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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

Tuesday, August 27, 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 and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name, and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Can you canvass the House to see if there's leave to move directly to Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to proceed 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 Wolseley, who has seven minutes remaining.

Bill 205—The Election Financing Amendment Act

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Well, good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for that, and my pleasure to continue my remarks on Bill 205, brought forward by the members opposite, the Conservative Party, electoral—Election Financing Amendment Act. And if memory serves, when we last left our hero, I was just getting warmed up and I was speculating as to some of the other political parties that might appear in the next provincial election, ones that people maybe haven't heard of before, but there is an historical precedent for this and that's why I find it so ironic that the Conservatives feel that they have any moral high ground or legitimacy whatsoever to be talking about the financing of elections.

Why do I say that? Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? Well, you know, for the dozens and dozens of people who are not going to read this speech in Hansard, let's just do a very quick historical review, just for the sake of understanding some context: 1995 provincial election, things are looking tight for the governing Conservatives under Premier Filmon. And so what do they decide to do, they decide to create a phony political party. It's called the Independent Native Voice. They decide to fund candidates, so-called, to run under that banner in the hopes that that will split the vote in some targeted, traditionally held NDP ridings. My honourable colleague from the Interlake was the victim of that scheme, but he didn't turn out to be a victim. He ended up winning just fine. Democracy triumphed. And he was victim of a smear campaign at the same time. He still came out on top because of the excellent work he does for his constituents in the riding of the Interlake. *[interjection]* Hold up those five fingers with pride; there you go. Number five's coming up, absolutely.

And there were other of my colleagues who were also targeted. And all of this only came out because of the good work done by the NDP in opposition. Other people in the community who had heard about this were raising concerns. Journalists got interested. And, finally, the story broke. It went all the way up to the premier's office, Premier Filmon's office. And the judge, afterwards—after reviewing all of the incriminating evidence, having the chief of staff called before the judicial inquiry, having the premier himself have to come before the judicial inquiry—what did the judge conclude? He said he had never seen as many liars come before him in a single judicial procedure in any of his time on the bench. There's a very good book, written by a Wolseleyite, Mr. Doug Smith, and it's titled *As Many Liars* and it's all about that very dark and ugly chapter in Manitoba history.

So it leads me to wonder, you know, looking around at my honourable caucus colleagues, who is going to be facing a pseudo-party in the upcoming provincial election? You know, I mentioned a few of these off my head; I'll repeat them. I'm expecting to have to face the granola party in Wolseley. I think the Conservatives are going to fund that and try and split the granola vote in my home constituency. My

honourable colleagues, here, from the Interlake and from Gimli, I think they might run the fishing party in any of the constituencies bordering our marvellous lakes here in Manitoba. They'll have a fishing party that'll go out and try and, you know, catch and snare some votes away from where they might originally have been intended. My honourable member who sits right beside me here, the member for Riverview-Fort Garry, where I grew up, lovely green spaces all along Churchill Drive there, following the Red River, he's going to have to contend with the garden party. Maybe somebody else here of American heritage, they'll decide they need a tea party in that—oh, wait, no, sorry. We're already dealing with the Tea Party, Mr. Speaker, and that's the members opposite.

So let's talk about some of the changes that have happened to elections financing rules over the recent years. You know, the public has come to demand a higher level of accountability and a higher level of public disclosure from all levels of government. Heaven forbid you have a situation where, you know, advertising money going into a certain province actually ends up funding a political party—Liberals—I don't think anyone would stand for that. We've tightened up election rules. Used to be that a federal party could fund a provincial party, or a provincial party wing could prop up a federal party. Can't do that anymore. You actually need to have people called accountants who go through and do audits of elected parties and unelected parties all across the country.

These extra accountability measures have costs involved in it. And wouldn't you know it, if a small party suddenly has to face that higher threshold, same as anybody else, well, wouldn't you know it, it's going to be pretty tough for them to have to operate. And I get to run against lots of candidates in Wolseley. The Greens always run their leader against me. I'm looking forward to doing that again in a couple of years. Right now, they're in the middle of their annual 45-month hiatus. In between elections, they just kind of go to sleep for a while, and then they wake up and magically have all the answers right before going back to bed.

So, you know, it's a process. It's a cycle. Everything in nature is cyclical. But they deserve, Mr. Speaker, to have a chance to bring their voice forward, to bring their ideas forward for the public to judge, same as anybody else, and I don't believe, and our government doesn't believe, that that should be restricted just because other parties have screwed up

in the past. And now, there is this higher level of accountability demanded of all of us.

Public financing makes that happen. Members opposite, despite all their protestations, take thousands of dollars. Every single one of them receive public financing from their elections. It's standard practice. And this is actually more democracy, Mr. Speaker, more democracy, not less. I'm going to put it to the general public and, like I said, the dozens of people who will read this for years to come: Which is better? Is it better to have more voices around the table discussing the issues of the day, or is it the vision of the members opposite that should reign true, where there's only one or two voices and only the people with money? Because, heaven forbid, maybe the federal government should actually look at some of the groundbreaking work we're doing here in Manitoba and not use the Senate as a gigantic money-bag, money-laundering, fundraising scheme.

*(10:10)

And that's a lovely segue into our debate at 11 o'clock.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much. It's my great privilege to rise this morning to speak about Bill 205, the election finances amendment act, because I think that while there are points of view on this issue that are particularly diverse, I think this is a really important conversation for us to have not only as legislators here in the province of Manitoba, but anybody that is engaged in the democratic process, anyone that's interested in the democratic process. This is a conversation; a conversation about fairness and access and democracy, and it certainly is one worth having.

Like all Manitobans, I would guess we've been tuning into national and international news every single day, in particular for the last couple of years, although one could argue across history—pre-television, I suppose, of course—and watching what's happening around the world when it comes to people fighting for their rights and fighting for what they believe in.

We see people rioting in the streets, we see war, we see acts of aggression going on across our globe. And at the core of all of that I think is a discussion about the right to govern and the right to have access

to being able to be considered to be a candidate and to be considered as somebody who might be able to govern.

Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, I take particular note—I can't say actually whether or not this is a—an uneven balance in terms of how media coverage happens, how incidents happen in the world. I have no data to support my observation, it's just my personal observation.

Certainly I'm keenly tuned in to how often in this news coverage issues concerning women and the right of a woman in a particular place in the world to have a voice in government and a voice in the decision making that rules how she can conduct her life. It can be something as interesting as holding public office or, in some places in the world, Mr. Speaker, it can be about her right to learn to read and go to school.

And so it's for those kinds of reasons that I believe this to be a critically important discussion here in our province and across the world. And it's about endeavouring to level the playing field, Mr. Speaker, and ensuring that all people that might be interested and that might be a person that an electorate would support in going to office, have a chance to do that.

And we don't have to look very far, Mr. Speaker, to see, you know, our neighbours to the south, in the United States, to see so very clearly that those people that engage in the electoral process—that is to say put themselves forward as candidates—are almost exclusively from a certain economic bracket.

You can see very clearly in the United States that you absolutely must be somebody who carries a lot of wealth in order to put yourself forward to be able to be somebody who governs. And I don't think that there are many Canadians, Mr. Speaker, that would like to see that happen here in Manitoba or, indeed, across Canada.

I absolutely, passionately believe that the citizenry should be able to make a decision based on that candidate's qualifications, their character, their sense of fairness, their ability to understand complex issues and work through them, their problem-solving skills. The electorate should be able to focus on those kinds of issues and should not be tempted or be swayed, Mr. Speaker, by that particular candidate's ability to influence their vote because of their ability to throw money around. I think that this is a real problem, and it happens in the United States, it

happens in other jurisdictions, but it can happen right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, I say, with the greatest of respect for all members of this Legislature, that if you had access to our income tax returns, and I'm sure that this isn't something you'd want to spend your time on, frankly, you've got other things to do with your life, but if you were to look at them, you would see that there is an imbalance, even within this Chamber, of the resources and the wealth among people in the Legislature. And I want to be clear, this is not to say that I begrudge anyone from living and flourishing from their hard-earned incomes or inherited incomes, and I don't want to, in any way, suggest that somebody hasn't earned the many, many dollars that they may have.

But I want to be very clear in saying that this, in no way, should be something that is an influence, that determines whether or not somebody should run as a candidate here in Manitoba, and public financing of political parties will endeavour to help to level that playing field. It will endeavour to help, I would argue, in particular, women in many circumstances, in many ridings in our province have the opportunity to seek elected office and to be elected on her merit—on his or her merit in these cases and not on their ability to offer to make generous donations to causes that the electorate happens to be interested in or to do any such things that would make a voter feel obligated to vote for somebody because of that person's wealth and what they might do with their wealth. Public financing enables those people in our society that may not have been raised in an environment where there are a lot of funds to engage in the political process—some very fine people that would be excellent candidates. And so enabling public financing to occur, it does enable people from all walks of life to seek public office.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, it is up to the citizens to make those decisions, but we want our citizens to make those decisions based on the qualities of the candidate, not on the probability that a wealthy candidate will do something for them afterwards. That is a frightful prospect.

