

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, August 15, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed with bill—the honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I'll seek leave of the House to move directly to Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act, brought forward by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister).

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to move directly to Bill 205? *[Agreed]*

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows, who has four minutes remaining.

Bill 205—The Election Financing Amendment Act

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): I'm very pleased to have four minutes left. I know I was a little lacking in passion the last time with my first six minutes. I can try and make up for that today. I'm in—am pleased to get to go a—speak again because, as I was finishing that off the last time, the member from Steinbach appeared to be suggesting that the President of the United States might be a little upset with me, but the day I'm on his radar will be a good day for me, I guess. So I was a little bit honoured that he thought that Obama might care what I said in here about the election in the United States.

But what he referred to, Mr. Speaker, is, in fact, the very point that I'm trying to make. Obama, in order to win that election, had no choice but to go, as the member from Elmwood said, hat in hand to big business asking for billions of dollars. And he couldn't go with just the public financing. He was unable. He knew he couldn't win the election if he did that. So he had no choice but to go. I'm also a little bit interested in the opposition's idea that the Democrats are anywhere near even—anywhere near central. They're much farther right even than our own Conservative Party here, which I know might be hard to believe, but it's true.

So the billions of dollars that were spent in that election, Mr. Speaker, are exactly the reason that we want to make sure that we are able to do it differently in Manitoba and continue to be able to do it differently. I know the opposition has no objection to receiving reimbursements, and that's good. That is certainly the way to go in order to make every party able to participate. And as I mentioned the last time, the little parties in Manitoba like the Greens and the Liberals are able to participate because of this kind of financing, and we don't want to lose that because we actually believe in democracy.

I would like to mention, and I didn't the last time, I think, that we were the people who banned the union and corporate donations and limited individual contributions so that it's not just the rich that can afford to run in Manitoba. Our Legislature is actually made up, certainly on our side of the House, by some regular people, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very proud of that, that we are able to do that. And in this province, you know, money is not what makes it possible for you to run. And I think that's what we want to continue to see.

The banning of the corporate and union donations and limits on individual donors increased the accountability demands. I think we want that. We want accountability in our province. I know that the opposition opposed the ban, of course, on union and corporate donations and have made no commitment, as far as I know, to keep that ban in place, and I think that's—that's—the concern that Manitobans should be worried about, in my opinion, because that is a true danger. If they remove that, and we go back to a world where, you know, big business can own the

Legislature, then we will be in an American state of politics, and I don't want to see that.

Somebody else in the House on the opposition mentioned they had relatives in the United States. Well, so do I. I have many relatives in the United States. I'm not dissing the United States or the relatives in there that we have. We love them. We want them to be able to have the kind of politics that we have here, the kind of accountability that we have here and not to be owned by big business.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to have been able to stand up in this House—to be able to stand up in this House to speak to Bill 205, brought in by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, my leader, the member from Fort Whyte. It's called Bill 205, The Elections Financing Amendment Act, and it was brought in for the very reasons that the member from Burrows just made, to try to provide accountability, which we're not getting in Manitoba today from this government in the Legislature, in allowing everyone to have that right to run in Manitoba.

Now, she insinuated that big business is running the Legislature in the past. Maybe it has for the 14 years under this government, Mr. Speaker, but the business people I talk to, that's certainly not the case. They are not prepared to accept this government's rules that they're trying to dictate to Manitobans in regards to the PST increase—[interjection] My honourable friend from Dauphin is making light of his own experience in increasing this PST. And there are a number of other dictatorial things that he's done in his time in different portfolios in this House, and whether it was Agriculture or Conservation, the member from Dauphin.

But it behooves me to think that there was some kind of accountability in the statements made by the member from Burrows just now when she—and I actually wrote this down. She said: We want accountability in our province. And, Mr. Speaker, there's nobody that doesn't. But we're not seeing it from this government. I have to repeat that. Accountability is going out and listening to people, talking to them, finding out what is needed to make our province a have-province. And comments like the member from Minto that made, you know, in his run for—half-run for leadership, where he said—where he said that, you know, his role to make Manitoba a have-province would be to scrape every last cent he could get out of Ottawa. Well, he's already been

getting record transfer payments—record transfer payments. But he didn't get the opportunity because he only ran for half of the election.

I just wanted to say that there are other members across the way that have lacked in accountability, and some, I know, it's not—some I know that it's because they can't get up, Mr. Speaker. They're not allowed to speak. They're not allowed to answer questions in this House. There's a handful of the members opposite that are trying to control this party and control Manitoba today, to control the NDP party, and they don't let anybody else up to answer questions. A prime example of that yesterday, and I know my colleague from Swan River very well, and he's a good representative there. But they didn't let him up to answer that question on biosecurity yesterday. I know he knows the answer.

Yes, well—[interjection] My colleagues are reminding me that maybe he's not that good a member, Mr. Speaker, but, anyway, I would indicate that he probably cares as much as anybody over there about his constituents, and he certainly hasn't brought in the dictatorial programs that the member from Dauphin did when he was the Agriculture Minister, so I have to give him credit for that. But he knows about biosecurity and he knows how important it is. So does the Finance Minister, if the thought about it for a moment. I don't think that the other members that got up yesterday to talk about that do very much about it. And that's what I mean about accountability.

So, Mr. Speaker, why am I speaking out against this lazy levy, this NDP's vote tax? Well, I'm speaking out against it because it just is simply a tax grab from Manitobans to fund the administration of a lazy political party, one that started out of touch. They made the rules and now they can't play by them. They dropped the—they dropped the—[interjection] And I'll get to that in a moment. The member from Dauphin wants to talk about the difference between the vote tax and the Election Manitoba rebates. And there is a difference, and he knows it. He knows it. He is the Finance Minister. If he doesn't know it he should, because he takes it too, over and above the \$5,000 that he takes from the vote tax. So, you know—

An Honourable Member: Money's money.

Mr. Maguire: Well, the minister says money's money and that's why he takes so much from the federal government and gives so little back. I mean, this is a—this is a situation where we've got a

government that has made their own rules, and we agree with them. They've got a \$3,000 cap on any single donation from anyone in Manitoba. They did away with the unions and corporate donations. Other areas of Canada have even made it less. I mean, the federal government allows the cap of much less than the \$3,000. And maybe the minister wants to do that here in Manitoba, which is—you know, go ahead, Mr. Speaker. But to take \$5,000 each, to take a vote tax—put a vote tax in place that helps them run the administration of their political party when they can't do it any other way. They don't even get enough donations to run their own political party so they had to go and take a quarter of a million dollars a year from Manitobans. Oh, but—well, actually about \$280,000. So then they said, well, oh no, this isn't—this doesn't look good, so we'll give \$80,000 back. They only took a couple of hundred thousand—they only took a couple of hundred thousand.

*(10:10)

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, the chirping coming from across the way is just a distraction to try and—as they've tried to distract Manitobans from the real issues out there like accountability in regards to dealing with the municipalities across this province in Bill 33 where they have never talked to municipalities, even though some of them were municipal councillors. They've never even approached them to find out if they would've been acceptable to forced amalgamations across the province.

Now they're looking for a way out and they can't find one. They've got everybody so upset across the province that there's only a few that are amalgamating and those were in place before they ever brought the bill in place, so—the forced amalgamation.

So, Mr. Speaker, we all receive 50 per cent of our rebates providing we get 10 per cent of the—of our spending in elections providing we get 10 per cent of the vote. They do and we do on our side, and if you don't get that, well, then you don't get it back. And that has been the case in some parties, and I want to get to the member's comments about the little parties in Manitoba in a moment because that's pretty belittling as well. That's pretty arrogant to talk about the little parties in Manitoba when the Liberals were the opposition in the late '80s in this House, and the NDP remember that one very well. I think they were the third party at that time. They felt like Buck Pierce feels today; they were the

third party. Now he's back to No. 2, but, you know, they'll soon be No. 2, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that this government talks a good talk. They take the \$5,000 in vote tax per constituent, per member that they have across the floor at the present time and use it to run the administration of their party. They don't go out and ask people for their own support. They are afraid or don't have enough manpower or can't collect enough from the unions anymore to run their own party. They're a lazy party. So there is nothing fair about this. This is another dictate to the Manitobans that you are going to help us run our political party, according to the NDP. We won't take it; we did not take it. We think it's immoral. It's wrong to take that money and so we have never taken it to give back, in case the Finance Minister hasn't been reading the notes.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would say that the former premier of this province, Mr. Doer, saw the error of his ways and refused to take the vote tax. That was right after our former leader and I, as one of his colleagues, and all of my colleagues behind him at that time held a news conference and said, we won't take the money. Well, within days the premier saw the errors of his ways, as he did with so many things that he did, that he actually listened to Manitobans and made a decision about what Manitobans said, not according to what his dictate thought he should do—not like this Premier (Mr. Selinger). So when they didn't take the money, then they come in with a new premier, there's a bit of dissension amongst the ranks, so they take the money—part of it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess it's—you know, there's pages and pages and notes here that I could speak from, but you don't need any notes on this one—you don't need any notes on this one—it's really clear we got a lazy NDP government that can't take—that wants—that can't refuse the money. They just can't refuse to spend more of taxpayers' money on their own administration. We will not take the money to do that. We are raising more money than they are. We go out and do that on a daily basis, asking for volunteers to come forward and help us. And they do, because they want this government removed, for one thing, and there is—on the election rebates in Manitoba—I've outlined that already—everybody gets those over and above, but it wasn't enough for this government to take those rebates back as all

members do, they had to put an extra \$5,000 in their pockets to run their own campaigns, as well.

So with those few words, Mr. Speaker, that is certainly why I vote against the government's moves to bring this vote tax in and why I so support Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing a democratic, northern representative to speak on this amendment.

