I Heart University of Winnipeg dinner. I was there with the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby). It was a wonderful event.

I want to talk about the idea of a program we started called Brighter Futures. Now, one of the things I talked about yesterday is this concept called a tap on the shoulder. That when you look at the No. 1 reason why a young person doesn't attend post-secondary, it's not because they can't afford it; it's a factor, but it's not the No. 1 reason. And maybe because their mom and dad didn't go, well, that's a factor, but it's not the No. 1 reason. The No. 1 reason why a young person doesn't attend post-secondary is simply because they haven't been asked in a meaningful way. So what have we launched? We launched the Brighter Futures program that extends the school day, that gives thousands of young people a tap on the shoulder to say post-secondary is for you.

Now, why is that so important? Why is it so important that we invest in the idea of supporting young people outside of the classroom as much as inside of the classroom? Well, it's the idea of independence, and we want to have a province that has independent young people, not obedient. Obedience is the idea of a young person doing all of the right things and of a 'persive' authority is there. When we know we make investments into mentorship programs, into leadership programs, into employ mobility and skill building, we invest into initiatives that build belonging and mastering, we are building independent young people, people that will be doing all of the right things whether a person of authority there is not, Mr. Speaker. That's a good crime prevention.

And I can say, and I want to say on the record that I'm travelling the province and hearing from thousands of Manitobans that this is the approach that they want. And so we're going to continue to invest in that, and we're going to continue to build on the—on all the investments we've made for the past 12 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): And, indeed, a pleasure to be getting up and speaking to this resolution today. Always a pleasure to be following the comments by the member for Point Douglas

(Mr. Chief), and he certainly puts a compelling argument together.

I guess—my comment to my colleague across the way is that we have a repeat offender rate of 90 per cent with youth, and that's after 12 years of his party being in government. And I guess there does have to come a time when you have to say, you know, the proof is in the pudding. Like, you know, you've had 12 years of round tables; you have had 12 years of meeting thousands, thousands of people who patted you on the back. You've had 12 years of opportunity to do something about it and, yet, we have a terrible repeat offender rate. And, of course, the government has now decided they're going to do a different way in the way they calculate the repeat offender rate, but it's still there. A 90 per cent reoffender rate for young people is actually appalling, and there are ways to deal with this. And I know the member for Point Douglas and I share in a lot of that. And I believe one of the things that the government is doing wrong is not looking for true and real alternatives for young people. And whether it be sports, music, the arts, there are different venues where young people can express themselves in meaningful ways and not get involved in crime.

For those of us who have teenagers, or some may soon have teenagers, others, you know, might have teenagers as grandchildren, you know full well that there is a lot of energy and pent-up frustration at times. And there's a lot of excitement and, you know, all of that's built up in a young person and that has to be channelled somewhere. And my suggestion to the government is, is that they get on a concerted effort on providing young people with an opportunity to get involved, perhaps, in sports.

* (11:40)

And we see, for instance, with the Mad Cowz in the downtown Winnipeg, you know, a lot of those youth are being challenged by individuals in the soccer field, Mr. Speaker, and encouraging them to get involved in a different kind of a gang. And what we're saying to them is that, give up your gang and join our gang. And the difference is, is our gang has a coach, has gang members, but we'd strap on cleats and a jersey and there's a referee on the field, and we play as a team; it's a different kind of a gang. Join ours and it's way, way more productive; it's way more fulfilling; it's way more uplifting and building for you. And you can prove yourself. You can get yourself ahead in life as compared to where you are in the Mad Cowz, Indian Posse or any other gang

that they might be involved in. Because young people do want to believe that they belong.

And, you know, from early on, when we had our kids in sports at four years old, it's funny how partisan kids will get about their team, and they'll talk about, you know, their team versus the enemy. And it's funny how they—you know, they right away buy into their teammates. And that's what human beings do.

And the best thing that we can provide for young people is rather than a venue for them to get into gang and get into trouble, for them to get involved in a team and do something very productive. And for that, it's going to take some vision.

I'm very pleased that Lloyd Axworthy of the University of Winnipeg is now looking at putting up a field house where soccer can be played, where football can be played, and that is going to be—if you look at the agreement that's been signed—a large part of that is going to be for inner city teams, because it's not reasonable to just have fields and facilities like the one we built at the University of Manitoba where it's not even accessible, at times, by bus. There isn't really proper bus transportation there. And, instead, suburban teams will be able to drive into the city of Winnipeg and will be able to play those teams. That will be—for inner city youth, for inner city teams—that will be their home field. That's the kind of thing that has to be done. There's got to be a proper investing in fields and in facilities. And the other thing is, is engaging individuals from across the city to get involved with these youth.

And instead what we have is a government that is far more concerned with press releases, with meetings, with having round tables and discussions.

Then I would say to the member from Point Douglas—the minister. You know what, Minister? There does, however, come a time—there comes a time when you got to stop having meetings. There's got to come a time when you have to stop seeking consensus and start making consensus. Be a consensus leader and start getting things done, because you—it's the old adage that—talking the hind end off a donkey. You know, talk ends up being cheap.