We know that we have seen issues in Manitoba's past, Mr. Speaker, where there has been tampering and gerrymandering of election processes, and I know that my colleague that spoke before me from Wolseley has outlined this in graphic detail. I don't think I need to repeat that, but we know that when fairness is not at the core of the electorate's ability to

make decisions, and when that is connected to wealth rather than to qualifications, this is a problem for all of us. We miss an opportunity to find people from other areas of society, sometimes on the margins of society, who have the qualities within to be fantastic leaders that wouldn't otherwise come forward.

So it's for that reason that I think we need to support the notion of fairness, support the notion of public financing, Mr. Speaker, and to become very aware, of course, that we are already benefiting across party lines from financing that comes from the public.

We know that our opponents—their chief financial officer said, of their 2011 election reimbursement, that it was the highest reimbursement the party's ever seen, noting that, compared to the NDP, we're receiving higher reimbursements than they are. I'm not sure that—I wasn't in the room, but it sounds like a brag to me. So, on the one hand, to stand up and brag about the wonderful returns that came as a result of the election reimbursement, and then to publically stand up and say there's something wrong with the public support—the public financing for elections, it just seems like a very big disconnect to me.

* (10:20)

And I think if we all get together, we look at those newscasts from around the world and we see the actual physical, spiritual and emotional harm that comes to people that are fighting for the rights that we so beautifully have here in Canada and here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, I think it should all give us pause to take a step back and to understand how important it is that anyone, regardless of their financial circumstances, that has the qualities and the capabilities to come forward and be a candidate and seek the trust of the electorate, should be able to do that, which is why I support public financing.

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): I'm proud to be able to put a few words on the record on Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act.

You know, I got to say, as you know, I've been fairly new to the House. I think this is a second motion that I have seen that relates to democracy since I've been elected. One of the other motions that were brought forward was, let's make—let's improve or let's increase, or whatever word you want to use—a resolution came forward from members opposite on voter ID. And they talked about how we should have

people show more ID when they vote. So, you know, I'm not surprised that when we see resolutions come forward that actually don't strengthen democracy, it actually weakens democracy.

And, you know, I represent an area that there has been a lack of participation in the democratic process, but for some good reasons. I talked on the record before about Pat Campbell [*phonetic*] who, for the majority of his life, wasn't allowed to vote because he was First Nation. And so when I decided to run, he was already in his 80s. And I approached him and I asked Pat if he would be willing to come out and support me. And we found out when I ran in a federal by-election that he didn't actually have the right to vote because he didn't have enough ID. And so we, you know—people tried to work and tried to get them that, and he wasn't able to do it, but he was allowed to vote in the provincial election, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I've always said that I think if we want services and resources to work, if you want people to be able to support themselves and their families, a real great opportunity to do that is by getting involved in the democratic process. Mr. Speaker, I have seen first-hand literally thousands—but first-hand—individual stories of people who voted for the first time who then go on to participate in many activities in their community.

I remember a young man named Chris [*phonetic*] who was 19 years old. He voted in the first election in Point Douglas. He came forward, and because of that vote, he felt that he had a right to come to more community events, to come and share his thoughts and ideas. And I remember him talking directly to the minister of Finance, giving his thoughts and ideas to the minister of Finance. He volunteered in that election. And so, when we look at how important supporting public financing is, it actually supports everyday people in their everyday life.

You know, one of the things I want to say about this is that I've been able to talk to a few colleagues. You know, I'm obviously born and raised, my family is originally from this country, but there's many members of my caucus that aren't originally and their families aren't originally from Manitoba. And, you know, they tell me the stories of living in places where there isn't democracy, where there isn't collective voice, where is—where there isn't access and there isn't, as the member from Seine River talked about, a level playing field. And, you know,

so they spend time talking. I got to hear them talk on the record here, but also just talking to them one on one how important not only public financing is, but how important it is that we find ways to improve and strengthen our democracy.

All the things that we have done as a government always starts with supporting the people who are most disengaged. They support low-income seniors; they support young people that typically don't get out and vote; they support Aboriginal people, where there's a history where they weren't allowed to vote. Those are important measures that we take. And we've done a lot, you know; we've set date for elections, we've allowed for longer polling, we've improved the amount of polls that we have.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, in contrast to that, I have seen the kind of measures that come out from Conservatives not only provincially, but federally. I—you know, you didn't have to look very far after the last election and hear so much about the in-and-out scheme that they have. Let's find ways to even get more money, so let's make laws tougher for everyday people, particularly people that are marginalized, and let's find ways to make money based on the system that currently exists.

We heard a lot about robo-calls and, you know, getting people to go here and go here and here. And, you know, we—so in the face of all those kinds of scandals, what did we see? Well, we saw them actually cut money to Elections Canada. Let's make it harder for people to vote. That's all you ever see coming out from the Conservatives. Let's make it tougher for people to vote.

Here in Manitoba, the member from Wolseley talked about the vote splitting. You know, I got to tell you, I know people from indigenous backgrounds that actually formed a political party. They themselves did it, and why did they do it? Well, they did it because, you know, they wanted to have a voice at that election. They wanted to have a say in what was going on in democracy. They wanted to bring, you know, a single issue to the forefront, and I give them credit for that. They engaged a lot of people in the political process, and that's what public financing does.

You know—so—you know, we can look at the history and say, okay, well, there's robo-calls. There's in-and-outs, scandals, there's voter ID splitting. So we know all those things that are going on, and then a resolution comes forward, a motion comes forward and says, well, you know what we

should do to improve this? We should make it harder for people to vote by increasing the amount of IDs they have to show. There's actually no scandal that I saw recent that actually says that, you know, when we look at the in-and-out, we look at the robo-calls, you look at vote splitting. Mr. Speaker, you know, when it comes to supporting public financing, one of the things it says is that you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential, that you can actually engage in democracy, you can engage in your community. You can actually talk to people and say, look, if you get out—and that was the No. 1 question that I got asked in the election that I ran in. The No. 1 question was always over and over again: Why should I vote? Why should I do it? It's not going to make a difference. You know, because when we see these kinds of—these kinds of scandals, when we see these kinds of—these schemes that go on around democracy, it makes people cynical.

And so, you know, we have to always work to not only invest in democracy, but we've got to look for ways to actually improve it and actually how we can find ways to engage people with it.

I remember Elaine Ranville [*phonetic*] who is a low-income senior in Point Douglas who came out and volunteered in our election, and she was going to all her friends to talk about the importance. She's just dealing with seniors, Mr. Speaker, and each person that she talked to said the same kind of thing, that they had never voted before. These are people in their 60s and 70s that have never voted before, and I think all members of the Legislature should be concerned about that. How can we find ways to get seniors who've never voted before to vote for the very first time? We have to find measures to be able to do that. If we see young people that are, you know, 18, 19, 21, 22 already setting the trend that they're not going to vote, so how do we improve that? How do we actually make people feel that they can participate and how do we make things—but those aren't the kinds of things that we've seen members opposite bring forward. The members—the things that we see members opposite bring forward is always for a particular demographic. It's always for people who not only are engaging, but people who are already probably financing, often, their political party.

So, you know, for me, when I look at it, I think of people like Pat Campbell [*phonetic*]. How can we improve it for someone like Pat Campbell [*phonetic*] so that he knows that he has a voice, even though he was told for years that he didn't. For people like

Chris [*phonetic*], a young man who votes for the very first time and starts to participate in not only in democracy, but participates in a lot of community events and gets involved. You know, on one day I could see someone like Chris [*phonetic*] wanting to run. Will he want to run for us or the Conservatives or the Liberals? I don't know. Maybe he'll want to run for—[*interjection*] No, probably not for the Tories, absolutely. But, you know, he's somebody who might want to look at engaging in democracy, and I think if we have public financing that's going to allow him to do that.

But it doesn't just stay with him. It actually ripples. It hits his mum and dad; it hits his grandparents and it hits a whole pile of people who've never voted. You know, I don't find it surprising that any resolutions, any motions or anything that we see from members opposite never seems to strengthen grassroots people to want to engage. People where we see the biggest deficits—people with disabilities, low-income seniors, Aboriginal people—those are the things that we should be debating on how we can actually improve it so more people can come out to the polls, more people can have their say, you know, but their policies don't reflect those kinds of people. So what they try to do is what you've seen a lot in the States, is a lot of voter suppression, that the more money you have the greater access you're going to have to democracy.

