

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

Vol. LXVIII No. 23A - 10 a.m., Thursday, March 3, 2016

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
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<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 3, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. In discussions with the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), I think we are asking you to move to Bill 202, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes), sponsored by the honourable member for St. Norbert, for the first half-hour, so until 10:30, and then from 10:30 to 11, Bill 205, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act, sponsored by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

Mr. Speaker: So is there agreement of the House, under private members' business, to start with Bill 202 and then after 10:30 we'll—or at 10:30 we'll then switch to Bill 205? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 202—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes)

Mr. Speaker: All right, we'll start first under private members' business by calling Bill 202, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes).

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I move, seconded by the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), that Bill 202, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes), now be read for a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gaudreau: It's a great pleasure to stand today and introduce this bill for a second reading.

I want to recognize some of the guests in the gallery that are here today. We have members from the Labour Council, the president of the firefighters union and some of the other firefighters and the president of the Winnipeg Transit.

And it's a real pleasure to introduce a bill like this that is going to have—help everyday Manitobans with a little bit of breathing room when they happen to be sick from work. They don't have to go sit in a doctor's office and wait to get a sick note. It also ends up saving the system a lot of money in the end; it could be in the millions, depending on how many sick notes are written, because as doctors write the sick note they bill the medical system for the time that they see the patient. And then they also, a lot of times, bill the patient for the note itself, and I've heard upwards of \$100 for some of the sick notes being written that the patients are billed. And then in some cases it'll actually save the companies and the organizations, because there's agreements where they actually pay for the sick note. So we're going to see a lot of savings in the system.

And the other thing that Bill 202 does is it frees up doctors' valuable time. Doctors should be treating sick people and patients, and it frees up their time to do so. Rather than writing a note for somebody who's sick, and sometimes in—they actually write notes, you know, a week or two later, because sometimes you can't get in to your doctor and they have to go on your word. And you say, you know, I was sick last week, and they ask you for the symptoms, and then they'll say, well, based on the symptoms you were experiencing, I'm writing you a sick note, and then they give it to the employer. It's not really a good use of doctors' time. It really is something that is more of a management practice in some cases, and it doesn't need to be so. We can free up doctors' valuable time. We can allow people to stay home where they're sick.

In fact, yesterday in The Globe and Mail, there was a great article from the Ontario Medical Association and the doctors there are agreeing that this bill, that this kind of legislation, is needed and that doctors should be treating sick people and injured people and not writing sick notes for people,

because sometimes, as I've experienced in the last two weeks, this cold keeps dragging on, you just don't feel good. And it's not something that I should go to a doctor for because they can't treat you. It's a viral illness that they cannot treat with medication. So going to a doctor is a waste of the system's valuable time. And people who actually are sick and ill then end up having to wait to see that same doctor because I'm taking up resources that I really shouldn't be taking up because I don't need to provide a sick note.

So I'm going to end with saying that it's a savings to the system. It helps people when they're sick stay home and heal and rest and actually recover faster. And they don't spread germs at the doctors' offices to the other people who might be there for other reasons. And in the end it's a good bill for the whole system all around. And I'm happy to take questions from the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker: Now, question period for this bill.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member what 30-third-party consultations were done, with whom and when?

Mr. Gaudreau: I was in contact with the doctors association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the nurses and also chiropractic association, and then also various labour groups to talk about this bill. They've been, over the last few months, discussing what the bill would look like and what would happen. So I have a lot of consultation with that.

In fact, actually, if the bill goes to committee stage, I'd like to make an amendment to it to add midwives, because the midwives contacted me and they said that they're health-care providers as well and they would like to be somebody included in the system so that way they can issue the note rather than another—than that person having to go see another practitioner.

So that's something I will be looking to do; in the event that it passes from the opposition, I will be adding an amendment to include midwives, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Smook: Could the member provide us with any names and what some of the results were from the different groups that he did meet with?

Mr. Gaudreau: Yes, actually, I could provide the member later with some of the organizations and the emails they've—that they were—that they've given back and forth to me. And I have to think back to all

the people that I've spoken to, many of them join us here in the gallery today about this bill, and many of them are not here today. But I will endeavour to give the member that information.

Mr. Smook: Did the member meet with MEC?

Mr. Gaudreau: Which—can I get a clarification on which MEC, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Smook: The Manitoba Employers Council.

* (10:10)

Mr. Gaudreau: No, I didn't meet with the Manitoba Employers Council; I met with dozens and dozens of other groups and people who were very supportive of this bill.