I think it's very important that the member from Arthur-Virden said that, you know, it's easy to speak on this, but, you know, when we speak on this side of the House, we talk about a democracy. We talk about how everybody—everybody—that's born in Manitoba has a chance to be premier. Everybody. On this side of the House, it becomes dollar signs. It becomes, hey, how much money do you have? Who are you born—what family were you born with?

And you know what? It's sad for me to sit here day after day and hear the members on this side of the House talk about the depressing thoughts of what Manitoba is. I think Manitoba's a great province. I've lived here all my life. I think Manitobans should realize that we're one of the best provinces in Canada.

But, oh, no, oh, no, you've got, you know, the member from Emerson or the member from Steinbach, and you know what? Yes, they're ready to load up the truck and move to Calgary. You know, they're ready to move to Calgary, and they're ready to go there because there's oil, there's movie stars. But you know what? Like, you know, Mr. Speaker, there's no flood control—there's no flood control. That's what we do on this side of the House. We look after all Manitobans.

They also talk about the great Saskatchewan. They talk about wearing their green shirts going to the football game and—*[interjection]* Yes, the watermelons that they wear on their heads. Some—you can even see the stains on their heads from the watermelons—*[interjection]* Thank you—thank you. But let's not belittle that. Let's not belittle that, because I just want to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, that our tax-free day in Manitoba was June 5th; the tax-free day in Saskatchewan was June 11th.

So, you know what? Go west—go west. Go where you think it's great. Load up that trek—truck. Move to Calgary: oil, you know, movie stars, hills, but no flood control. We're a province that thinks about the people of Manitoba.

I know there was a rumour—I was just at the Northern Association of Community Councils—didn't see any of my friends from this side of the House there. Northern representatives were there from all the different constituencies, and there was a rumour going around and I want, Mr. Speaker, to—for you to address this, that this side of the House is thinking about taking the Golden Boy and turning it around so it faces south. And we know—we know it faces north, because that's where the future is. That's where the heart of Manitoba is. But I just want to put on record that I'm—you know, I mean, you start twisting that—the Golden Boy around, it could fall off. And I just want to put on record that at the northern meeting, we had great discussions about some of the problems, some of the successes of the north, but, again, I want to put on record, I didn't see any of my friends on this side of the House there. It's like the north doesn't exist and that's sad.

I know that they've sent flowers to some of my friends in the north; the cultural minister from Beausejour sent flowers. I thought that was great. I mean, so they're into sending flowers to some of the—my constituents, and I appreciate that. But there's more than sending flowers. You've got to go there. You've got to represent. You've got to see what's going on.

When I see the banter going back and forth in this House and finger pointing at about what's going on—whether it's on Hydro, whether it's going on in First Nations communities—I think you have to go there. I think you have to visit and, like our honourable member from Thompson said, he's there all the time all over the place. So when these people are talking, you've got to get some backbone. You've got to get some history. You've got to get some facts. No use making them up.

Like I say, we're a democratic party over here. We—we're based on democracy. Over here, it's about hypocrisy. You know, we'll just say whatever we want, you know, and that's good enough. We can say whatever we wanted and the people can judge.

* (10:20)

And I forget who it was—if you tell a lie long enough and frequently enough, they're hoping people

will believe it. Well, I—you know, I happen to say that the people of Manitoba are a lot smarter than that. The people of Manitoba know what a stable and leadership government we have. They're dreaming when they think they're going to win the next election. I mean, that's—you know, I mean, what have they offered? What have they offered? They've offered nothing, they've just criticized. They've offered a 1 per cent cut right across the board. Let's cut; let's cut nurses, let's cut teachers, let's cut social workers. And they stand back and they say, well, what do you expect? What do you expect? You know, we're going to save money. But it's about the people. You can save money. I mean, that's what it's all—to them—is all about the money, show me the money. But you know what? There's people lives—there's people lives—that are at stake here. You know, if you want people to buy houses, they need jobs—they need jobs. But if you're going to cut those jobs, there's not going to be any selling houses.

The vote tax is very important because it's not elitist. It means everybody throws into the pool. That means all the money you've been receiving up to now—that means all the money that you've been receiving up to now, now, you're saying, I don't want it? Well, maybe give back the last 10 years. You know, the whole point of this is that we don't want to be American. We want to be—have a made-in-Manitoba, we want to have a made-in-Canada voter recipients. And if you think in this side of the House that you're going to get people to vote for you because of the—because we have a vote tax? No. The people of Manitoba want to know that there is a democracy here. They want to know that big business is not involved in the outcome of the elections.

And have—has this side of the party tried to rig elections? Have they? Yes. Have they been caught? Yes. Is there any trust of—for them? No. You know, and then what—why aren't they bringing that up? Why are they not singing the song, I'm Sorry? I'm sorry; I haven't heard that. Have you heard that? I haven't heard, I'm sorry, okay? And you know what, when they do that, like I say, if you don't 'calker'—conquer your faults now, they're going to continue on going. I mean, yes, it's been quiet. But since the Monnin inquiry and—you know, there's quotes there and he says, in all my years on the bench, I've never encountered as many liars—did I say that right? Liars. Did you hear me? Liars—liars. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was—okay—liars in one proceeding as I did during the inquiry.

You know, and also they talk about, you know, the flood and the 1 per cent and all this, but let's not forget—let's not forget—that they promised not to sell MTS. Let's not forget that right now MTS rates in Manitoba are some of the highest in Manitoba. Let's not forget that Manitoba has one of the most—how can I say—livable economies in Canada. Let's not forget that Manitoba is a place where you can have cheap power—cheapest in North America, that you can have cheap insurance. Go, you know, load up that truck, move to Calgary and see what you're going to pay for insurance, you know, and load up that truck, put your watermelons in there, go to Saskatchewan and pay taxes later on.

All I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, it's very important to know who you are. Take your finger over there, point at your heart and say, I'm a Manitoban. I'm a Manitoban. And yes, Winnipeg will win the Grey Cup someday. Yes. Yes, the Winnipeg Jets—after Toronto Maple Leafs come back—will win the Stanley Cup. And I think it's important you've got to believe—you have got to believe—in Manitoba. And on this side of the House, I see everyone believing in Manitoba. Load up your truck—load up your truck—go to Calgary: movie stars, hills, oil, but no flood control.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk another 10 minutes on this, but I'm sure—I'm sure—that they are realizing now, they're thinking, you know what? We have to go on record and say how much we love Manitoba, not about going to the west. Stay here—stay here—and prosper from our—

Mr. Speaker: Honourable member for Spruce Woods.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Boy, I'm surprised; Thursdays roll around pretty quickly around here, Mr. Speaker. It's—clearly, when I walked into the Chamber this morning it was very clear that it had to be Thursday morning with a speech like that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm here. I'm here standing for Manitobans on this side of the House and standing up for Manitobans, and we're going to continue to stand up for Manitobans week after week after week. I hope the people in the gallery here today are here for Manitoba. I hope they've been able to see a little bit of democracy in action, and we're going to give them some facts this morning.

And I'm glad to hear the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) talk about being sorry, and he's

exactly right. Every member on that side of the House should be sorry for their activities over the last few years.

Let's talk about broken promises, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about broken promises. This goes back to the 1990s and the previous premier that talked about ending hallway medicine, ending hallway medicine with, what was it, \$15 million. Are you kidding me? The fact is health care's got worse over the years with the NDP. We've investing more and more money into health care every year, and where are we at? Dead last—dead last—we're dead last. And I know that government talks about having more doctors in Manitoba. We're saying, where are they? Where are the doctors? We have got the most emergency rooms closed in the history of Manitoba under their watch and it's getting worse every year under their watch. I can look at my communities and I've got at least three ERs that are permanently closed. Now I've got three more that are on share—on call with shared emergency rooms services, and it's getting pretty critical and that's the premise of this that we've got before the House.

We want to talk about priorities. What are the priorities of the NDP government, Mr. Speaker? Well, the priorities of the NDP are to look after themselves. That's exactly what their priorities are; \$200,000 a year to go into their party to look after themselves. They don't care about democracy. They don't care about what's best for Manitobans. They're just worried about getting elected in the next election. That's the fact of the matter. Absolutely, that's what it is.

You know, the NDP find if they can't raise money, well, we'll have to go back to the well, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to go to the well or the taxpayers to find our money to fund our political party. We are different on this side of the House. We're willing to go out there and talk to people, ask for help, and if they believe in us they will help fund our political party, and that's the difference between the NDP and the Progressive Conservative party on this side of the House. That is the difference.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's do a little bit of math. Over the course of the term here, the NDP are going to take this \$200,000 a year, and over the course of a term it's a million dollars of taxpayers' money—taxpayers' money. Now, I'm sure what they're going do is they're probably going to take that million dollars and they're going to—they're probably going to save it or they're going to reinvest it in the next

election. I'm sure they will. You know what they'll do? Then they'll spend a million dollars and they'll get the 50 per cent back again on that million dollars. That's what they're going to do. So they're going to take another half a million dollars out of taxpayers' pockets.

Mr. Speaker, sure, we're going to get a 50 per cent rebate for sure when we run the next campaign, but we are going to do that with people who contribute to our party. We're not using taxpayers' money, as well, to fund out another 50 per cent. We are using tax—we're going to use contributions from ordinary Manitobans. We are not asking the taxpayers to fund our political party, and that is the difference between the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about Saskatchewan for a while. It wasn't long ago we used to look at Saskatchewan as the have-not province. We did—we did—we looked at them as the have-not province. Well, in 14 years things have changed dramatically. Now Saskatchewan look at us as the have-not province. In fact, they think our economic policies here are actually their benefit. What we're trying to do is we're trying to save Manitoba. We're trying to save Manitoba Hydro from the NDP. We're trying to save Manitoba Hydro for the taxpayers and the ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro.