* (10:30)

And that's what public financing is all about, improving access for all people, to making sure that we have an ability to make people like Pat Campbell [*phonetic*] have a voice and his voice is heard. That we have people like Elaine Ranville [*phonetic*], when she's going out day to day to get low-income seniors who've never voted before, that there's a system that supports her. That we have people like Chris [*phonetic*] who votes for the very first time at 19 years old and the only ID he has is his treaty card. Well, that will be enough, and that's what we need to support.

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I'm happy to get up today and be able to talk a little bit about this issue and especially honoured to be following the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief), who every time he gets up to speak on one of these issues about democracy,

I'm reminded one more time that our—one of our roles certainly as legislators is to inspire our constituents and inspire all the various communities that we come from to be part of the political process.

And the reality in this province, in this city, is that some communities do have better access to the political process than others. That is a reality. And if we pretend that that's not a reality, we're not going to be able to do anything to change it.

And one of the things I did this past weekend, Mr. Speaker, was to watch a lot of the coverage commemorating and celebrating what will be tomorrow, the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington in the United States. And in no way, would I ever compare anything that I'm ever going to do in my career to the achievements of the people who marched on Washington, the people like Martin Luther King Jr. who led that civil rights movement.

But as I was watching it I was reminded that that struggle was about many things: certainly, it was about segregation; certainly, it was about equal access to education for all children; it was about where you get to sit on a bus; but, it was also fundamentally about voting rights. And that was important to remember because that movement came out of a time when, certainly, everybody had the right to vote, but that right was not exercised equally. And there was active, active movements to limit the right to vote, to keep black Americans from going to the polls. People would go to vote on the pain of being scared for their lives, and that's what that movement came out of.

And, in a democracy, it isn't enough to just enfranchise everybody equally, that is important. And we know in our own history of the incredible struggles of women early in the last century to gain the vote, which was not given easily. That struggle was a real struggle and people were prepared in some instances, certainly in countries like England, women were prepared to lay down their lives for that vote.

And we've seen in our own country that franchise be extended to Aboriginal people. It's not always remembered when we talk about women getting the right to vote, that Aboriginal women got the right to vote much later in our history than white women got the right to vote. That is part of our history and a shameful part of our history.

But it's not enough to just give people the right to vote. You have to do your best to design a democratic system where everybody has equal

access to a democracy, where your ability to participate in the democratic process isn't limited by how much wealth you have, how much privilege you have, doesn't concentrate power in the hands of the already powerful.

And as we look at even the last 20, 50 years of our development as a democracy, there have been moves over time to ensure that everybody can access democracy and public financing has been part of that. Moves that include things like the ability of all of us to get part of our election expenses rebated.

And contrary to what members opposite have put on the record, those rebates are not based on how much money you fundraise. Those rebates are based on how much money you spend. And it is in recognition that if you run a campaign and you're able to get a certain percentage of the vote, then, it is in the public interest that you be allowed to run a campaign and not have to know that you've got at your disposal 25, 30, 40 thousand dollars, but that you are going to get part of that rebated. And that we all, as citizens, think that that is in the public interest—that it is in the public interest that everybody gets an opportunity, if they have the desire and they have the drive to run for office, to run for office.

And it's also, I think, in the public interest that we have a multiple of views represented in the political process. Public financing is certainly helpful to large established parties, I won't dispute that, but it is also for many smaller parties who are not as established, the lifeblood of their existence. And this public financing that this bill wants to shut down would mean that there would be fewer voices in our political process, that there would not be small parties and parties who have not enjoyed the electoral success of the two major parties in this province, would have a more difficult time existing. They would have a more difficult time complying with the election finance laws, they would have a more difficult time fielding candidates and they would have a more difficult time participating. And those voices are important in our process. And if we are truly democrats, we want to—even though it means they're running against us, we want to have more voices, we want to have more people involved, and that's part of what public financing also does.

Other moves that we've seen made to try to make sure that everybody has access to democracy include things like limiting union and corporate donations. That is a change that we brought in early in our mandate in order to make sure that the people who

get to set the agenda are the regular folks of Manitoba, are people like my mom, who is not a wealthy person but gets to participate in the political process. She gets to give her 10 or 20 or whatever dollars a year to the party—to the NDP, of course—and she gets to participate. She gets to come to meetings. She gets to decide policy. She gets to have positions of leadership, not because she's able to give thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars to the party every year, but because she has a desire to make things better.

And that is, I think, the proud—certainly, the proud history of our party, which I know better than other parties represented in this Legislature—that, for us, we are a place where, you know, I, as a 16, 17-year-old young woman who came from a working-class family that had neither access to power or privilege in any respect, was able to come and be part of a political movement; was able to come and serve on the executive of a political party; was able to sit down and speak to the leader of my party, who was going to be the premier one day; and eventually who was able to become elected and stand here in this Legislature and speak from my experience, and speak on behalf of my constituents. And that is something that we should all be proud of.

This Legislature is a better place because there's diversity represented within its walls. We make better decisions because we don't only represent a small segment of society. We don't come from backgrounds that are accustomed to having power. We come from all kinds of backgrounds. We come from all kinds of struggles. And we're a better representative—we're a better—better able to represent the people of Manitoba because we have those experiences. And public financing, as much as we may want to argue about it, is part of making sure that we continue to be able to have that kind of diversity within these—within this Legislature, and we continue to be able to represent all the people of Manitoba.

So I've been thinking a lot after, you know, watching a lot of documentaries this weekend about the civil rights movement, and although I have faced prejudice in my own life that sometimes has required a lot of courage of me, I've never had to take the courage of those people who went on freedom rides in the early '50s, and in the '40s even, which is something I didn't know. White people and black people together that stood for a cause, that knew it could cost them their lives, that knew it certainly could cost them physical injury but stood together

because they believed in a—in an ideal that democracy is about the ability of everybody to participate in their government no matter the colour of the skin, the size of their wallet, their gender or any other characteristic. That to be a democracy means that everybody gets a chance not only to vote, but everybody gets a chance to run. Everybody gets a chance to be involved in a political party that they believe in or start a political party if there are none that suit their beliefs.

And if we lose that, we take a tremendous step backwards. We take a tremendous step backwards where we will, once again, be a province that is governed by those who have privilege and power for the service of those who have privilege and power.

* (10:40)

I feel, as a legislator, that my first job is to do my best to represent people who don't traditionally have a voice in this Chamber, to represent people in the decisions I make in the policy discussions that we have that haven't traditionally seen themselves reflected as having power. I believe that's one of my roles as a legislator and that's one of my roles because that is my history. That's my experience. That's the place that I come from, a place where I never—well, I did dream, but I didn't know that it would ever happen that I would be able to stand here and make a speech like this, and that's why public financing and access to democracy is important.

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

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I'm pleased to put a few words on this bill, and why I'm pleased to put this on is because I believe that democracy is the best form of government, and I think it's the best form of government because it really means that people are equal. People have a say and it's based on the fact that all people have a say on how we're governed and how we treat each other. That's a fundamental difference than a dictatorship or an oligarchy or anything else where people have the power.

And when you talk about financing, we have a choice. We have lots of countries in the world where the very privileged few who are multi-millionaires have control over everything, and they have control over the political process. They have control over the government. They have control over the military, and people don't have the rights. They don't have rights at all. And even when you start talking about United

States, our friends to the south, you have the presidential election that costs one person in excess of a billion dollars in order to run for the president of the United States, and you start wondering about how we can have a democracy.

And I look at Wikipedia, which it's always now our way of responding things, and it says democracy is a form of government in which all eligible citizens participate equally either directly or through elected representatives in the proposal development creation of laws. It encompasses social, economic and cultural conditions that enable the free and equal practice of political self-determination. And how do you do that if, perchance, you need a billion dollars to get in or you need a hundred thousand dollars to get in? And it's interesting to note that what we have tried to do in Canada and this province and this side of the House is actually put rules so that all people have equal right and equal say. So government shouldn't be because of the size of your wallet, the same as health care shouldn't be the same size of our—your—a—shouldn't be just on your—the size your wallet.

We believe privilege and power should not just govern. We don't believe the top 10 per cent or 1 per cent should get their way just because. We believe that we should govern for all, and it's a different philosophy. I know that we brought in the fact that union and corporate donations weren't allowed. Why? So that there was no undue influence on the policy making of government. And, you know, it's funny that the Conservative Party opposed the concept of banning corporate and union donations. And you have to go to the fundamental belief why they would vote against that, why they do not like the banning of corporate and union donations. To me, I think what it is, is it makes sure that there's no undue influence by a certain segment, regardless. I think what it means is that for a candidate like myself, if I want to raise money I can't go to a couple of friends and say give me all the money I need to run in my election and then I will give you undue consideration. I will give you consideration over anyone else, and that would be fundamentally wrong. In order to raise money for my election I have to go to my friends and neighbours and I have to ask them for small quantities of money and I have to be indebted to each and every person not just because they give me money, but because they give me support fundamentally.