You know, with the repeat offender rate, Mr. Speaker, of 90 per cent of youth as repeat offenders, like when do you stop talking? When do you stop doing press releases? And when do you say, you know what? What we've done for 12 years hasn't

necessarily worked, let's do something, let's get forward and do the kinds of things that will stop this revolving door of youth crime.

And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, the best way to do it is involve all the various sports communities. I know the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief) was actively involved in getting inner city youth involved in hockey, and I commend him for that. In fact, in his previous life, before he was in this facility, he and I met, we talked about it, and I was very impressed with the kinds of things he was doing with Mark Chipman and other groups and getting young people involved in sports.

And, you know, whatever their passion in, whether it's basketball or volleyball, you know what my question is—and I said this to Lloyd Axworthy—why is it that the Duckworth Centre is locked most times? You can't get in with youth teams. You'd be hard-pressed to call up the University of Winnipeg and say, you know, we're going to have five, six teams get together and we would like to have a little tournament in the Duckworth Centre. Good luck getting in there. And that's the problem with a lot what's going on.

And I would say to members opposite, you know, talk is cheap and you've had 12 years of cheap talk. You know, when are you actually going to do something? Take on the important issues. Take it on. You—you're the government; you have the ability to do these things.

And, you know, I know for a fact that the schools' gymnasiums, you can't even get into them anymore, Mr. Speaker. In the summer month—in the winter months, they are so chock full with activities, you can't get facilities for practising and whatever. And, you know what? Is—it's time to invest, perhaps it's time to go to the universities and say, hey, listen, you know what? You also got to let some of these youth groups in, especially with those that can service inner city youth.

There's a lot that should be done, and I would suggest that, after 12 years, it's time for the talk to end and for something to actually be done, because a 90 per cent repeat offender rate is not acceptable. And I would suggest to this House that we actually support this resolution and work together to do something for the young people who are at risk in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): And I'm very pleased to put some words on the record on this motion today. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that we should be looking at what actually works. And I've always argued that before we bring in laws we should check other jurisdictions and see what the record of those—what records they have in those jurisdictions.

For example, one of the biggest travesties in the criminal justice system over the last 30 years has been the three-strikes-and-you're-out policy of Ronald Reagan in the early '80s in the United States, where we had the United States system build a huge amount—numbers of prisons. They were promoting private prisons in those days, and, you know, what happened out of all that experience was that the crime rate went up. You know, we didn't get results for the money that they spent. And, finally, after 25 years, we—we're—they were looking at situations in California and in Texas and in the Carolinas, where they were looking at, you know, bankruptcy, and they couldn't afford the system anymore.

So, guess what happened? Right-wing ideologues such as Newt Gingrich, a couple of years ago, actually did a total about-face, and they started to promote drug courts in Texas, and a total change in approach to the—to this system that was developed by the Republicans in the 1980s. So, while all this is happening in the United States, these changes in North Carolina, South Carolina and in Texas, with the drug courts, what we had, federally, here in Canada, was the Conservatives basically following the Reaganites of 25 and 30 years ago, and, you know, their plan was, you know, they wanted to build \$9 billion in new prisons and spend all this money, and we said, well, why are you doing that? It didn't work in the United States. Even the Republicans say it doesn't work in the United States. We brought out all sorts of statistics from Europe, European countries where crime rates are low, where they have a different approach, and we said, well, why don't you follow that approach? And they didn't do it.

Well—and guess what happened Mr. Speaker? Just, you know, a few months ago, it was announced by, I believe, Minister Toews, that they're not going to build \$9 billion worth of prisons anymore. So, what we observed in Ottawa in the last three or four years, what it all has to do was the—was publicity hits for the party in power.

They have a multi-hundred page Criminal Code which is a hundred years old, which should have been revamped by now and changes been made. Instead, what they do is come up with these boutique, little bills, specifically targeted to one particular measure they want to take, and it's basically a photo op, Mr. Speaker. It's designed to get coverage across the country that they're going to get tough on car thieves, for example, or they're going to get tough on a certain specific part, and it's all part of building that, sort of, image that they wanted to build and promote that they were being tough on crime.

The end of the day, once again, we find that once the election's over, all of a sudden, there's no need for building these \$9 billion worth of prisons. So, you know, the member—the members opposite are very clearly involved in the political angles here. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) has pointed out very clearly how the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), you know—member for Steinbach just hates good news. He cannot stand any good news and, by the way, there's a lot of good news from this government in this area over the last number of years, starting with the member fill Kildonan, when he was Justice minister. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was active in promoting a auto suppression strategy that was—that's worked. Right across the country, people have looked—politicians have looked at—to Manitoba as a jurisdiction where reducing auto theft has actually achieved results.

* (11:50)

And what did we do in Manitoba? We took down the auto theft rate by 80 per cent by putting a number of things—by putting immobilizers in cars so that cars couldn't get stolen. But more importantly by having a unit of the police follow the 50 level 4 auto thieves and keep on top of them and make certain that they were under arrest and in jail as often as possible. And guess what? The crime rates went down.