Mr. Smook: So I take it that the member did not meet with any employer groups, which is kind of important in this bill.

Does the member have an average cost of what a sick note is today, or who has he met with and what are the numbers he's found?

Mr. Gaudreau: Just a point of clarification that, actually, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) was—informed me that he actually met with the Royal Bank as an employer and they were actually interested in this bill as a cost-saving measure. So there's one there, Mr. Speaker, that—of the employers that we've met with.

In—some of the costs for the notes that the member's asking, it depends on the doctor. Some of them are as low as \$20 and some of them, I've heard, as high as over \$100 for the note depending on how long the forms are and how much time the doctor has to spend filling them out.

So, in the case of some labour organizations, a couple hundred notes a year are being requested, and at \$100 a note, because they have a very long form that needs to be filled out, it costs the system quite a bit of money.

Mr. Smook: Is there a need for seven undocumented sick days in Manitoba, and what evidence does the member have is that the number seven is a number that is necessary for the health and well-being of Manitobans?

Mr. Gaudreau: The Canadian national average is 9.3 sick days in a year. So when I looked at that, I—if the member opposite would like an amendment to make it 9.3 sick days a year, I'm very open to an amendment of adding the actual average of what

Canadians are sick in the year. I looked at that number, and then I decided that, with consultation with some of the groups, that seven days seemed to be a fitting amount on the average, from what I've been hearing here in Manitoba. But 9.3 is the average for every Canadian that takes a sick day—or sick days in a year.

Mr. Smook: In reasons for asking for a sick note, one of them is there is a suspicious pattern to the employee's absence. Who determines if there is a suspicious pattern, and if there's a dispute between the employee and the employer, who decides this?

Mr. Gaudreau: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's part of what this bill is about, is the medical system shouldn't be used as an HR system. The medical system is to treat sick and ill people. I don't think Tommy Douglas, when he brought in health care, envisioned it being used as a management tool.

There is a mechanism in my bill that says if there's a pattern of illness that the employer can then ask for a doctor's note. I would argue that a pattern is, you know, three, four, maybe five of the same days off. You know, if you're taking every Friday every time you're sick, that might be considered a pattern. And then the dispute mechanism for that employee would be whether or not they think that there is a pattern and that would be how it's handled.

Mr. Smook: In the case where a person has time off because of sickness, and, after their seven days, who will pay for getting the sick note? Like, if the employee needs to take a day off in order to get a sick note, who will be responsible for the wages for that employee?

Mr. Gaudreau: Yes, this bill isn't about paying wages for sick time. If a corporation or company or an organization already has a sick-leave plan in place, that's great. The employee would get their days paid as prescribed underneath their agreements or the agreement of the company.

This bill is about saving the medical system money and keeping sick people at home. It's a common-sense bill that looks at that kind of issue. It doesn't address pay for people while they're on or off work.

Mr. Smook: One of the questions that I had here, in the last paragraph of the bill it states that conflict with other provisions of this code. Could the member explain this a little better please?

Mr. Gaudreau: Yes, in case some of the leave provisions in the codes provide for, let's say, three days off without a sick note, this would supersede that; this would be seven days. So we're just covering our bases that if there's, somewhere in some of the stacks of paper in our libraries with the code that it changes, that this would be seven days and that would take over top of that code.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, can the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) tell us how much of this bill relates to the fact that people don't have family doctors and can't get family doctors in Manitoba? Has he done some research and can he tell us how many Manitobans actually don't have access to a family doctor and that would—might be one of the reasons for the bill?

Mr. Gaudreau: Well, Mr. Speaker, this bill actually goes a long way to addressing people getting family doctors because it frees up doctors' time. And the truth is that on our side of the House, we've actually gained 732 doctors in Manitoba since being in government.

The only time that we lost doctors in the House was when that side of the House was in government, when 117 doctors fled the province and we lost doctors. Their best year in government was zero doctors gained. Our worst year in government, I think, is plus eight, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: So there are still many people within my own community—well, and maybe the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), maybe every one of his constituents has a doctor and it doesn't matter to him.

I certainly know that there are many within my own community that don't have doctors. I can provide him the emails, of course, and I would just wonder if he could provide us, it would be helpful for information. I know that his government promised that every person would have a family doctor by the end of last year, so maybe he can confirm that.

Is that the case? Does every Manitoban have access to a family doctor?

Mr. Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, we've added 732 more doctors and we're not done yet. We're still adding more doctors; we're still working on it. The point would be that half a billion dollars' worth of cuts is what they're suggesting isn't going to bring more doctors to this province.