And here's the interesting part. The members opposite really have said, oh, we don't believe in

these rules. Well, it's obvious that they don't believe in rules, because if you look in numbers of campaigns, whether it's federal or others, members of the Conservative Party have exceeded the contribution limit. Well, that's fundamentally wrong because it means that you are not following the rules. If you look at other options, the fact that the members opposite actually tried to set up a false party and they were caught—in fact, at first they denied it and they said, no, no such party existed, we didn't do it, we didn't—we weren't at fault. And when they actually did the investigation, they brought in the witnesses—and that was the elite of the Conservative Party, the friends and neighbours and political allies of the current Leader of the Conservative Party in Manitoba—when they came in, the judge said he couldn't believe as many liars as existed in that case.

And, to me, when we discuss ideas—we may disagree, we may agree. I believe that 80 per cent, 90 per cent of the time we will agree and 20 per cent of the time we don't. However, fundamentally, I think Churchill had it right, where when he was voted out of office he said that he had the right to be voted out of office. It was the people's right to give him the power to govern over all. And I think that what we need to do is continue to say, how do we have an open and free discussion of policies?

Now, I believe that there's other parties, other individuals that have a right to say things, Mr. Speaker. It shouldn't just be the New Democratic Party, the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party. Fundamentally, democracy means it's a free exchange of not just the current parties but all parties, and I'm actually interested in—hearing what some of these new parties are talking about. And I think you do that by allowing them to become parties, to listening to their discussions and attitudes, and I've talked to them. I have talked to many of these new groups and they have some interesting ideas, and I think by listening to other groups you actually have a stronger democracy.

Now, I also am a realist. I know that you can't form a party because we have rules on disclosure, on accountability, on donations to make sure we track them, to make sure people aren't buying a political party. All those things cost money to do compliance, and I know a couple of members on the opposite side have insurance companies or financial companies, as I had, and you know what? Compliance costs money. You have to hire the bookkeepers, you have to have accountants, you have to keep proper records, you

have to send tax receipts. All of that concept means and costs money.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? If I had a choice of having the wild, wild west where the person with the biggest wallet had the absolute liberty to do what they wanted in our country, Canada, which I love, and our province, which I love, or I have the choice between having one where there's limits, rules and a cost, I would take the second, because I do believe that if you have rules then it means that the size of your wallet does not mean that you just get elected. In some cases, in the states, you hear about where there was two 'mayortoral' candidates in New York. There was an election. The one mayor candidate actually spent in excess of a hundred million dollars in two months, and then he got elected. They weren't ahead, they had no history or anything, but they had a wallet.

And, you know, that scared me, and it scared me fundamentally because what that meant was it wasn't just the people who put in the time and effort and all this, it's the person who could buy the air time. And, you know, if you look at Italy right now, you have the person who's the current prime minister owns a whole pile of the media outlets and owns the TV and the newspapers, and that way he can control the message. Is that the type of democracy we want?

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that when you look at it, I believe in certain rules and regulations. I believe in having limits as to how much influence a person can have, and, you know, although I like the Americans, I do believe that we have a superior system, because what it means is any single individual can go and run, any group of people can form a political party, any group of people can put forward their ideas without fear or favour. And that's the key, without fear or favour, so you can't buy your way in.

* (10:50)

And so, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I'd like to say that if you look at the fines that the members opposite have got, that are on the record, for exceeding the spending limits, for breaking the laws, whether it's setting up a new party or funding under the table, et cetera, I know that I believe in having regulations, putting a small cost of money to allow democracy to flourish, because that's where I believe we all need to go.

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

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I'm delighted to be granted the opportunity to say a few words in this very important debate on Bill 205, the elections finances amendment act.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to relate an incident in late 2007, I believe. I attended one of the events sponsored by the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. The minister then, my esteemed colleague, the dearly departed Oscar Lathlin, requested me to attend on his behalf, and I was joined by other members of our caucus. And one of the speakers at that event was a young man, very impressionable young man, named Kevin Chief. [*interjection*] Oh, I'm sorry.

Mr. Speaker: I want to remind the honourable minister that we're to refer to members of the Assembly by their ministerial portfolios or MLAs by their constituency names, please.

Ms. Marcelino: The then-speaker at that event was now the honourable member from Point Douglas, and I was so impressed by the speech of that young man. He spoke from the heart. He spoke from experiences of growing up in the community that he belonged to, and also, he spoke of the many activities that he's doing to help young people. And I said to myself, wow, I wish this young man would run for public office. He would be a wonderful role model, and I wish he would run for our party.

At that time, I didn't have any more reservations about running for office. Based on my experience, I know if this young man would commit himself to running for public office, he would be supported by many people from his community, from the party he will run for, and also by—supported by a very meaningful elections finances act—Election Financing Act.

Well, I said he'll be supported because that was my very experience. When I was approached by some members of the party, I was very—that was, if I remember correctly, May 3rd, 2007, it was mid-morning, and I was minding my very small business at Garden City Shopping Centre, when three members of the party came with very little warning and without saying what their intent was. I was perplexed while—why I would be visited by members of a political party because election campaigning is already happening. It was already in its second week of the campaign period.

To make a long story short, they asked me to run for the constituency of Wellington, and right away I

said, no, because, first, I didn't have any plans of being in a public office and, second, I don't think I could handle a campaign because of my limited resources. I was told that if I had the support of people, family, friends, and the community, I could launch a campaign because money is not—while it is important—it's not the end all or be all of an election campaign.

With that thought, I sought, or I consulted my family, and a dear friend, who happens to be my minister of the church close to this beautiful building, the Reverend Dr. Raymond Cuthbert, who, incidentally, is celebrating his birthday today. When I've already consulted my family and they were not all unanimous in giving their approval. But when I spoke with my minister, he told me, ate Flor—ate meaning older sister—you have enough integrity, go for it. Those were his very words. I thought for a moment—and prior to that I was already thinking hard and praying for it—and with that encouragement, I made the decision to go for it. And I phoned the party—that, yes, although belatedly, I will be their candidate. And as the saying goes, the rest is history.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, without The Election Financing Act that provides a level playing field, I won't be here. I—my only resources then were support from my community, the moral support from family and friends, and not very much money. But I was surprised that when I approached people, and some even not very known to me personally, there was financial support that was obtained, and so off we go with that very late campaign. I must say I'm thankful that was the shortest campaign period and—just two weeks of campaigning—and the election was held.

And with that experience, Mr. Speaker, when I visited Daloto City in the Philippines in 2010 and spoke to the municipal council, I shared with them the beauty of elections in Manitoba. That in Manitoba you could be a member of a visible minority, you could be a woman, and above all, you could be with very little monetary resources. But if you have the heart, willing to serve, if you have the desire and the willingness to work hard for your constituents, you can be elected. And they were astonished; that is never the experience of those people that I spoke to, nor the experience of any of the politicians who run in a Philippine election. They said for them to run for office, they have to spend millions—millions and millions of pesos. And even converted to Canadian dollars, that was—that would be several hundred thousands of dollars.

And that will never happen in Manitoba, because there's—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism will have one minute remaining.

The time is 11 a.m., time for private members' resolutions, and, as previously announced, the resolution under consideration this morning is sponsored by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), entitled the "Senate of Canada", and it's standing in the name of the honourable member for Spruce Woods who has two minutes remaining.

DEBATE ON RESOLUTIONS

Res. 19—Senate of Canada

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It's certainly a pleasure to conclude my remarks on the resolution brought forward.

Clearly, the Canadian Senate has certainly garnered a lot media attention over the last several months and, certainly, Canadians are certainly engaged in that discussion as well, and it's certainly a topic of discussion in many coffee shops around the country, I would assume. It—certainly in Manitoba it is.

Mr. Speaker, just reading in the paper this morning where I see the federal NDP leader, Mr. Mulcair, is travelling Canada, and he is a proponent of abolishing the Senate as well and I—assuming that's where this NDP party is headed as well.

So it's certainly an interesting debate we're going to be having about that in terms of the Senate. I know it's certainly a long process. We have to get Manitobans engaged. We have to get Canadians engaged because we have to have an agreement if we're going to go that far, Mr. Speaker, in terms of abolishing the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to see the NDP here have a real interest all of a sudden in democracy. You know, we've had the NDP pass—are trying to pass Bill 20, which clearly asks for an increase in the provincial sales tax and also at the same time takes away Manitobans right to vote on tax increases. So it's interesting they're talking about democratic reform on one side and on the other side here they are taking away people's ability to vote on increase in

certain taxes. And, really, that's—it's very interesting they would try again to play politics with some of this—some of these resolutions they're bringing forward.

So certainly we are interested in a debate on this particular issue and look forward to a debate on both sides.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate?

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker, and it's my pleasure to rise today to take a few moments to speak about the Senate of Canada.