* (10:30)

Oh, I know the NDP, they're on their campaign trail already, Mr. Speaker. They're out there fear mongering Manitobans already. They're the big bad days of the 1990s, the party that dwells in the 1990s. They love their fear mongering. They've started the election campaign already. So be careful of what they say. You can hear the campaign's started already. It's nothing but a campaign of fear.

We saw the last election, you know, all the bad things the Tories are going to do. Whether it's right or wrong, that's the way it's going to be. But don't let a good—don't let the facts get in the way of a good story. That's the way the NDP spin it, and with 192 spinners—192 spinners—192 communications people are spinning the government line. That is what they've got, 192 spinners. This side of the House, we have two—two—spinners. We call them spinners. We use that term. They are honest communications people. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, 192 to two. And our job is to outspin those spinners.

An Honourable Member: All you got to do is tell the truth.

Mr. Cullen: And it is about the truth. You're right, the member from Lakeside raises a very interesting point, and it's about telling the truth, and it's about telling the truth to the ratepayers and taxpayers of Manitoba.

And what about the granddaddy lie of them all, Mr. Speaker? Just before the last election, this government said, no, they weren't going to raise taxes, and no, the thought of raising the provincial sales tax was complete nonsense. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) himself said that. So here we are, and just six months after the election, the first budget came out, and what did they do? They broadened the sales tax on all kinds of goods and services. It cost taxpayers millions of dollars. Then next year they still didn't have enough to balance the budget. So what did they do? They increased the provincial sales tax by one point.

And you know what? Even with that—all that extra revenue, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is still a half a billion dollars short on his budget. So that's why now we keep finding these new and creative ways where these NDP members are finding ways to tax us, additional fees, additional surcharges. The Minister of Finance still has to find a half a billion dollars to balance his budget. That's what he's after. And that really was the granddaddy lie of them all in terms of the last election. Now they have broken their promise on that one as well.

Now, we know the Broadway bullies across the way are pushing that provincial sales tax on every Manitoban. They introduced it—back in April they introduced it. July 1st, they're making retailers collect that 8 per cent from every Manitoban, Mr. Speaker, and that is costing Manitobans \$5 million a week in extra revenue. That's what they're picking the Manitoba pockets, is \$5 million a week on that extra provincial sales tax. And I just do quick math, I think we're in about six weeks after July 1st, so that's \$30 million that the Minister of Finance has taken out of the pockets of Manitobans just over the course of six weeks. And he's still coming up with creative ways to rob Manitobans and take money out of their pockets.

And we look at the death tax, Mr. Speaker—unbelievable. I mean, we're getting taxed from birth, now we're getting taxed with—while we're in the grave. Unbelievable that a party would stoop that low to tax Manitobans when they're in the grave. It's

really unconscionable that they would even think of something like that.

If they would have spent half as much time figuring out how to run government more efficiently, we would be a lot better off. We wouldn't have to go back to the taxpayer day after day for more money, Mr. Speaker. Instead of being so creative at how they can get money out of taxpayers' pockets, if they would just take that energy and that time and be committed to running government more efficiently, that would be—we'd all be so much better off. But I know they want to take the easy way out. They just figure out, how are we going to get more money out of the taxpayers. They always think they can go back to the well and take money out of the taxpayers' pockets. And that's why we're here, to stand up for Manitobans and fight against those sort of tax increases.

And the thought of the government taking money, taxpayers' money, to fund their own political party is outrageous to Manitobans, and that's why our leader has brought forward this important piece of legislation. We hope the government—it's never—not too late for the government to change their mind, Mr. Speaker, and not take this particular vote tax. We'll hope that the NDP would see the light and change their mind. I know the former premier, he didn't want any piece of it. We hope this current government will see the light and not take this vote tax.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I'm very pleased to stand and talk about what I think is an actual very important debate that we have in this legislature, one that I think Manitobans ought to be very interested in. Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said that members are entitled to their own opinions but they're not entitled to their own facts. And I say that specifically to the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen), who talked a lot about facts and about—and the truth, at least according to him.

But before I do—before I talk about that, I do want to say that I paid very close attention to the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) when he spoke on this resolution, on this bill. The member for Fort Whyte, I think, made a very good speech in this House, in terms of the election finances act—amendment act that they brought forward. He outlined, I think, a very clear, a very concise vision of how he sees democracy, how he sees government,

from his perspective. Now, it's a hard, right wing, extremist, kind of individualist view that he has but I say to his credit he laid it out there for all of us to take a look at and importantly, he laid it out there for a—1.2 million Manitobans to scrutinize.

It's a different vision than what we have on this side and I thank heavens for that. We do not agree with what the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) put on the record that day. And I want to say, though, I appreciate the words of the member for Fort Whyte when he talked about his family and how they homesteaded in the Portage La Prairie area, how his grandparents, his dad and his—him and his brothers and sisters, how they worked on the farm and built the farm and some of the trials and tribulations that they have.

And I can understand that because I come from a rural farm background as well. I was very intrigued that the member for Fort Whyte talked about that one spring when his dad, for reasons of kidney stones, according to—

An Honourable Member: Ouch.

Mr. Struthers: Ouch is right—has indicated he couldn't get the spring seeding done and his neighbours came over to help him and do the seeding and it was the only time that the member for Fort Whyte's dad couldn't get his spring seeding done. And I think that's a great story and I've heard those stories—my family has those kind of stories as well.

Where we disagree with the member for Fort Whyte is that he saw that as individuals just coincidentally showing up on the same day to help with that seeding, individuals making that decision. Well, that's where we disagree. I think a community came together just like they have in times—in decades previous and generation to generation in our province, it was a community coming together to help one of the families who needed the help that they received. And I have no doubt that the member for Fort Whyte's father helped out his neighbours and was part of a community that then worked together so that the whole community could prosper.

I think that is a very instructive story coming from the member for Fort Whyte and I think it very much tells us a view on democracy that Conservatives have. They see it as a very individualistic, sitting in a ballot booth, putting an X on a piece of paper, and that is an important part of democracy but I would suggest to you that if all that democracy is, is putting an X on the paper then

pretty much every country on the face of the earth has a democracy which is just not true. Democracy is more than just putting an X on a ballot. Democracy is the discussion, the debate, the conversations, the involvement of communities, the involvement of individuals, the questioning of candidates, the putting forward of platforms and discussions that lead up to the moment you put your X on the ballot. That is what democracy is. That's why we banned corporate and union donations, because that interferes with the discussion—the democratic discussion that takes place leading up to an election and certainly in between elections in our province. And, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House firmly believes that that discussion should not be skewed by the person with the thickest wallet. Members opposite seem to think that's okay; we don't.

* (10:40)

What really confounds me on this is to watch every single Conservative member of this House get all self-righteous about public financing, climb up on their high horses and get so hypocritical—so hypocritical. I get back to what the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen)—[interjection] Well, that seems to wake them up, Mr. Speaker. I get back to the member for Spruce Woods here. The member for Spruce Woods said, oh, we got to get some facts out on the table. We got to tell the truth. Well, how about this little fact—how about this fact for the member for Spruce Woods—the member for Spruce Woods, the fact is he took \$7,393.28. That's a fact. He took public financing after the last election and then he has the nerve, he has the unmitigated gall, to stand here in the House and badmouth as if, oh, somebody's lazy, because they took public financing. Does this mean that the member from Spruce Woods is a lazy 'minist'—is a lazy member?

Mr. Speaker, we heard from the member from Arthur-Virden. The member from Arthur-Virden, a decent guy I want to say, a hard-working guy, but he gets up and he calls anybody who takes public financing lazy. He's lazy to the tune of \$14,607.79, and he, too, has the nerve to stand up and say what he just said in this House. He should be ashamed of himself.

It doesn't end there. Mr. Speaker, the very person who brought this Bill 205 into the House, the very person, the member for Fort Whyte, who made, I thought, a decent speech on this, but he, too, gets all self-righteous and hypocritical about it. He took even more money than the member for Arthur-Virden

(Mr. Maguire). The member for Fort Whyte took \$16,107.53. And after taking \$16,000—in excess of 16 grand, he comes into this House with this bill, this hypocritical, self-righteous bill he brings in after taking back 16,000 bucks of public financing. Is the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) going to return that money? Will the member from Fort Whyte remove himself from this self-righteous, hypocritical position he's put himself in and give back that \$16,000?

And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? It's not just those who were fortunate enough on the Conservative side of this House to get elected that took the money, even some who did not get elected took the money, and there's a whole list of them. Fortunately there's more who didn't get elected from the Conservative side than did, but let's take a look at Dauphin. Their candidate, also a decent guy, the fellow's name is Lloyd McKinney. He was a very good fellow, lives in Roblin. He's a very good guy, great family, but he, too, took money, public financing, \$12,056.78, and members opposite just applaud that.

You know, nothing—nothing—in this House, and they've been hypocritical in the past and I'm sure they'll be hypocritical in the future—nothing—absolutely nothing speaks more about hypocrisy than these members standing up and being self-righteous about public financing and then stuffing the public financing into their bank accounts after every election and after every by-election, and then they stand up here in the House, Mr. Speaker, and they give it to us because we had the nerve to outlaw corporate and labour donations. We had the nerve to hire—to have the Elections Manitoba hire returning officers and take that out of the political realm. They have the nerve to stand up and whine and complain and then take the money. What hypocrisy.

Mr. Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand up and put a few words on the record, as the honourable member from Spruce Woods mentioned earlier, put a few truths on the record.

I wanted to start off by mentioning the—and congratulating and thanking the member from Fort Whyte for bringing forward this very important Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act, which basically is the vote tax. And it's—it also gives me great pleasure to be following the Finance Minister. You see, I was going to start off my speech

this morning by welcoming the people in the gallery who sat here for roughly, you know, 40 minutes of this morning's debate, and then all of a sudden the Finance Minister gets up and starts putting untruths on the record, Mr. Speaker, and then, all of a sudden, the gallery cleared out.