And we have a system now where you can go online and you can find doctors. It's actually working very well. I know my wife, for example, went online and found a family doctor and it took her two days to find that family doctor on the new system, which is a very quick system.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, we've—we're investing in doctors, we're investing in health care. You look at every single hospital across this province has new renovations, new ERs, helicopter pads. That is how you build a health-care system. You cannot build it on cuts.

Mr. Goertzen: Is perhaps one of the reasons why this bill has come forward, and I'll use my area as an example, many people can't actually get into my hospital because the government built a hospital where sick people aren't able to get into, so it would be difficult for them to actually get a doctor's note, because they can't get into the hospital.

Is that one of the reasons this bill has come forward because some people can't actually get into hospitals that the government has built?

Mr. Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) might want to use the—listen to what he's saying. We build hospitals on this side of the House. He's talking about hospitals. We're building them. Our side builds. Their side cancelled all health-care spending and all capital expenditures. That's what they did when they were in government: they cancelled all health care and capital expenditures.

My bill is a common-sense bill that saves the health-care system money, and it lets people stay home and recover and it saves the people money because they don't have to provide a doctor's note, Mr. Speaker. When a worker has to go sit at a doctor's office and spend his time to get a doctor's note and pay that doctor's note, and most people don't have sick leave provisions where they don't get paid for that day anyways, now they're out of pocket to pay for a doctor's note. My bill looks after the average Manitoban and looks after everybody in this province.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions on this matter has expired. Is there any debate on this matter?

Mr. Smook: Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a few words on record regarding Bill 202, the employment standards code amendment act, brought forward by the member from St. Norbert.

Mr. Speaker, bills that are brought forward to the Legislature need to make sure that they have the best interests of everyone involved, in this case both employees and employers. Bills that are brought forward should not put an unnecessary burden on any of the parties by the way of red tape or costs.

Consultation is a very important part of bringing bills forward to make sure that everyone has been consulted, and I can see in some of the answers from our member from St. Norbert that one of the most important groups, the actual employers, were not consulted, and to me it's very important that all these groups are consulted and listened to. And that's why, in a lot of cases, bills like this usually come forward through the Department of Labour. They come forward; they're vetted through Labour Management Review Committee. The proper work is done to make sure that the bill is done properly.

* (10:20)

And I kind of fail to see the need for this bill the way it is written. It doesn't have all the research that's necessary to make this bill a proper bill. The way this bill is written it will create more red tape in a system that has already too much red tape. We should be looking at ways of reducing red tape, not bringing more red tape.

Will the employer need to keep a record of every single employee so that they can mark down every time they take a sick day? Will that employee have to, then, sign for that sick day when they take a sick day, because to make sure there's proper documentation so when, if necessary, the person needs to get that note that everything is properly documented?

To me this sounds like just adding more red tape to the system, Mr. Speaker, and if there's a discrepancy between this employer and the employee, who will decide? Typically, it's—they—you have to go to a labour board or something like, because there will definitely be discrepancies in some cases. So who will be that person to decide? That—if there's a board that's necessary will that, again, take time off of peoples', you know, important days of work and 'sthat' to resolve these issues?

The member talks about taking up doctors' valuable time and placing unnecessary financial burden on the health-care system. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is this NDP government that is placing an unnecessary financial burden on this health-care system. Manitobans have had 16 years of broken

promises, a revolving door of Health ministers, and a system that has gone from hallway medicine, to highway medicine, to taxicab medicine—and all this time not providing a better health-care system for Manitobans.

We have some of the longest wait times in Canada for ERs. We have close to 30 ERs in this province that are closed. This government has spent a lot of money on health-care, and it has no problem spending money, but it has a problem achieving results. We need better results for whatever this government does.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that this bill, there's several other members who would like to speak to it, so I will let somebody else put some words on the record.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Goertzen: I thank my friend, my colleague from La Verendrye for his words. I think he made a good point when he talked about the lack of consultation in a bill.

And we know that it's important that Manitobans be consulted. We'll have a bill that will be debated just in a few minutes, the elder abuse bill, which I know the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) has had many consultations. It's been brought forward to this House a few times and never been passed by the government. I'm sure that myself and the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) could have some discussions and, hopefully, would be able to move that bill on to committee. I don't know if that would be the will of the government; they have not passed the particular bill, though, we'll be debating at 10:30 for quite some time and I think that that's been a discredit to seniors. But I hope that they'll want to consider that, and I'd be more than open to sitting down and talking with the Government House Leader because I know that bill has had full consultation.