And I do have to begin my remarks by saying that I was a member of the all-party task force, the committee that was put together by members of the Legislature back in 2009, I believe it was, to go out and touch the earth and get the opinions of Manitobans. So I think I can speak with some authority on this topic having toured through a number of communities of our province and having listened to more than 90 presentations from Manitobans on this topic. It is something that I know a little bit about and I—and I'm very interested in commenting on.

Of course, our position is that the Senate should be abolished given that it's been largely ineffective over the years. I suppose some 130 years ago when they thought about it it might have had some relevance, but times have certainly changed and from a modern perspective I think this institution is an anachronism and it is time that the decision is made to do away with it. That's our position as a party. We do not agree that this is just a federal decision. If we go down this path I think it's incumbent upon the federal government to ensure that all Canadians are represented in this decision, meaning that all provinces should be united in deciding on its dissolution.

Now, the Harper government, of course, in opposition we know what the rhetoric was. Time and again I'm sure all of us were subjected to Mr. Harper in opposition calling for a Triple-E Senate, which I believe stood for equal, elected and effective. Correct me if I'm wrong, but had a nice ring to it, a Triple-E Senate. And he made great hay over that issue while in opposition, himself criticizing how ineffective the Senate was and decrying the fact that it was bloated with patronage appointments, that, at the very least, he would be moving toward electing members. And, well, that was then, this is now, of course.

We see that his track record in a-patronage appointments is truly appalling, Mr. Speaker, and it's blatantly obvious to all of us today that all that rhetoric in opposition about a Triple-E Senate was just posturing, that as soon as the reins of power fell into his hands he went back to the good-old-boy system that's been in place for a hundred years and started stacking the appointment with his own appointments.

And now I would—rather than a Triple-E Senate, I like to think of it as a triple-B Senate. Triple-B in that is totally bloated with patronage appointments, once again, it is currently blue with the Tory hacks that have been appointed to this Senate, and, in short, is total Beaudesne in how it's constituted today. And so that's my look on it. It's a triple-B Senate—bloated, blue and absolute Beaudesne—that we, as Canadians, are—continue to be subjected to this corrupt and—institution that has completely failed.

And we only have to look at some of the recent appointments to see how glaringly obvious this is, you know, and the irony abounds. The first two that I look at, Senator Mike Duffy, of course, and Pamela Wallin, respected journalists in their day. And, you know, I'm sure the journalist community must be appalled themselves that these two people who for decades were the very pillars of the journalistic community were plucked from that realm by the Prime Minister and plopped into the Senate where they immediately began to bloat themselves on all of the various different expenses that they were eligible for. I—you know, I'm sure that, as I say, the journalism community is quite upset with them, and rightfully so.

I would point to these two individuals, as well, in that they are both long-time residents of Ontario—I think that's been well-established—and one was appointed as a member of the Maritimes and another as a representative of western Canada, both being Ontario residents. This is an insult to westerners and Maritimers, in general. Could the Prime Minister not have found one or two individuals in these provinces that actually resided in these provinces, to go to the Senate? No, he couldn't. He was so keen to bring these loyal Conservative Party members into the fold, and for what purpose? Well, we all know what purpose: to send them across Canada on our dime, right? To basically do the lobbying and the fundraising for the Conservative Party. This was—you know, for a Prime Minister that preached Triple-E in opposition, this really is appalling that we would see

such a 180, such an about-face, such a reversal when he came to power.

And, you know, I think that they're doing the right thing now. They're looking at the expenses of all members, and that's long overdue, and maybe some changes to the rules are due. I know that we've looked at our rules in Manitoba and have improved them over the years, and, you know, I think the positive result is that all of us are conducting ourselves properly when it comes to appointments. Well, there was one appointment from Manitoba. His name was Mr. Don Plett, and I'm not suggesting for a moment that he is one of those who has abused his expenses. There's no references in that regard whatsoever, and I'm not suggesting that. However, I look to Mr. Plett. What was his role prior to becoming a senator? He was the founding president of the new Conservative Party after the old Alliance Party and old Progressives got together and formed the new party. He became the first founding president of that party and remained so for a number of years up until the time that he was appointed as the senator for Manitoba. And, you know, this just—this sticks in my craw personally a little bit. Somebody who is so blatantly, so obviously a Conservative Party hack would be taken and put into the Senate, it's just the capstone on the hypocrisy that occurred—Prime Minister has displayed over the years.

* (11:10)

I look to some of the other appointees, Mr. Brazeau, another Conservative appointee, and the point I would like to make with him is he's a relatively young man. He's only in his early 40s. He will—he is eligible to remain in the Senate for the next 30 to 35 years despite all of his discrepancies. So it's truly unfortunate that renewal of this entity or abolition is not in the cards in the immediate future.

Some of the other individuals—I look to Nigel Wright, the one who tried to cover things up for Mr. Duffy, the \$90,000 cheque which he was duly fired for—and I give the Prime Minister some credit for that. But he reminds me of some other past Tory party hacks here in Manitoba, reminds me of that Keystone Kop era with the vote-rigging scandal in 1995. They say truth is stranger than fiction. Well, anybody who's read the book *As Many Liars* to see what a bumbling bunch of incompetents—and this was truly memorable in our history not only as an example of monumental arrogance and stupidity and

corruption, probably the lowest point in Manitoba political history, I made that point before.

But, you know, I'd love to talk a lot more. I see I only have about 15 seconds left.

Our party, of course, has taken the opposite course with the ban on union and corporate donations, and so on and so forth. But others want to speak.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good morning, Mr. Speaker, a pleasure to speak to this resolution brought forward by the government, and glad to see they have an interest in an issue, I think, that Manitobans and Canadians are more generally growing in their interest in terms of the Senate. And, obviously, there have been a number of issues around the Senate that have been not positive, and certainly been negative in recent days and in recent weeks in terms of the issues around expenditures, and those things need to be dealt with and they need to be dealt with appropriately. And we know that there are steps that are being taken involving the RCMP and others to ensure that that is taken care of appropriately.

I also know that the governing party in Ottawa, the federal Conservatives, have a long history of talking about Senate reform, but more than that, also taking action on Senate reform, Mr. Speaker. We know that there is a case right now before the—a reference case that's been brought to, I believe, the Supreme Court of Canada in terms of the ability to change the Senate unilaterally by the House of Commons, and that is another effort, ongoing effort by the federal government to look at changes to the Senate.

More recently, I think, we've heard the Prime Minister indicate that his preference is to change the Senate, but if it's not able to be changed, then, certainly, the elimination of the Senate is something that could be a possibility. And so there's obviously a willingness among some govern—or some parties in Ottawa to change the Senate, to reform the Senate and, if necessary, to eliminate the Senate. Now, that is certainly in stark contrast from what we've heard from other governments in Ottawa, and there's a long, I think, storied history with the Conservative Party and its legacy parties about changing the Senate and the willingness and the openness to do that.

We also hope that in terms of the issues that are happening in the Senate right now, that there'll be a full accountability, because accountability is important where there are things that happened. Whether it is with elected individuals or whether it is with others within the bureaucracy, we do expect accountability. There needs to be accountability, Mr. Speaker. It's something that actually this government could learn from, about having accountability on certain issues. There were discussions yesterday about accountability and lack of accountability from this government.

So it's one thing for the government to bring forward a resolution and talk about changes and want to have accountability, but it's something quite different when it comes to their own actions, Mr. Speaker. I think that their own resolutions could have more power, could have more moral high ground, if you were—if their own actions backed up what it was that they were suggesting. So, when we hear about the lack of accountability that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) demonstrated yesterday, it doesn't bode well when this government, then, in turn, brings forward resolutions and talking about accountability because it doesn't reflect well on what their own values are. It doesn't reflect well on what their own feelings are about accountability.

When we talk about money that is, perhaps, improperly garnered from the public purse, we don't have to go back that far to remember the \$76,000 that the NDP themselves received improperly. So I listened to the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), and he talked and was concerned about funds that were improperly gathered in the Senate, or potentially improperly gathered, and I would agree with him, I would—there we would not be in disagreement. If, in fact, those funds were not appropriately expensed, then they need to be repaid, and there is a repayment happening. But when you look at what the governing party, the NDP, did, when they were found to have taken \$76,000 inappropriately from taxpayers, what we didn't see is we didn't see that same forthcoming attitude that the member for the Interlake just tried to talk about a few minutes ago.

Instead, we had a government that tried to get away with that particular issue. They tried to sweep it under the rug, Mr. Speaker. We had to have an NDP 'wisser'-blower come forward. I remember well the NDP whistle-blower who was a CEO or an official agent on one of the NDP campaigns, and he went out to the back of the Legislature, back in a

summer day and the fountain was going and the media was there, and he explained. He explained how this whole scheme worked and how the government, how the NDP party, got \$76,000 inappropriately. And it blew the lid off of that scandal, and we got to see some of the inner workings of the party and how they, particularly and specifically, tried to get that money inappropriately and then tried to cover it up.