So with that, we're going to get into exactly what is going on with this vote tax, Mr. Speaker. I guess when we talk about what exactly this vote tax is meaning, it is the fact that they are not going out and asking for support for their party. Each and every one of the members across the way, including their candidates in the last election, went door to door. They were door knocking. They were asking for votes. They were making promises. They were making a lot of promises that, you know—this is 2013, the summer of 2013. The election was in September 2011. We're still waiting for many of those promises to be fulfilled.

Not one of those members—57; 37 members, another 20 candidates—not one of them went to the door and said, by the way, we're going—in the next budget we're going to raise taxes and fees on various items across the board and it's going to be to a tune of \$184 million. By the way, you know, this is what they were—what they weren't telling the people at the door. Then by 2013 they also didn't mention that in the Budget 2013 that they were going to increase the PST by one point, which is 14 per cent, which adds up to \$237 million. When you add the two up, that's a half a billion dollars on more revenue going right into the government's coffers for them to spend.

Now, where is that money going? So I know the Finance Minister had his time to speak, and I sat here very quietly and listened to him put some words on the record, so I'm asking for his co-operation and just sit there and to listen to me.

Now, I also know that—what are these members across the way asking for when they're asking for this vote tax? They're basically asking for \$5,000, 5 to 7 thousand dollars, because it's not quite solid yet—5 to 7 thousand dollars per member. They're not going out and they're not asking people for their support. They're basically taking it from people's pockets. We've got 1.2 million people in this wonderful province of ours, and what are they doing? They're going out and they're pickpocketing not only hard-working Manitobans, but we're also talking about grandkids, kids, children, piggy banks. They're just taking it right from their savings.

Now, what is their plan with this money? They are going to hold this money for the next couple of years. They're going to take this each and every year, and this is going to be about a million dollars in total. So I know that the Finance Minister had put some numbers on the record. He was spouting off some numbers as far as election kickbacks, I guess, you know, which contributions which, willfully, people are—actually donate to the parties, whether it's the NDP party, the Progressive Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the Green Party, whichever else. They go around, they door-knock and they ask for support. So that's what we've done; that's what their party has done.

* (10:50)

Now, with this vote tax, what they're going to do is they're going to take this money right out of people's pockets without asking them, they're going to put it to the side, they're going to then—come next election—they're going to take all that money, that million dollars, and what are they going to do? They're going to write one big, fat cheque, a donation, to their party, the NDP party, which, then, they're going to get a kickback for that.

So, what are they going to do? They're actually going to double-dip on this money. They're going to rob us twice, if not more than that, Mr. Speaker, because there's all these other taxes and fees that they're taxing us for on a daily basis.

I can't believe that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), who is supposed to be a highly respected individual in the province, would put those type of things on the record and basically say that, no, this is not how it's going to work. So, when we talk about—*[interjection]* Well, we're not—just to put on the record, the Minister of Finance was saying how he doesn't want us, on this side of the House, to be hypocritical. Well, we're not taking that vote tax. It is a 'schwack' of money that we're not going to be taking. Why are we not taking it? Because we feel that we can go door to door and we can ask for support from our supporters and then if somebody wants to donate money, if somebody wants to donate \$5, \$10, up to \$3,000, right? What is the NDP government doing? They are—they either change the rules or they make up new rules. All we're asking is, play by the rules instead of the broken promises that they constantly do.

Now, when these members were going door to door, again—oh, one more thing that I want to just mention. There's lots; I can go on for minutes and

minutes and minutes and hours. But I know that the member from Flin Flon stood up here and he did a very interesting, passionate rant. But what the minister from—or not the minister, the member from Flin Flon failed to mention was, he didn't mention the Crocus fiasco. And I have to mention this, Mr. Speaker, because there was hard-working Manitobans who invested into Crocus fund who did not, who got absolutely railroaded by this government. Back then, who was the Finance minister on the—when the Crocus fund, the fiasco exploded? Well, it just so happened to be the Premier (Mr. Selinger).

Now, it's sort of interesting on how the 'fi'—the then-Finance minister all of a sudden becomes the Premier. How in the world—and I don't quite understand that piece yet, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to catch onto that—is how in the world he got off scot-free from that. But I will do more and more reading and investigating onto that, and I know that some of the members across the way know the story, and I'm sure that that's why they don't bring it up very often, like the member from Flin Flon, as well. Maybe even the member from Gimli, he's, I'm assuming, he's going to be getting up shortly to talk about the vote tax. Has he—*[interjection]* Well, and apparently, the members from the government side is saying that the member from Gimli already had spoke, and that's too bad I missed that speech because I'm sure that there was some interesting things that that member put on the record.

Now, we were also talking about the broken promises in the last election, and I would hate to go without mentioning, of course, the forced amalgamations, and again, the PST hike, where basically, they're not consulting. They're not consulting with tons, with the 1.2 million—less, of course, 37 people—in the province. They're not consulting. They're not listening to what Manitobans have to say.

These are some very important issues, Mr. Speaker. When they decide to break the law and not give that referendum to hard-working Manitobans to come and to actually have their voice, they're basically breaking the law. As of July 1st, they're pulling in, as we mentioned, the \$237 million, and when you tack it onto the fees and taxes that they put in for 2012, again, \$500 million, half a billion dollars.

And where's the plan? No plan. They should have had the plan, tabled the plan and move forward.

No, they decide that they're going to bring in a bill to squash the taxpayer protection act, not give people that referendum, that voice. And it is disheartening, Mr. Speaker, but their day will come. So I appreciate you listening to me. Thank you.

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

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): It's a privilege to rise on this because as, you know, an academic who's taken an interest in social justice and democracy around the world, and especially as social justice is implicated for First Nations people, I do find it amusing listening to members opposite. The levels of irony are through the roof, and don't even get me started on notions of projection and transference because, you know, that's a whole other thing. That was an issue that I actually thought left the building when the former Leader of the Opposition left, but—[interjection] Yes, my former classmate, Hugh McFadyen.

But, you know, I only—I have a few minutes here, but let me just say that it's kind of ironic to have elections financing and talk of integrity introduced by people who when Monnin—the Judge Monnin says, a vote-rigging plot constitutes an unconscionable debasement of a citizen's right to vote. To reduce the voting rights of individuals is a violation of our democratic system—and that was from page 13 of his report.

So, you know, it's kind of amusing, and the volume from the other side clearly indicates, Mr. Speaker, that some members, especially their newer members, really have an aversion to the truth in history. So just because you're loud, doesn't make you right.

And, you know, in terms of wording, if they have some problems with where—you know, Judge Monnin—they might not have liked the ruling. I'd like to quote their chief financial officer from his report in 2012 where he stated that their 2011 election reimbursement, that this amount was the highest reimbursement the party's ever seen, noting that compared to the NDP we're receiving higher reimbursements—

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

The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution under consideration this morning, sponsored by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, entitled: repatriation program for Manitoba international medical graduates, IMGs.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 33—Repatriation Program for Manitoban International Medical Graduates (IMGs)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I move, seconded by the member from Morden-Winkler, this bill for the repatriation program for Manitoba international medical graduates, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the following is the resolution that I'm putting forward:

WHEREAS there is an ongoing physician shortage in all areas of rural and remote Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Institute for Health Information indicates that Manitoba has one of the worst physician retention rates in Canada, specifically in rural and remote areas, at 32.1 per cent compared to the national average of 58.1 per cent; and

WHEREAS research reveals that rural physicians are two to four times more likely to have been brought up, or to have spent a substantial amount of time, in a rural community and that attending a rural high school is a major indicator of a physician's decision to practise a long—to practise, pardon me, long term in a rural community; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Resident Matching Service indicates more than 3,500 Canadian students are enrolled in medical schools abroad and this number is growing; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Resident Matching Service indicates that 90 per cent of Canadian international medical graduates, IMGs, prefer to return to Canada for their clinical training and medical practice despite the limited number of available positions; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba currently does not have a strategy in place aimed at repatriating Manitobans, specifically those from rural and remote areas, who are obtaining their medical degrees abroad, back to the province for post-graduate residency training; and

WHEREAS the province of man–Alberta has added an additional 393 physicians, which includes 121 family physicians, to the province since 2001 through launching and funding a provincial program to assess and replace Alberta IMGs applying to the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary for post-graduate residency training; and

* (11:00)

WHEREAS up to 64 Alberta IMGs securing residency placements each year through the Alberta International Medical Graduate Program has significantly increased the annual number of licensed physicians in high needs specialties including family medicine in Alberta.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge the necessity of improving opportunities for Manitoba IMGs to be repatriated to Manitoba to practise in order to address continuous physician shortages and to increase physician retention throughout the province; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health and the Minister of Advanced Education to consider supporting, alongside the Canadian Residency Matching Service, a rural provincial program for the assessment and placement of Manitoba IMGs trained outside of Canada and the United States into available residency positions at the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, seconded by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen),

WHEREAS—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

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

WHEREAS there is an ongoing physician shortage in all areas of rural and remote Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Institute for Health Information indicates that Manitoba has one of the worst physician retention rates in Canada, specifically in rural and remote areas, at 32.1% compared to the national average of 58.1%; and

WHEREAS research reveals that rural physicians are two to four times more likely to have been brought up, or to have spent a substantial amount of time, in a rural community and that attending a rural high school is a major indicator of a physician's decision to practice long term in a rural community; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Resident Matching Service indicates more than 3500 Canadian students are enrolled in medical schools abroad and this number is growing; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Resident Matching Service indicates that 90% of Canadian international medical graduates (IMGs) prefer to return to Canada for their clinical training and medical practice despite the limited number of available positions; and

WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba currently does not have a strategy in place aimed at repatriating Manitobans, specifically those from rural and remote areas, who are obtaining their medical degrees abroad back to the province for post-graduate residency training; and

WHEREAS the Province of Alberta has added an additional 393 physicians, which includes 121 family physicians, to the province since 2001 through launching and funding a provincial program to assess and place Albertan IMGs applying to the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary for post-graduate residency training; and

WHEREAS up to 64 Albertan IMGs securing residency placements each year through the Alberta International Medical Graduate Program has significantly increased the annual number of licensed physicians in high needs specialties including family medicine in Alberta.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge the necessity of improving opportunities for Manitoban IMGs to be repatriated to Manitoba to practice in order to address continuous physician shortages and to increase physician retention throughout the province; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health and the Minister of Advanced Education to consider supporting, alongside the Canadian Residency Matching Service, a rural provincial program for the assessment and placement of Manitoban IMGs trained outside of Canada and the United States into

available residency positions at the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Maguire: It's my privilege to be able to put this resolution forward, Mr. Speaker, in an effort to help the government in regards to the securing of a number of doctors for rural and northern positions in Manitoba. I know that there are a number of international graduates that we have that are Manitoba-based, and that is somewhat the reason for bringing this forward.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, also, I want to say that this resolution has been something that I've been thinking about for a number of years. We know that we've had a situation where budgets have been more healthy, I guess, if you will say, in regards to transfer payments and equalization payments from Ottawa. And we know that the minister has increased the health spending in an effort to try and improve the health-care system in Manitoba, and it is a tough job, there's no doubt about it. But we are still a-seeing physician shortages in rural Manitoba and there are steps being taken to try to alleviate some of that area. But the facts are we need physicians, doctors to be able to keep emergency rooms open in Manitoba, and we have 18 of them closed at the present time.

So this resolution comes forward after much thought and-then, of course, examining another program in another province and that's why I've referenced the province of Alberta in this program and I put the numbers in there just to show the effectiveness of the program in Alberta. Not to say that we would have a parallel program here, but to use it as an example of what could be done for a made-in-Manitoba model, because we have different needs than they do in the province of Alberta. Our needs are more family physicians and locating some of those in more rural and northern positions.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the numbers that I've put in here are just to draw attention to the need not to denounce the government for the efforts that they've put forward. but the Canadian Institute for Health Information provides a lot of information that we should take in, and that's where I got the numbers of the fact that our physician retention rates are 32.1 per cent versus the Canadian average of 58.1 per cent. So this resolution is to try to bring forward and help the government try to attract some of those 3,500 Canadian students that are enrolled in medical schools and abroad with a growing number. I've had the situation with a young doctor-potential doctor here who has had to go out of Canada to get

his residency, Mr. Roux. There's been others that we have spoke with around the province and we're-we've had a number of them contact us on this very point.

So, Mr. Speaker, our program here is to indicate that 90 per cent of our Canadian international medical graduates would prefer to return to Canada for their clinical training and medical practice despite the limited number of available positions. So what we're asking the government to consider is to consider supporting, alongside the Canadian matching-residency matching service, a rural provincial program for the assessment and placement of Manitoba IMGs, international medical graduates trained outside of Canada and the United States. Because, you know, if they're trained in the United States, there are a number of places there that they could help get their residencies as well, but these are for people outside of Canada and United States-and have them come into available residency positions at the University of Manitoba.

Now I know that the minister has increased-he made an announcement this spring to increase the number of spots in our training facilities, for seven more rural and eight more speciality doctors here in Manitoba. These are for the training to get their medical degrees, Mr. Speaker. And so we want to see some area here where some of the Manitoba born and raised here-not necessarily born, but raised here, as well-youth of our rural areas and across Manitoba, would be able to have a-get a-come back to Manitoba and get a residency training here because they're more likely to stay here.

The examples that I've used earlier, Mr. Speaker, are that if they have grown up in a rural area, gone to high school in a rural area, you know, not necessarily being able to-obviously, in this case-get their education at the University of Manitoba to become a doctor. We would like them-if they've gone someplace else in the world to get that training-and I have a number of them in my own constituency that have had to do this-all constituencies do. So we're just asking that when they come back to Canada, that there are some efforts put forth to try to allow them to have residency positions in Manitoba so-particularly, when they've indicated that they will be a rural or northern doctor in Manitoba-on a permanent basis.

And I would say that the reason it's been so successful with these numbers in Alberta is because if you even only had four or five of them here-say

five, Mr. Speaker. I know most doctors—when I go up—and the case right now, of doctors that are permanently located in these rural communities, they're there for 30 years—probably 35 by the time they get their medical training done. If they work 'til they're 60, they'll have 35 years' experience in that position. Over 35 years, at five a year, even, you'd have 175 permanent rural doctors 35 years from now in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba. And I think that would help tremendously for the minister to be able to help alleviate her concerns and the government's concerns in relation to being able to have some long-term care in those areas, and help keep the emergency rooms open in those facilities.

We're quite fortunate in the community of Virden right now to have a number of doctors. We had a young lady that came from Pierson originally, that had to—took her training in Lakehead University, that went to Alberta, to get her residency training at that time. And she is now, basically, I would say, she has settled into the community, bought a home, married. And I believe she is doing a tremendous job, from the people that have had her attention in the community, Mr. Speaker.

And all I'm trying to do is say that there are other situations where we would like to have them come back to Manitoba and be able to get a residency here.

The situation that I know of, one of Mr. Roux's partners, that it was—not a partner but a colleague that he was trained with—Manitoba-based, Brandon young person, Mr. Speaker, who has now gone to Norway. Well, they were trained at the same university in Hungary, but he's gone to Norway and his partner now, the—his girlfriend that went through medical school with him is over there as well. Will he come back? Or instead of having two doctors in a rural community that they'd—that he was already in a return-to-service agreement with—will he stay in Norway for the future—and they will gain the two doctors instead of a smaller community in Westman, in rural Manitoba. That's what we're faced with.

So all we're trying to do by bringing this forward is to say that, you know, we want to be able to make sure that we have a made-in-Manitoba formula that will—not parallel—but meet our own needs to the Alberta program, Mr. Speaker, that would provide that 'prog'—or repatriation 'prog'—framework, that could be used to help develop doctors in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is not to give priority over any one sector or another. It's certainly just to make sure

that we are actively trying to promote those youth in Manitoba who want to become medical students in our—medical doctors in our hospitals.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that's why these therefores—the two therefores—are so, I think, important. We're asking that the government just acknowledge the necessity of improving opportunities for Manitoba international medical graduates to be repatriated to Manitoba to practise in order to address continuing physician shortages, and to increase physician retention throughout the province of Manitoba. And that they consider supporting, alongside the Canadian residency matching service, a rural provincial program for the assessment of placement of Manitoba IMGs, trained outside of Canada and the United States, as I've said earlier, into available residency positions at the U of M.

* (11:10)

And I believe that we would provide some stability. We have a situation today where a lot of doctors come into rural Manitoba. They need to have that two years of training and then they are free to go wherever they want, and quite often they'll come back to the city of Winnipeg here, and they're needed here as well or they wouldn't have a position to be here, or other provinces, though that's the problem. Once they're here, then get their training, get their two years of training here, they're free to go anywhere.

And, Mr. Speaker, we would—we have brought this—I have brought this resolution forward, seconded by my colleague from Morden-Winkler, to try to help the government improve the situation of having more stability in our rural hospitals. So, with those few comments, I would let others speak to this resolution.

Thank you.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to this resolution. I'm pleased to have the opportunity and I would begin by saying that while there's no shortage of combat in this Chamber on the subject of health care or on the subject of availability of doctors in rural and northern environments, I would begin by saying that I appreciate the member's concern for trying to augment health care in his community. I believe he has always had that concern and that is not in question from my standpoint. In fact, I would suggest to you that it is one of the commonly held

views in this Chamber, that we want to have the best possible health care available for all Manitobans. And I think that whenever we find opportunities to work together in this regard, we're all going to be better off. And so I certainly do take the member opposite at his word and at his concern about not only his community but communities in rural Manitoba and I want to acknowledge that I believe that he cares deeply about this, as do I.

Having said that, I would say to the member that I lost track, actually, of the errors that are listed as fact in his resolution and I do need to take some time today to just offer some corrections so that we can have a fulsome debate on this subject and, of course, be grounding ourselves in the facts. I would say to the member first of all that I won't be able to address all the errors, actually—10 minutes isn't enough—but the main ones do include the fact that he does cite—I'll go with the most obvious—he does cite, of course, that CIHI lists us as, you know, bottom of the pack when it comes to doctor retention rates. And, indeed, when you look at the data from CIHI on the subject of doctors who left for other jurisdictions to practise, doctors, indeed, who have come from other jurisdictions to work here in Manitoba, you peel out the issue of doctors who have retired or who are not practising any longer or, indeed, the doctors who have died.

I don't believe members opposite have a magic elixir that would bring these doctors back and have them be practising again, so when you're speaking on the subject of doctors practising in Canada, you will find that Manitoba lands squarely at the middle of the pack on this issue, not at the bottom of the pack. Newfoundland and New Brunswick fare worse than Manitoba in this regard—also, the members might be interested to know, does the province of Saskatchewan and the province of BC. And so I would just note for the member that on that particular subject, we would all do well to be focusing on doctors who are indeed active and practising in our great country.

Further, I want to address the fact that we should look at the journey that we have been on as a government on the subject of making medical residencies available. It used to be the case, including in the time when members opposite slashed the medical school spaces down to 70, that indeed every residency available in Manitoba matched exactly the number of graduates expected from the University of Manitoba's faculty of medicine. In other words, there were no spaces

available for any international medical graduates whatsoever. Those seats got filled predominantly by those young people from the University of Manitoba.