What did the Filmon government do? Their option was, we're going to make the parents pay. We're going to make the parents pay the fines of the kids. Well, how well has that worked? I don't think we've collected a nickel of any of the Filmon era fines that went up. So my argument always has been let's look at what works and let's do what works, and what works is putting immobilizers in cars. What works is having a gang suppression unit chasing the

50 level 4 car thieves, and that's got these numbers down to a very reasonable level.

Another area, Mr. Speaker, you will know this—that the Manitoba government has had huge success, is that we are now allowed to seize houses and properties from organized criminals, and it's been known since the repo laws were promulgated in the United States a number of years ago that when you take down organized crime, when you take the profit out of the crime, then there's no incentive to commit the crime.

So when you have motorcycle gangs that are profiting from drug crimes and able to keep their spoils and have somebody else go to jail to serve their sentences because that's what happens and then when they—if they go in themselves, they are able to spend a few months in jail and then come out and access their bank accounts of millions of dollars. If you can take that money away, get that money out of the system and seize the houses, seize the cars, seize the assets of the criminals, then all of a sudden you've taken away the oxygen that fuels the activity, and that's what this province is doing. The Minister of Justice has seized more than \$1.5 million. They're currently pursuing claims for cash, vehicles, and houses worth \$14 million more. This is what an activist government does. This is what a government that does what works does.

The opposition certainly didn't do things like that when they were in government a number of years ago. I have lots of statistics here, and other speakers who have more time will be able to deal with the improvements that we made. For example, 274 more police officers funded by the Province since 1999 when the Filmon government was in power and a whole number of other issues like that. The helicopters, another issue that the provincial government funds.

But, more importantly, we have not been inactive here. The Justice Minister has been pushing the federal government to bring in a number of measures, and by the way, that were successfully brought in. For example, we've pushed the federal government to successfully, by the way, pushed the federal government to make tougher laws in a number of areas, and some members will—can relate to this.

One is eliminating the two-for-one remand credits. That was done by our Justice minister, the member from Kildonan, making representation to the

federal Justice ministers' meetings and getting the federal justices to introduce the legislation, getting it passed through Parliament. So, Mr. Speaker, eliminating two-for-one remand credits, cracking down on gun crimes, including making it harder for people who commit crimes with guns to get bail, increasing sentences for smuggling firearms, created an offence for using the Internet for the purposes of luring children, made gang-related homicides first-degree murder, created offences for drive-by shootings and shootings at buildings, and many, many more provisions, that are currently the law of the land today, started by, initiated by, this government. Let's see some proper performance from the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here today speaking on this, and I'm so pleased with the opposition for giving us an opportunity to speak on this topic, because I just think that what we have done over the years is phenomenal.

I've spent the last—before I was here—working in a program that worked with kids involved with crime, Mr. Speaker, on the front lines. And, the work being done there, it just—it makes me a little bit upset to hear members opposite say that we've done nothing, when I see the tremendous amount of work that has been done, for example, in the lives of the kids that I worked with.

And, just as an example, this year, we have six of those kids—we have a total of 14—six were reaching the age of 18, six are graduating from high school. Three of those kids are going on to university and the others will, hopefully, be going into mentorship programs and that sort of thing, and their lives have been totally changed. Some of those kids were seriously—well, all of them, were very involved in crime in order to come to us. And, they're just an absolute testament to the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the right program changes lives. So I did want to get that in.

There's a few people working in the North End, I did want to thank, particularly the police. As I've gone around meeting the people in our area, people have mentioned to me how pleased they are with the service and the work of our police, which we have funded, considerably more than opposition ever did when they were in. And, we're very proud of the work that they're doing.

There's also some specific people, and one of those people is a young man named Michael

Champagne. And, I'd just like to get him into the record. He is a 24-year-old Cree, originally from Shamattawa, who is already being called a long-time activist at the age of 24. And he has been busy just working with the youth in the North End, speaking and reaching out to them, to let them know that there is a different way; that hope is there and that they can live productive, healthy lives, and that they were meant to be creative, productive people. And, so, I did want to mention that work that he's doing in there because it's just been fabulous.

I also want to speak about—a little bit about, the program that the honourable minister of children and youth has been presenting, that he spoke on. And, I'd like to say to members opposite, that, I don't know, maybe the honourable minister would be willing to come to their caucus and do his presentation, because everyone should hear it. And every Manitoban, I hope, will get to hear it, because it's just really fabulous. So, I don't know if he'd be willing to do that, but he might, if you're actually interested in some of the facts. I know those have never—as my colleague mentioned, members opposite are not

usually limited by the facts, but, if they heard some, I think that would be a fabulous thing.

There's also a Wayfinder program and the member from Point Douglas also mentioned that. And, the Bright Futures program is just fabulous—again, working with low-income students. In this case, helping them get credits, Mr. Speaker, and working to develop those life skills through tutoring and career exploration and community mentorship, and they're just amazing.

I ended up going out with them for the Christmas program and it was a bowling event, and there was 167 youth there from that one little tiny piece of that program. And they were all just thrilled and excited about their program. And, this year, a number of them will be graduating at the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows will have five minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, we are to recess the House until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 24, 2012

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