Mr. Speaker, we heard about the Premier (Mr. Selinger) who had a letter—that he demanded a letter from his party from absolution, trying to get something that said that he wasn't responsible. Now, that letter fell into the shredder at some point between when we found out about—or when it happened and when we found out about it. It—the Premier was accidentally walking by, and it fell into a shredder that was left on and it disappeared. But we know that that is how they reacted to the situation. So the member for the Interlake, while he might have good intentions when he stands up and talks about the Senate and the reform of the Senate, and I would agree that the Senate needs to be reformed; I agree that there needs to be changes in the Senate and nobody's going to say otherwise, but he'd have a little bit more moral high ground if it wasn't his own party who tried to take \$76,000 inappropriately from taxpayers. He'd have a little bit more high ground if it wasn't his own party who was refusing to behave with accountability when it comes to the comments from their Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson). He would be on a much higher ground if his own party had the accountability that he would expect, and that we would expect, from the Senate of Canada.

So we do hope that there are going to be changes in terms of the Senate. I do think Canadians want to see changes in terms of what the Senate does, how it operates, how people become senators. I do think that we're going to continue to see the governing party in Canada bring forward those ideas. We look forward with anticipation from hearing from the Supreme Court of Canada regarding what the ability is for the government to make changes to the Senate without having to open up the Constitution to make those decisions, Mr. Speaker. So there's a lot of unique efforts that are happening right now in Ottawa on the changing of the Senate, and to the extent that Manitoba or any province can be influential in making those changes, that's fine, and I think we should have a role in that. But it would be much more influential and much more persuasive, I think, if the governing party itself, who brings

forward the resolution, was able to clean up their own house first. And certainly, acknowledging that they took \$76,000 from taxpayers inappropriately would be a good start. They had to pay it back, of course, but they were always very reluctant to discuss this. The Premier had letters shredded as a result.

* (11:20)

The other thing would be accountability among the things that are said from their members and, most recently, the member for—the Deputy Premier, that would be a good start. That would give more moral high authority to a resolution calling for accountability within Ottawa.

So we are certainly pleased to be—to look at a resolution and say that there are things that can change in the Senate. There are things that should change in the Senate and, I believe, with confidence, that there are things that will change within the Senate. It might not happen as quickly as you or I might like, and these things often don't. But certainly there are a number of initiatives that are happening, whether it's the Supreme Court reference or the audits that'll be happening throughout the Senate on the expenses that will be a catalyst for change. And I just hope that the catalyst for change that is happening in Ottawa in terms of the Senate will also, in some ways, motivate this government here to change, will motivate them to be more accountable, to be more responsible, to try to talk to their own party about not doing the kind of schemes that we've seen with the \$76,000 legal rebate. And, of course, we don't know what else we haven't seen, what else hasn't come to light, but we certainly know that one came to light. And if they would do that, I think that they would have a much greater authority in terms of this kind of a resolution or any kind of a resolution they would bring forward.

So I do think that there is some common ground in this Legislature when it comes to the issue of Senate reform. I think all of us agree that the Senate needs to change, that it was established at a time where the needs were different in Canada, where the political reality was different in Canada, where our country was different. And just as our country evolves and our province changes, so too do the institutions that govern the country and the province also have to change. And so we do have common ground there, I think, in looking at those changes, and I do think that there's common ground with political parties in Ottawa for those changes.

So I certainly look forward to seeing how those things transpire, and I think all of us will want to work co-operatively with the governing party in Ottawa to ensure that the Senate changes will be those that are reflective of what Canadians are looking for and reflective of what our country at this time in its history needs from its governing institutions.

So I look forward to hearing from other speakers. I know it's a topical issue and it's an important issue, and I know there are many others who have things to say.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and it's a great pleasure to voice our opinion or my opinion on—regarding the Senate of Canada.

It's a pleasure listening to the MLA from Steinbach in making his commentary and basically kind of endorsing his consent regarding the potential change of the present system as how the senators are in place. And maybe as the stars line up for the new elected MP, whoever that may be, in the Provencher—and also another member opposite has also indicated that he's taken a keen interest in federal politics. Well, maybe we'll—maybe if the stars line up for both the members opposite, that they'll be in Ottawa and maybe have the opportunity to move forward with their intention of changing the Senate as it is today and move forward in the appropriate democratic position as we all see it.

It's 'objee' pretty evident, Mr. Speaker, what—this has been around for a number of years, and I think there's been a desire, as was once indicated when we had the Manitoba all-party committee went around the province of Manitoba asking about the Senate reform. This was the response to the federal government's request that the provinces consult and ask for input on senators' election. Unfortunately, you know, we'd hadn't had much conversation or feedback on the committee's report. You know, they travelled through various communities in the province of Manitoba which included Steinbach, Carman, St. Laurent, Brandon, Dauphin, Russell, Flin Flon, Norway House, and it just seems like we heard submissions from about 90 Manitobans at these hearings. And when we—when there's an urgency to do such an inquire, I would hope that the federal government would really take this sincerely, because what you have is individuals, the ratepayers, coming out in expressing their view and their

opinions, but yet when it was brought forward to the federal government, it almost seemed like it wasn't their enthusiasm to move forward with any kind of 'sereness' to observe the report that was brought forward.

And, in fact, it's quite interesting that just recently a number of other provincial leaders have also made some opinions very strong of what they think of the Senate. And, you know, we often refer to the province of Saskatchewan, and it is truly somewhat encouraging that the Premier Brad Wall, basically, his commentary was, I just fundamentally do not believe that we will ever meaningfully reform the Senate, meaning that he honestly thinks that there is no chance that it's going to change in any way.

And I would then question why would that be possible. Is the—does the Prime Minister have a different venue, a different attitude towards what the public is asking for in the Senate reform? It's really somewhat disturbing to see that we can have people appointed to the Senate to the wishes of the government in power, and, obviously, that seems to be very complacent and obvious today as we see where the Senate is sitting. As we—we understand the importance of the Senate, but I think we've lost the true, true benefit of what the senators were there.

And, in all honesty, I was home on—this weekend talking to a number of the ratepayers in my constituency, and we happened to talk about the Mike Duffys of the world and Pamela Wallins of the world and the unfortunate circumstances that have surfaced regarding the—I guess, lack of a better word—of the arrogance or the feeling that, you know, they're able to do anything without claiming for it. And a prime example is when we talk about Pamela Wallin, the Conservative member from the Saskatchewan area, which was \$321,000 in questionable travel expenses. Well, Mr. Speaker, I—you know, I think that's a real concern we would have. But not only her we have also Mr. Mike Duffy who—inappropriate expenses of \$90,000 to improper housing. And we also have another individual by the name of Mac Harb, \$231,000 in improper living expenses.

Mr. Speaker, it seems like it's an epidemic among all the senators, and I would hope that the Prime Minister or the federal government would have been accommodating to this, but it just seems like their wishes are to somewhat protect their own species. Also, it's quite interesting to note that a poll released, was done on June the 20th, revealed that

majority of Canadians want the Senate changed or abolished. In fact, statistically, 41 per cent of Canadians prefer it to be abolished; only 6 per cent were in favour of it, leaving as it is. So it's a true indication when we talk about the democratic society and opinions, that the federal government is choosing not to move forward with the wishes of the general public.

Our government, as we are very proud to indicate when we talk about the democratic reform that our government has moved forward with—and I'll give you some prime examples, Mr. Speaker, banning of union and corporate donations. We began by banning union and corporate donations and limiting individual contributions. We've also banned corporations and union donations and limited to individual donors, that have increased—that automatically demands a political party. Unfortunately, the PCs opposed the ban on union and corporate donations and they have refused to take a—committed to keep a ban in place ever since. So what we have is kind of a scenario within the provincial politics, is that members opposite choose to talk out of one side of the mouth and then flip over to the other side.

So, you know, when we talk about our government being—believing in the democratic process, we are true indications of what we've done.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to make some commentary when we talk about election scandals, and I think when we talk about the 1995 election scandal in—when Chief Justice Alfred Monnin made the allegations, it's somewhat disturbing that these kind of situations still take place in society today. And, I suppose, when we talk about the Senate and we talk about need for changes, I'm sure the legal system such as referred to the 1995 election scandal definitely has—hopefully Canada Elections Act will deal with that appropriately, because we don't need a reoccurrence of situations that was indicated in 1995.

*(11:30)

But, Mr. Speaker, obviously, the Senate was a situation that was necessary. I just want to sum up my commentary by saying, you know, obviously, Manitoba heard the message years ago. Manitoba eliminated our Upper House more than a hundred years ago. And I suppose if members opposite would send a letter to the federal department—but, you know, possibly—possibly—we will have two MPs that are, maybe, across the way, if the stars line up and we move forward, that I will paying close attention if

that reality was set in for the two members opposite choosing to run for the MPs' positions federally, that we will hold them accountable, that their wishes—and that they would definitely pursue that career, and I look forward to our continuing conversation. So, Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak.