But today things are very, very different, Mr. Speaker, and, in fact, in this budget, which members opposite are so opposed to, four point million dollars—\$4.3 million, pardon me, is dedicated to create 15 new residency spaces. The member opposite did acknowledge us—acknowledge this, but didn't acknowledge the fact that this indeed brings the total first year residency seats to 136, the most that there has ever been in the province of Manitoba and, indeed, well exceeding the 105 medical school graduates from the University of Manitoba. So there are more spaces available for residencies than there are students who graduated, paving the way for internationally educated medical graduates to find their residencies here at home.

I can say to the member also that if he doesn't believe me, he can turn to the words recently published in a news release about Manitoba now having a record number of doctors at 2,599 practising—a net increase, Mr. Speaker, of 562 net new since 1999. Dr. Postl says the support of the government of Manitoba—with the support of the government of Manitoba we're also creating opportunities for qualified graduates from other universities including Manitobans who studied in other jurisdictions who want to return to our province. So we know, of course, that U of M takes seriously the sentiment that members opposite are raising, and I want to acknowledge that and let the member know that, indeed, the University of Manitoba gives weighting in the CaRMS residency matching to Manitobans, both graduates of the University of Manitoba and Manitobans who have studied elsewhere. The members opposite, I believe, in the main are asking for a leg-up for Manitobans, and we agree. We want those Manitobans to put down roots. But the assessments need to be made by medical professionals who know how much of that leg-up can legitimately be given to Manitoba-born or Manitoba-raised students and how much needs to be weighted on their clinical abilities and their academic abilities.

I also want to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, just to alert the member to the fact that contrary to the point that he thinks I never listen to him or members on the other side, I can say the other day that the member, I believe, from La Verendrye and I were having a conversation, and he cited for me this Alberta IMG Program. Now, I pride myself in

paying close attention to what's happening in other jurisdictions, and the way that the member was describing to me, he believed the Alberta IMG Program was working was quite different from what I understood. I took him at his word, of course, and I sent my folks away and I did some research to look at what the members were claiming was the case in Alberta concerning Albertans educated internationally. The members opposite suggest that the Alberta IMG Program is for Albertans who go abroad to study, come back, get residencies, suggesting that they had had 393 Albertans who studied abroad and came back to Alberta through that program. I want to alert the members opposite that that is not true. That is not a fact. Contrary to what they are saying, the Alberta IMG Program is not just for Albertans who went abroad to study. It is for any internationally educated medical graduate, regardless of where they are from.

We contacted the Alberta program, asked some questions, you know, based on what the members opposite were suggesting to me early on. They do not track how many of their residents were from Alberta before studying abroad—they don't even know. And while we don't know how many Albertans, you know, got those residencies in Alberta, we do know that Albert IMG—or, pardon me, we do know that Alberta international medical graduates found residencies for 135 IMGs in the last three years—that much we do know.

In Manitoba we found we had 105 IMGs from Manitoba find residencies in the last three years, almost equal numbers, despite the fact that Alberta is three times the size. Again, in Manitoba—let me be clear—we had 105 IMGs find residencies in the last three years—not from Manitoba, I misspoke—105 IMGs find residencies in the last three years, almost equal to the number in Alberta, which is three times the size of us.

* (11:20)

Now, I can also say, Mr. Speaker, that over the last three years we do track in Manitoba how many of those individuals were Manitobans that went to study abroad and I can say that there have been 23 Manitoba IMGs who came back to do their medical residencies here in Manitoba including nine this year.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to plainly say this. We have seen a net increase every single year in doctors,

that is a good thing. We have seen a net increase in medical spaces in school which provides more opportunity for Manitobans, and that's a good thing. We want our young people in Manitoba who want to practise in Manitoba to be here wherever we possibly can find a way to do that. But we must, and this is paramount, ensure that the medical judgment of medical experts is used to select the very best possible candidates and we don't do as, indeed, the member opposite from Modern-Winkler who issued a press release say—we don't give local doctors first dibs if they're not especially qualified to have those residencies. We want to be fair. We want more doctors. We want Manitobans to excel and we want to create all the fair conditions that we can to help achieve that happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): It's my pleasure to be able to rise and to speak to the resolution introduced by the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) and, indeed, I thank him for bringing this resolution to the floor of the Legislature and allowing us this hour to have a discussion around this idea that has merit, has value.

And, really, that's what we're inviting the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) into is a frank and sincere discussion about ideas and saying, what about this? And instead what we get is the same kind of ideological tripe that she puts on the record. She first throws under the bus the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook). She throws under the bus the member for Arthur-Virden and she spends half of her time to talk about data when we know the data is very clear. But I'm not going to spend my time rehashing all of the things that we have put in question period on the record, all the data that we've presented from independent sources: the Canadian council for health, CIHI.

Instead, what we want to do this morning in the short time that we have even while the members on the other side go hysterical, oh, they're in good spirits this morning. What we want to do is concentrate on one thing, Mr. Speaker, and I guarantee you, you will not have to call me back into focus on this resolution because I can tell you the members of the PC Party are focused on exactly the idea of taking a look at Manitoba and this terrible problem that the Province has in retaining doctors in rural communities and going out and saying, what about what other provinces are doing? Because what is clear is that far more could be done in the province of Manitoba. It is

that conversation that we want to engage the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) in and we welcome her to join the conversation that we're leading in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, Lorraine Dooley is a Manitoban—and I'm sure hoping that the members opposite are listening to this—Lorraine Dooley is a Manitoban who went and she studied and she got her medical degree and she did so at the University of Dublin in Ireland, and her family is from Manitoba—as a matter of fact, her family is from a rural Manitoba community—and Lorraine entered into conversation with a rural Manitoba community. As a matter of fact, she and her partner had expressed an intent to move back to that community, a community that needs a commitment from rural doctors. Now, don't get me wrong, in no way, shape or form was she trying to go around CaRMS. We understand the Canadian residency matching service, she met it. She interviewed. She was considered to be a legitimate applicant to the program, but the fact is she was applying with hundreds of other IMGs. And what the minister fails to recognize is that even in this case, even as Lorraine's application was declined, even though we had a commitment to go and remain in a rural community, her partner to go and seek employment in the same rural community—the community is Vita. I will make you no mistake of saying the community was Vita, and we know the problems that the minister has in that community even where the ER remains closed for 10 months, and in this case the position was simply granted to somebody else.

Now, in that conversation with that very sincere, that very capable young person from Manitoba, we simply started asking questions and, indeed, we were asking questions before then. And we asked, well, what kind of a system do we have and does everybody have the same system? Because what was clear in the debate in question period in months and weeks previous is the minister said, oh, there is no role for the minister to play; there is no role for the government to play; are you talking about interference in the program? Of course we're not. Of course we're not. Of course we understand exactly about the kind of autonomy that the faculty of medicine has, and I assure my colleagues on the other side, we've done our research. We've looked into this. But the fact is, they'll be very embarrassed to know—they'll be very embarrassed to know—that when we look around ma—Canada, there are jurisdictions, and those—and stakeholders there with

whom we've spoken who've said, Manitoba could be doing more. Manitoba could be doing more. These are the stakeholders in other provinces saying Manitoba could be doing more if you have the willingness of the minister to look at certain things. And indeed, that's exactly what this resolution does.

This resolution is a very, very good resolution that just talks about inviting the minister to acknowledge and support the idea that she can legitimately play a role in helping to repatriate Manitobans who have studied abroad, who are coming back, who meet the criteria, who want to study in rural communities. I will not rehash the data that's already been pushed—put on the record by the member from—for Arthur-Virden. But it's clear that we understand—and I know my colleagues from both rural and urban areas, they also understand, that when it comes to rural practice, if you have someone from Manitoba, they're more likely to stick in a rural community. If you have someone from rural Manitoba, they are more likely to stick in a rural community. If you have someone, for goodness sakes, like the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) has indicated, who has a family member practising medicine in a rural Manitoba community and they are not successful, even though they meet all the other objective criteria in coming back to Manitoba, surely they are not so obtuse to say that we should look at this, we should turn it around and we should say, huh, that could present an opportunity for improvement. So, before they bark from the other side and shoot down the idea, I invite them to look into it, and I invite them to reread Hansard later and see what is the actual idea that was expressed by the member for Arthur-Virden and the member for Morden 'workler'—Winker and the other colleagues who will stand up later.

Mr. Speaker, to fast-forward in the time that I have left, here's what I would want to put on the record. We've already made the case, the minister understands that in rural communities we have a real emerging crisis with more and more ERs closed all the time, downgraded services all the time and less and less doctors who are both located in and retained in rural communities. So, on the basis of that, we've asked the question, what can be done? And clearly what could be done is to produce a system that allows other criteria to be measured. Now, of course, I will make clear again for the minister, I will repeat this so she gets it right, we are not in the business of saying that politicians should hand-pick applicants and decide who gets residency in the

province of Manitoba. I know the minister has a very two-dimensional approach to understanding. Yesterday, we asked questions about doctors, and immediately she says, oh, we're not interested in nurses and EMS, and that's the kind of two-dimensional approach she takes.

We know that competency assessments take place through the faculty of medicine. We understand that. It's appropriate, it's autonomous, it is arm's-length, but government can influence how residency seats are distributed to IMGs. And you know what, the minister conceded the fact, never in question period, the first time we raised it, never in question period the second time, but thanks to the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire)—and I know we've worked hard on this in the backrooms; we've gotten together; we've worked with research stash—staff—and because we mentioned it, all of a sudden the minister has a press release. And that press release comes out August the 13th, and guess what it says? For the first time, we find information that states that in the province of Manitoba, there is opportunity for qualified graduates from other universities, including Manitobans, who studied in other jurisdictions who want to return to the province. And what the release goes on to say is that U of M has a target—a target—of filling 70 per cent of residencies with Manitobans. Well, that has merit.