And I know that there are changes in a democratic society, and today is definitely one of the things that I'm voicing my opinion is when you have senators that have been in existence and allegations as we see today, I think it's a true testament that the Prime Minister, the Conservative government, definitely should be looking at reforming the Senate as it is today for the betterment of all taxpayers, not only in Manitoba, but also in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's been a great 'privilege' to speak on behalf of this.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I want to thank members opposite for bringing forward this resolution for debate in the Manitoba Legislature. We know we have seen it debated in the public eye and we've seen several issues that have come forward—unfortunate issues that have come forward as a result of some expense claim forms and these kinds of things that have transpired federally. And I think those types of issues are unfortunate and I think that there are ways that we can improve on accountability and transparency when it comes to expense claims in—with the Senate. And I know that the federal government is looking at ways now to make some of those changes to ensure that there is more transparency and accountability, and I know that they have gone to the Supreme Court and they've asked for a Supreme Court decision on whether or not some of these changes will be able to take place without constitutional changes, which, of course, we all know will require two-thirds of the provinces with 50 per cent of the population to approve.

And so, of course, I believe that the federal government is taking action on this now and they're looking at ways to reform, and I think that that's what—indeed, I think that's what people across Canada are looking for. They want transparency, more transparency and accountability not with just the Senate, but they want it within our own Legislature, here; they want it within legislatures across this province—or across this country; and they want it within the federal government, as well. They want to know more about what the expenditures are going towards—that their hard-earned tax dollars are

going towards. And I'm a believer at more transparency and accountability when it comes to taxpayers' dollars and how it's being spent, and I believe that, indeed, Canadians across this great country of ours would call on the government for those kinds of changes.

Abolishing the Senate is not something that—well, it's a— you know, it's a nice debate to have but it's not something that can happen overnight and it's not something that—because it will require constitutional changes that we see right now. Now, again, the federal government is asking for an opinion on that by the Supreme Court to see what kind of changes can take place in order to make the Senate a more transparent and accountable body.

And I do want to caution members opposite that, you know, there are some politicians and there are some senators, there are—across our democratic society there—you know, sometimes people make decisions that are wrong. And I think that, you know, it's unfortunate that when those things happen it tends to be blown out of proportion, perhaps, a little bit; that it takes in to consideration all of us and as—and it makes all of us look bad as elected officials across this country. And I think it's unfortunate that that happens. I mean, I do know many senators who I've spoken to who have done some great work on committees federally and to improve Aboriginal rights across this country, to improve our economy, taken to improve health care, education—all sorts of committees where senators have done, I believe, some great work and have offered—have been able to do that background for us, Mr. Speaker.

So I think we need to be careful about generalizing across an entire body just because perhaps there are some areas—there are some people that have made some unfortunate decisions, Mr. Speaker. But I think also, because those unfortunate decisions were made and they were allowed to be made, that's where trans—that's where we need to look at ways to change and make the Senate more accountable.

And I—so I know that the federal government is working towards making those kinds of changes. And I believe that they're doing a good job and will get to the bottom of that. And we'll hear more, over the course of the next while, as to what kind of changes will be able to be made without requiring the constitutional change, which, of course, again, requires two-thirds of the provinces to agree as well as—that are holding 50 per cent of the population.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know that several years ago there was a bill brought forward in this House, Bill 22, I believe it was back in 2006, and that was introduced by the then-premier of the province, Gary Doer, and it was seconded by our current Premier, (Mr. Selinger) who was the minister of Finance at the time.

And that Bill 22 was The Elections Reform Act, and the act established a committee of the Assembly—this Assembly—to make recommendations about how Manitoba senators should be elected. And that was something that was brought forward by the NDP at the time, six, seven years ago, in this Manitoba Legislature. There was an all-party committee that was established as a result of that. And that committee went all across this great province of ours and asked Manitobans what they wanted with respect to the Senate. And at that time, Manitobans spoke overwhelmingly that they were in support, at the time, of an elected Senate.

And I find it, you know, interesting that while some of the issues that have transpired in the media over the last little while, I find it interesting that the NDP suddenly jumps on board, flip-flops on this issue, and suddenly says that they're in favour of abolishing the Senate. And just doing it because they—for political purposes, Mr. Speaker.

And we know that members opposite do all sorts of things for purely political purposes. We know that they love to go across this province and their main focus is on spending money across this province, and ribbon-cutting ceremonies, Mr. Speaker, that that's their focus.

But, you know, when it comes to this issue, and I'm glad we are debating it in the Manitoba Legislature today, because, Mr. Speaker, it's important to remind members opposite of the history of how this all-party committee came together. And I think it's unfortunate that some six or seven years later, the NDP has forgotten about that all-party committee that was put together in this Manitoba Legislature. And I will remind members opposite that that was brought forward by the premier, that it was the seconded by the minister of Finance at the time. And when that—I believe it was the member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) that was the co-chair of that, and I believe she was the person who seconded this resolution that we're debating here today.

But I'll remind her and I'll remind, you know, all members of the House, that there was a committee already set up to do this in Manitoba. And a

committee that went around and consulted with Manitobans, and heard loud and clear from Manitobans, about what they wanted to see with respect to the Senate. And that committee came back and they reported, Mr. Speaker, and they said, loud and clear, I guess, that they—that came back on recommendations about how Manitoba senators should be elected.

And just a few years later, now, because it's in the public eye and now because the NDP, for political purposes, want to jump on the abolition bandwagon here, Mr. Speaker. You know, they've given up and they've forgotten about what has transpired in the past, within their own party, something that was brought forward in this Manitoba Legislature. They've forgotten about that and the history that has taken place there.

* (11:40)

And so I would encourage members opposite, I believe, you know, they would agree with us that some changes need to take place. We agree with that—we agree with that. But to simply abolish the Senate at this stage, I don't believe it can be done. And I think we need to look at—proactively look at ways to make the Senate more transparent and accountable to all Canadian citizens, and I believe all Canadians would like to see that. And, of course, I think members opposite, if they look back to what they had agreed to several years ago in this all-party committee and this task force and what came out of that, I believe that, you know, some changes that could take place—the federal government is looking into this right now and I believe that they are going to find ways to bring more transparency and accountability to the Senate. And so we look forward to the federal government updating us on what kinds of changes can take place constitutionally and where we can go moving forward with this.

But I want to thank, you know, the member opposite for bringing this forward. It is an important debate to have in the Manitoba Legislature. There are many debates that are very important in this Chamber, and I look forward to all of those debates moving forward as well.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): It gives me great pleasure to be speaking on the Senate. I have to say, today I probably am a Wallite in that I think Brad Wall said it right when, you know, whatever we do as far as trying to change the Senate will never

happen so I think we should abolish it. The honourable minister that spoke before me said that the NDP thinks a simple solution is to abolish it.

Well, you know, let's look at the Triple-E Senate. I know I had a chance to talk on this when the committee came around Flin Flon a couple of years ago, and the committee was set up to get ideas on how we could reform the Senate. Every speaker in Flin Flon that spoke on that talked about abolishing it. Why are we wasting our time? How can you fix something that is broken? And, you know, the stuff that's in the paper recently just shows that.

And so when you look at an elected Senate, is that going to make it stronger? Does that mean the four members in Prince Edward Island will match up with the four members in Manitoba? Or does that mean the 10 members in Nova Scotia will match—you know, match up with the six in Saskatchewan or the 22 in Ontario or in—yes, in Ontario—will match up with Nova Scotia's 10? You can't elect them. It's not fair to begin with. It was set up at a time in history when the population was basically centred in the east. So having an elected Senate is not going to make it any more powerful, any more whatever. I mean, if we give the—have an elected Senate and Prince Edward Island still has four senators, what does that say to the rest of the provinces like Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba and BC? I mean, that's ridiculous. So elected Senate, it's not going to work.

Let's talk about an equal Senate. What does that mean, equal? Equal, you know, equal in Ontario versus equal in Québec, or is it equal in the west versus equal in the Maritimes? I don't think we can solve any of that.

Effective—effective Senate, well, how effective is it now? It's not very effective. How effective—if we elected senators and have two elected bodies in the Parliament of Canada there would be division. There would be—you know, nothing could be passed. I mean, the Americans are having that. We don't need an American system. We don't need two elected bodies. We've got one elected body that represents Canadians. The Senate is hand-picked; it doesn't represent anybody.

Ask Mike Duffy. He didn't know where he's from. I guess he lives in Ottawa, but, you know, he's got a cabin in PEI, and, you know, I mean, he goes to fundraisers in Vancouver. He doesn't know who he represents.

So you can't have an elected Senate. You can't be effective. What it would do is make our government not very effective. It'd mean that the two elected bodies would have to answer to Canadians and there would be, obviously, divisive—division in the Legislature.

I think we also have to look at, when we look at the Senate, if we abolish it, what are we missing? Well, we're missing all the stuff in the paper about the senators' spending fees. We'd miss that. We would miss, of course, the senators that go down to Mexico for six months of the year. We definitely would miss that. We would miss having a Senate think they have more power than they actually do.

So I think—and I respect the Prime Minister in stating that he is now looking for ideas on what to do about the Senate. I don't think reforming the Senate is the answer. As I pointed out, it's—it won't be—how you going to get all the provinces to agree? It's going to be hard to abolish it, I agree, but let's do the right thing. Let's get rid of it. Let's have a made-in-Canada government. We don't need to follow the British form of government. We don't need to follow the American form of government. Let's follow a made-in-Canada government. I think that is important.

I think also we have to realize that if we want more representation for Canadians, we obviously have to add more MPs. And as we do that, rep by population or whatever, we'll get a better 'consensus' of what Canadians want. But by having another elected body, then you have a checks and balance and maybe nothing can be done. You know, we don't want to be doing that.

I think it's very, very important that this issue is looked at and not at a partisan way, but looked at what is best for Canada. Let's not try and copy any other types of government. Let's look at what's best for Canada. And I think what's best for Canada is abolish the Senate. I know when you go to the doorsteps of people in your constituency and they see what's been happening in the different papers, they say abolish it. What are you going to reform? You know, what? Their travel expenses? What are you going to reform? It's a dead issue. And the issues are just, you know, keep on getting worse.

And I think by the Prime Minister—and I know in the last election he stated that he wanted to do some changes with the Senate. I hope he really means it and he looks at abolishing it because I can't see the provinces getting together, changing the

representation, looking at elected Senate, looking at an equal Senate, looking at an effective Senate. If it becomes effective, what does it mean to the MPs? Are they going to be effective? So I think that that has opened a whole can of worms. I think we as the provinces should stand up with Brad Wall and all other provinces that want to get rid of the Senate. Let's get rid of it. Let's move on, and I think the money could be used in many other ways for the people of Canada.

And I think we as the NDP party have talked about that many times, about getting on the love train and taking the prosperity of Manitoba to all reaches of Manitoba, taking the hydro prospects of Manitoba and making sure that jobs are there for the north, the south, the east and west so that all Manitobans can benefit in the hydro power that we are going to work with.

And, also, I really like to see that the western provinces are looking together to work together in transportation, whether it's in transportation of oil or by pipeline or transportation by rail. I think we've got to work together in solving that. I think we've got to work in—together in solving the different treaty agreements that we have with the different First Nations in the—in our provinces, because a lot of the different reserves and that are overlapping in the province. So we can work together on that. So there's many things we can do as western Canadians in working together and coming up with solutions that are made in western Canada for everyone.

I—like I say, being a teacher for 31 years, I know we looked at the western protocol and looked at developing curriculum that was for the West so that there would be a seamless move if you're going from Saskatchewan to Manitoba or Manitoba to Alberta. I think that's important. So we have got examples where we have worked together with other provinces, and I—like I say, I think the West should stand up together and stand up with Brad Wall and say, let's get rid of the Senate. Let's not look at electing people that don't have any power. What's the point of it? And then, trying to make them equal? Well, we don't want another elected body in government because then you're going to have checks and balances and then you'll—one party will have to have no power. An effective—the only way it's going to be effective, if we abolish it. Let's get rid of it so no one—we can all go to bed at night and not worry that Mike Duffy is going to, you know, have another \$10,000 come his way. And I think all of us here agree that what's been happening in the Senate

is embarrassing to all politicians and I hope we can put a stop to it. And I think one of the best ways to stop it is abolish it, and everybody stand up, get on that love train from Manitoba and, you know, maybe circle through Yorkton and Winnipeg and Alberta and come back here.

* (11:50)

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I'm going to put a few words on the record with regard to this resolution, and I believe that this government is bringing something forward that they had an opportunity to, under the previous premier, to address. It was—we had an agreement between all parties to look at the Senate issue, and I believe that there were a number of recommendations put forward, and I believe that this government could take a role in ensuring that those things were brought forward and are addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the latest flip-flop by this government with no direction and a spending addiction is actually looking at other issues that are not in our realm, but are in the federal realm, that their senior ministers and their leader, their Premier (Mr. Selinger) can deal with on a federal level. Manitobans want to know what this government is actually doing with regard to its out-of-control spending, how they're going to address the increase in violent crimes in this province. Had a very good conversation with a recent—or recently with the mayor of Thompson who is very concerned with the lack of support this government is showing with regard to the issues that he is facing and his constituents are facing within that community.

So there's a lot of work to be done locally across this province with regard to issues that this government can't seem to get a handle on. They seem to be taking—or making announcements like they have with regard to the need for the PST increase to deal with infrastructure challenges and critical infrastructure needs, and we know those are out there. But what we are seeing this government do is use those dollars to actually do ribbon cuttings and open sites within the province of—that have very little to do with the critical infrastructure needs within our province. We see so many Manitobans looking for leadership from this government and have been continually disappointed with the lack of this government's responsibility to those needs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that in 2008 and 2009 there was a—that committee that was struck to look at the electoral system in Manitoba with regard to Senate reform, and that committee did a lot of travelling and did a lot of work with regard to listening to Manitobans. But, again, there has been little action taken on the part of government with regard to this. You know, other issues that have jumped forward have been the vote tax by this government, the PST increase by this government, death tax discussions by this government, and it seems to be very self-serving and this government has very—done very little with regard to looking at the issue of Senate reform.

Now, we know that there are issues with regard to the current Senate members and we know that they are going to have to be held accountable for those expenditures, and we believe that all Manitobans are very concerned with how the Senate is operating with regard to their responsibility for the taxpayers' dollars. But we believe that this government has a role in ensuring that Manitoba's report on Senate reform is put forward and that they, as the government, are leading that with their federal counterparts to ensure that this happens, Mr. Speaker.

So we—what we're looking for from this government is actually their interest and their focus being on what matters most to Manitobans. And I say that with a smile, because that seems to be a slogan that the government thinks Manitobans really can relate the NDP to, which we know is not a fact, Mr. Speaker. We hear more and more about this government's lack of interest in really paying attention to what matters most to Manitobans. We know that the taxpayers' dollars, as this resolution is supposed to speak to, are not being respected by this NDP government. We see that clearly in how they're determining how to move forward with regard to announcements.

We see so many issues in Manitoba. We see, just even in the Brandon Sun today, talking about the issue of Highway 45 and how this government promised that they would be looking at upgrades and the necessary safety measures being put in place to ensure that personal safety is addressed, and we know what happened last week with regard to a young boy losing his life who was bicycling in Waywayseecappo community. And we know that those people remember the promises made by this government with regard to safety upgrades to that

highway, and we know that those promises have been ignored.

So, when this government says that they respect the taxpayers' dollar and that they believe that they have a right to condemn others, Mr. Speaker, I think they have to look in their own backyard and see that Manitobans are listening very carefully to what they're doing with their tax dollars. And I believe that the PST increase, which has been expanded over and over and over again for the last several years, is taking more and more dollars out of the pockets of Manitoba families.

Manitoba families are very concerned. They want to see opportunities for their children. They want to see their children be able to contribute and participate in sports, Mr. Speaker. I know that—and I'm a firm believer that when you keep children active and busy that that keeps them active and busy and tired by the end of the day. And I know that my children have benefited from being involved in school sports as well as extracurricular sports. And they will continue to do that for the rest of their lives, continue to be involved in the leadership of sports programs and academic programs as well.

So I'm a firm believer through our household and in our community, the people that we represent and the people that we're friends with within the communities that we visit and we belong to know the significance and the importance of involvement and the importance of taxpayers' dollars being spent where they're intended to be spent and to make life better for all Manitobans.

So, you know, I appreciate the resolution being put forward, but I think this government has an obligation, Mr. Speaker, to actually live up to their own measures, to actually work towards ensuring that the dollars that they get from taxpayers is actually going to help Manitobans. So, you know, I believe that this resolution put forward by the member opposite is topical, and there are people that are very concerned about this, as am I and others in Manitoba, but we also know that this government has a role to play to ensure that their dollars that they are responsible for that have come from Manitoba taxpayers are being spent in the best possible way. And we know there are needs. You know, the autism spectrum disorder, you know, community—there's so many families on a wait-list. There's so many individuals across the province who are looking for some leadership from this NDP government.

Hospitals, Mr. Speaker—we know that there are hospitals who have no doctors. We're seeing nurses stretched to the limits. We are seeing a government that is just playing rhetoric on the record without actually addressing those needs. So I think this government has a lot to do to—

*(12:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) will have one minute remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, August 27, 2013

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