* (11:30)

We've never heard this from the minister. We've asked specifically and pointedly. We've contacted individuals in the province of Manitoba. Doctors don't know about this. People who work with IMG don't know about this. The Office of Rural and Northern Health has never indicated this. We welcome the minister to put on the record the details of this, but even as she's doing so, let's be clear, the minister says we have a target. Well, a target is not the same thing as saying we get 70 per cent of Manitobans into placements. What is the difference between targets and results, and it's huge. We asked the minister to shore up her statements and to say is that a firm result that she gets 70 per cent of Manitobans applying into the program. So, certainly, we thank the member for Arthur-Virden for bringing forward the resolution because it seems to spur on the minister to put more information on the record.

Mr. Speaker, we are asking for the minister's willingness to discuss this. We are asking for her colleagues to support the idea. This is not a poison

pill. This is a resolution that is written to foment debates and to allow the free exchange of ideas to do a better job in this province. We acknowledge the job is not easy, whether it is Saskatchewan, Alberta, BC, Manitoba, Ontario. We get that. We understand that. But the minister has to also acknowledge there's more that she can do and it's time the Province of Manitoba stops denying that they have a role in the province to help locate and keep doctors in rural Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): You know, I was inspired to speak about doctors in this province to begin with when I came in and I looked at this resolution, but after the member from Morden-Winkler talking about ideological tripe, I must say that I'm really looking forward to speaking on this, Mr. Speaker. Because, you know, if you want to talk about ideological tripe, I think all you have to do is look at the record of the Conservatives when they were in power, you know, during the '90s, and I know it's the lost decade for them. They like to pretend it didn't happen. But they came in—I want to tell you their basic vision for health care. It started, basically, that there was actually too many people going to doctors. There were too many bookings, and they came out with a brilliant idea that one of the best ways of resolving that was actually to have fewer doctors. You know, the end result of their lost decade is there were 117 fewer doctors. But it didn't just happen. They actually cut the medical school admission to 70. So over their period of time in office they had a net loss of 117 doctors.

And, by the way, I could get into nurses and the number of nurses they fired, the number of nurses that left the province, but I'll save that for another resolution because I have to say I sure love when members opposite bring up the issue of health care in the Legislature because there's a lot to be said.

So I just want the member opposite and perhaps the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), I know he's the Health critic, which has got to be one of the most challenging positions when you're a Tory, but, you know, they cut the number of doctors because they cut the number of people admitted to medical school. Now, I'm really proud, by the way, and I want the member for Morden-Winkler perhaps take some notes, because as of this year we are now—we have 562 more doctors in the province, not 117 less, 562 more.

I also want to note, by the way, that in terms of medical school, and I have some knowledge through my own family. My—one of my brothers is a doctor. I actually have a niece who's a doctor. My brother's practised in Oxford House and South Indian Lake for more than 20 years. He's a U of M grad, and I do have some sense, by the way, of the challenges and I have a lot of respect for people that put a lot of time and effort to become doctors. But what I also want to point out, by the way, that one of the clear issues is not just in terms of the number of people in medical school, but how many of them have a connection to rural and northern Manitoba. I don't think it's any accident that my brother is practising in northern Manitoba and he grew up in Thompson, graduated from R.D. Parker Collegiate. He's from northern Manitoba. Well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the current 110 admissions to medical school, nearly 40 per cent of them are from rural and northern Manitoba. That is the highest I think it's probably ever been and that is because of the work of our minister, our government working with the medical school in recognizing that one of the clear challenges has been, yes, getting physicians into rural and northern Manitoba.

And I do want to put on the record, by the way, that in my area we have many international medical grads. We have a very diverse group of doctors from many different countries. And I want to put on the record, by the way, that there are still some issues with some of the specialists. But I remember, in the 1990s, how difficult it was to get a doctor, a family doctor, how difficult it was to get many medical specialists. And I want to put on the record that thanks to the work of our regional health authority, thanks to the work of our minister and the Department of Health, right now, anytime I need to see a doctor, anytime my constituent needs to see a doctor, we have doctors available in Thompson, and that is because of the work of this government; it didn't just happen.

Now, I want to talk about something else as well because in terms of residencies—I appreciate the member for raising this issue, and I'm rather disappointed that the, you know, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), the Health critic, immediately tried to turn it into a political issue, because they're—you know, I mean, you know, I realize it's challenging, him being the Conservative Health critic. But the fact is, we have increased the number of residencies. But I do want to stress, by the

way, our approach, in terms of residencies, is essentially what the approach is in Alberta. We don't interfere politically. We recognize that one of the key issues of recognizing international medical graduates is to make sure that they have exactly the same kind of qualifications as existing Manitoba doctors, existing Manitoba graduates or jurisdictions that have a very similar approach.

And one of the things I'm very proud of, by the way, in terms of international medical grads, some of our best doctors in Thompson are actually international medical grads; in fact, one of the doctors is a good family friend. And it was because of the actions of this government, working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, that we are leaders in the—we have been a leader in terms of qualification and recognition of international medical grads. So I say to the members opposite, you know, and I particularly say to the member for Morden-Winkler, I think, could put out a rather glib press release: Local doctors need first dibs.

You know, I'm not going to accuse him of being obtuse, Mr. Speaker. I will say, by the way, it really does talk about going to the lowest common denominator here. I mean, if we're going to have a debate about doctors in this province, I would expect it to be a little bit higher level than that.

And I'll put on the record, by the way, that while we're at it, we may want to have a debate—let's talk about ideological tripe here—about why the Conservatives still haven't figured out why we ran into so many difficulties in the 1990s and why they probably still haven't figured out why they lost the 1999 election. And I can tell you it may have had something to do with the lack of doctors, may have had something to do with the number of nurses they fired, may have had something to do with Connie Curran, the attempt to privatize home care. How about the freeze on personal-care home construction that led to people being lined up in the hallways because there simply were no personal-care home placements? You know, I don't think they've understood that there's a reason why they lost the 1999 election, and one of the main ones is because the Conservatives mismanaged the health file. They cut it, and people saw the difference.

And I want to say to them: They keep trying to fight the '99 election, the 2003 election, the 2007 election, the 2011 election, but they clearly haven't learned their lesson. The Leader of the

Opposition, who was a—it was a Cabinet minister in the Filmon government in the 1990s—he's on record saying it was the best government, I think, in Manitoba history. We've seen the members—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Ashton: There we are.

You know, and like people who don't learn from history are condemned to repeat it, well, Manitobans will be condemned to repeat it if they were to form government because one of the first things the Leader of the Opposition did, by the way, when he wasn't busy auditioning to be a game show host—I realized the other day, by the way, I did say he was probably for Who Wants To Be A Millionaire. And, of course, Pamela Wallin had that role a few years ago. Maybe that's what the Leader of the Opposition is doing today. Then again, he might be auditioning to be a senator because he does have a habit of kind of moving on rather quickly. But the first thing he did is he came in and he said, we're going to have tough love. We're going to have cuts. He even said, there will be layoffs. There will be layoffs.

* (11:40)

Oh, and I must say, every day I see a Conservative member get up and talk about any health-care issue in their constituency. You know, I always respect the role of MLAs. I have been in government; I've been in opposition. But, you know—and I'm not being obtuse here for the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen). It takes a lot of chutzpah when you're a Conservative MLA to get up and feign all that indignation when your leader has said he will cut funding from health care. You can huff and you can puff, but you're sure not going to be blowing any houses down with that kind of argument.

Let me explain to members opposite—their approach didn't work in the '90s, and we now have the Leader of the Opposition going one step further. You know, the difference between the Leader of the Opposition and Gary Filmon—I don't think Gary Filmon ever said on the record he supported two-tiered health care. I think we all understood that that was—you know, you end up with privatization of home care; you end up with Connie Curran, you know, and the Connie Curran report. That's what you end up with.

But their leader's on the record of being in favour of two-tiered health care. Now, where does

that leave the people in rural Manitoba? Believe you me, if he was to form a government, member opposite went to recreate the—you know, the paradise of the '90s as they see it, the first areas to suffer would be rural and northern Manitoba, because we suffered the most in the 1990s. So I want to conclude by—Mr. Speaker, by saying thanks to the member for Morden-Winkler for putting the term ideological tripe on the record, but we know ideological tripe when we see it, and we see it—

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

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Certainly interesting debate this morning, Mr. Speaker. Certainly welcome Manitobans joining us in the gallery this morning, and hopefully they will hear some positive words from our side in terms of how we're trying to help the government with health care in Manitoba.

Now, we know the government is focused on the 1990s—they're focused on the 1990s. They can't seem to get over all that, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know what it is. But I can tell you that the people I talk to in my communities are sick and tired of the rhetoric and the excuses from the 1990s. That's all they've got for excuses.

I'm asking the government to take some accountability. They're always—if you listen to their debate this morning in the House, it's never the fault of the NDP party. The NDP party are never responsible for anything, Mr. Speaker. They can't be accountable. They've been in government for 14 years. I—my councillors who are fighting day and night to keep health care alive in their communities are sick and tired of the NDP rhetoric blaming the government back in the 1990s. They've been in power for 14 years in Manitoba. What do we see in health care? The health care's going down the tubes—that is what they're saying.

Mr. Speaker, I'm telling you, in my riding alone, I've got the community of Wawanessa, the emergency room's been closed there; community of Baldur, emergency room is closed there; community of Cartwright, the emergency room is closed there. And those are—they've been closed so long now, I'm saying they're permanent closures. Now we've got communities such as Killarney and Boissevain are sharing on-call services for emergency. We've got communities such as Carberry and Glenboro are sharing on-call services for ER. So, as we go

forward, health care is getting more and more fragile in rural Manitoba and it's clearly because of the decisions the NDP government are making.

Now, I don't know where all these doctors are that the minister claims are here in Manitoba. I have no idea where they are, if they're working part-time or they're retired or where they are, Mr. Speaker. And I give full credit for doctors. I know a lot of doctors over the years, and they do tremendous work for us here on behalf of Manitoba. And they're hard-working, very diligent individuals and they really certainly care for their patients and care for us in Manitoba.

It's unfortunate that we've seen the numbers that we have in terms of leaving the province, Mr. Speaker. We've had 2,200 doctors leave Manitoba since 2000, and it's a very unfortunate trend. And hopefully the NDP would take note of this particular record, and it's very alarming when we see that number of doctors leaving the province for other jurisdictions, and I think it's something that the government has to take notice of. You can't go back and just blame a previous government for everything. You have to be accountable at some point in time.

Now, I—we know the NDP, their solution to everything is to spend more money. And it's all about spending money, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't matter what the issue is. If we ask about an issue—and it's our job as opposition to stand up for Manitobans and ask the questions—stand up for Manitobans and ask the questions—and every time we come back—don't worry, we're spending more money. Don't worry, we're spending more money here; we're spending more money there. We know that they can spend money. They are the kings of spending money. We're simply asking for value for the money that you're spending.

It's about results. It's about getting results. And that's what Manitobans are asking us too. They're saying, you, as opposition, please try to keep these guys accountable. We are digging into our pockets deeper and deeper every single year for taxes that the NDP are putting—charging us. We're asking, please, tell the government that we want it—have them accountable. They have to be responsible for the money that they're spending.

And we know that there's more and more money going in health care each and every year. And I know the government here is getting more and more money from the federal government to help them

with health care, Mr. Speaker. I know they're a little excited because the increases aren't as big as they used to be, percentage wise, but the money is still rolling in from the federal government, from our cousins across the country.

And, you know, we're getting more and more money as well from transfer payments from our cousins across the province. So there's no shortage of money here in Manitoba, even though the NDP keep going back to the taxpayers for more and more monies, Mr. Speaker.

But we're simply saying, the money you're spending, let's look at getting value for it. But we get reports from CIHI saying, you know, you guys are bottom of the barrel in terms of results. Well, how can we be spending the most—almost the most per capita, of any jurisdiction in Canada, and we're going to be dead last, Mr. Speaker, and—in terms of health care. And one thing is dead last in terms of accessibility to health care. And that's clearly what we're seeing in rural Manitoba. And I know that the same thing can be seen for our cousins here in the city of Winnipeg, it's in terms of accessibility to health care.

And I know the minister and government are making promises, oh, yes, everyone's going to have a family doctor by—whatever year it is they're saying. Well, we know the litany of broken promises that the NDP, Mr. Speaker, have put forward. And we're sure—Manitobans are sure, that will simply be another one.

Now they—the issue that really bothers us here on this side, and bothers a lot of people in Manitoba, is that the biggest percentage of our budget is going into health, but we don't have a plan. We don't have a plan or a vision or a strategy on how we can deliver health care better. We are in a complete mode of crisis management. It's crisis management, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP solution, new strategy for health care in Manitoba, is to amalgamate RHAs. That is their single biggest plan when they brought forward their budget. This is our new plan for health-care delivery Manitoba; let's amalgamate RHAs, Mr. Speaker. Well, they may have laid off some of the senior staff, we're not sure about that, we're going to see about that.

But I know for a fact they're also out there—the RHAs are hiring more managers. I know that for a fact. They're hiring more managers. Where is the

cost saving in that? We don't have more front-line workers. We're developing more and more managers. What a way is that to deliver health care in Manitoba? How are we going to give patients better health care if we're just hiring more managers? That's simply the way it is, Mr. Speaker.

Now the decisions the NDP make have repercussions for individual Manitobans. And I talk about the closures in the ER, and I talk about the rotating on-calls in ERs, Mr. Speaker. What it does, it causes a lot of grief and hardships for ordinary Manitobans, because they're not sure which facility is going to be open on any given day. And it's certainly creating some confusion out there, and it's creating confusion for local community leaders. And it's a very unfortunate situation they've developed. But, unfortunately, it's the kind of health care that we've come to expect under the NDP. And it's very, very unfortunate.

And I know my communities—I look at the community of Killarney, for instance. And the minister said, you know, this is a pretty sizable regional area and regional hospital; it's a nice, good hospital. It's in relatively good shape. We've kind of got the nurse situation ironed out there. But then our doctors are having some issues too. We're having issues keeping doctors and some doctors are retiring, Mr. Speaker.

So clearly, it's the RHA's job and the government's job to go out and find doctors. Well, the community got so upset that the RHA and the government isn't finding doctors, they went out and actually recruited their own doctor. They've gone out and recruited their own doctor, Mr. Speaker. So they have got money invested in finding their own doctors. And even by finding their own doctor, they're still being forced to share on-call emergency services with other communities. And we hear that that whole shared services might even get worse in the future.

* (11:50)

So if the government would—members opposite would care to take a time to get out of their offices and see what's going on around the province in terms of health care, I think it would be a wise decision for them. That's why we are bringing forward resolutions to talk about how we can make health care better in Manitoba. Now, if they want to stay in their offices and believe everything is rosy, they can do that. But if they want to get out in the real world

and talk to Manitobans and see what's going on in health care, I think it would be a wise decision.

So, clearly, there's issues in health care—how we deliver health care. Simply throwing money into health care isn't the solution, Mr. Speaker. We're asking the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), the NDP government to have a look at solutions here and move forward. And let's have a good, wholesome conversation with all stakeholders in how we can make health care better in Manitoba.

Thank you very much.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to get up and to address this particular resolution put forward by the member from Arthur-Virden and spoken to by the member from Morden-Winkler and also from the aspiring member to Brandon-Souris, and I'm glad that I'm able to follow what is an audition. Apparently the member from Steinbach doesn't have to audition in the same manner that the member from Brandon—from—where's—[interjection] Spruce Woods has to. Sorry, I—getting mixed up on what your seat is or—what your future seat is, I think I know.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, when the Tories get up to talk about health care, it's kind of like a Maple Leaf fan getting up to talk about the Stanley Cup, or it's kind of like a Chicago Cub fan getting up to talk about the World Series. They don't belong in the same sentence. And the fact of the matter is that the member from Morden-Winkler, who I have a great deal of respect for—I think he's a thoughtful individual and he says he wants to get up and have a frank and sincere debate about health care, but he doesn't want to have a frank, sincere and factual conversation to be about health care. That's what—that doesn't happen on the other side of the House.

And I want to remind them that we remind them about the 1990s because Manitobans have not forgotten what their record in office was when it came to health care, when it came to managing the economy, when it came to education, when it came to higher education—post-secondary education, and when it came to issues like child care, which they didn't care about at all, or when it came to issues like climate change, which they didn't ever acknowledge in the 1990s. We remind them of their record because it's—because Manitobans have not forgotten of how they operated as a government when circumstances were difficult, when there were challenges to be faced. And what they did in office at every opportunity was to cut and run. And it's fair to

say that the leader of the—current Leader of the Opposition, who was in government at that time, who was at the Cabinet table at that time, chose to first cut and then run.

We don't do that on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We stand with Manitobans every single day, we invest in Manitoba every single day, we invest in the health-care system every single day and we have resuscitated a health-care system that was put on life support by that side of the House.

Now, the member from Spruce Woods says, oh, well, we don't have a plan. We don't have it—a plan. Well, wasn't his plan, Mr. Speaker, wasn't his plan in the 1990s that they would reduce the number of seats in medical school by 20 per cent from 85 to 70 seats? Was that their plan, because I'd be ashamed to live up to that if I was on their side of the House. Have they forgotten that it was their plan during the 1990s when the number of doctors was reduced in 1998 from 2,100 to 2,016? Was that their idea of a plan? That's not a plan. Was it their plan to cut health care across the board and was it their plan, in particular, to freeze hospital construction? Is that what you call a plan?

Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but when the Tories talk about health care, they are talking about an issue that they have failed dramatically on at the provincial level. And when I'm at doorsteps and we start talking about the issues that matter most to Manitobans, they talk to me about health care. They say, well, geez we're glad that your government, your Health Minister, has hired more doctors. They're very pleased to know—and I'm married to a nurse, so it actually helps in this regard—to know that we've trained more nurses and hired more nurses.

They're pleased to know that when they go to receive medical assistance that no one asks them for

their Visa card. They don't say, how are you going to pay for this, as they do in the United States and other places across the world. They don't ask if your health insurer will approve this treatment over that treatment. None of that happens under our government because we stand four square for a public health-care system accessible to all Manitobans and not just, as my friend from Brandon East said earlier, to those folks who are part of the Wellington hillbillies in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say quite clear, also, to my friend from Morden-Winkler, because this is really important, to me, anyway, we've had a Health Minister who's been in that position, I believe, for nine years—seven years. Longest serving Health Minister in the country. Now, when I moved to Manitoba, here, in the late '90s, health ministers were coming and going under the Tory government like there was no tomorrow. In fact, they were the sickest people—*[interjection]* Yes, sickest people in the province, but more than that, she—in being the Health Minister for seven years, she does have a very good handle on the system. And when you're the Health critic for only three or four months, have a little humility on how you raise health-care issues. Have a little humility about how you address these important, public policy issues. Have a little respect for the considerably important and good work that's been done in repairing a health-care system that was, frankly, on life-support, as I said earlier, when we arrived in government, and is now functioning for the benefit not just of a few Manitobans but for all Manitobans—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview will have three minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, August 15, 2013

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