And this particular bill, we would hope that the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) would reach out, again, to others who are impacted by the legislation, to speak with them and to ensure that they, perhaps, can even bring forward a better bill, because we think that when you meet with people and you speak with people and you have consultations that, ultimately, that is something that's important. There are different scenarios, you know, that one might want to discuss. We, you know, as a hypothetical example, one could imagine an

employee who might be together with his colleagues and his boss and, perhaps, there would be a dispute in that meeting, and the employee might have a blowout with his boss—might even go so far as to say that everyone hates his boss. That would not be an—well, that's an unlikely scenario, but it's been known to happen. The employee might storm out of the meeting—might storm out of the meeting at, let's say, 12:30 and then not come to work at, let's say, 1:30. That is, certainly, a possibility.

Now, under this legislation that employee wouldn't have to bring forward a sick note—that person wouldn't have to bring forward a sick note. They might have to report to somebody else, but they wouldn't actually have to bring forward a sick note or indicate whether they were sick or not.

Now, maybe that person was sick, maybe he wasn't, but it would certainly be suspicious that if at 12:30 you had an employee who was well enough to be in a meeting with other employees, who was well enough to be in a meeting to have a blowout with their boss, to yell at them and to say that nobody liked them in the province of Manitoba. The meeting might even be so significant that you'd have to have security come to the meeting and be by the door; it might have even been that significant that that had happened. Now, it's all hypothetical, of course, Mr. Speaker.

But, if the individual was well enough—was well enough—to be able to scream and yell at a meeting and interrupt another colleague who was giving, potentially, a report at that time, maybe you—one would wonder, are they truly sick? Are they really sick? Were they not well enough to go to work only an hour later? Under this legislation brought forward by this member, it would indicate that you wouldn't have to have that note; you would trust the individual.

Now maybe the—I don't know why the member seems so concerned about the hypothetical situation. I bring forward a hypothetical situation to the House and the members opposite are livid. They can't imagine that this ever would've happened. They can't ever imagine, Mr. Speaker, that there would be a situation where an employee would be together with their colleagues, together with their boss, and an employee would get up and scream at his colleagues and scream at his boss that everybody hates his boss, storm out of that meeting and then not come to work an hour later at 1:30.

Mr. Speaker, I know the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) can't imagine such a scenario, and I'm sure that, knowing him, he would be trustworthy enough to then bring forward that note. I believe that he would. I believe that he would actually bring forward the note. But maybe there are others who are less trustworthy and that you'd want to ensure that that situation was covered off, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I would love to be able to sit down and talk with some of the members opposite who—and maybe I will—who maybe were in that same sort of hypothetical situation or maybe would want to put themselves in that hypothetical situation and may want to tell me whether or not an individual were then truly sick if they did that sort of thing in a meeting. Maybe I'd have those meetings—maybe I'll have those meetings yet, Mr. Speaker. And it goes to the issue of ensuring that legislation is—had been properly vetted, properly discussed, and sometimes it's not even just the message that is so important; it's sometimes just the messenger. Maybe who brings something forward is important as well.

It's difficult, of course, to imagine such a hypothetical situation ever happening in a place like the Legislature. It's difficult to imagine it happening in a place like a caucus, Mr. Speaker, but then maybe it isn't. And so, when we look at the different things that could happen, we want to ensure that there's consultation—consultation with employers, consultation with those who might be impacted—and then we can go forward and talk about how legislation can be made better.

But I would ask the member for St. Norbert, who I know would never be involved in a situation where he would not come to work after having been through something like that, who would not show up to work after having had a blowout in a meeting. I know the member for St. Norbert wouldn't be that kind of an individual, but there are others, Mr. Speaker, who we might want to have that discussion with. And maybe I'd like to have the discussion with the member for St. Norbert about that exact thing about how honourable members should be acting honourably and to not go and say that others, perhaps, should be considered—*[interjection]*

Okay, so me and the member for St. Norbert, he's offered for me to sit down with him in the loge, and I'm happy to sit down with him in the loge. I'm happy to have discussions with the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) and to talk about whether or not we can take private members' bills

and how we're going to deal with them in the next few days; I'm happy to have those discussions.

I hope that the member for St. Norbert will come forward and talk to me about that particular hypothetical situation. I'm more than willing to discuss it. I hope he doesn't get angry and doesn't storm off, because I'd like to have that discussion with him on how we can discuss how this—

* (10:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for—I should ask, was the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) concluded his remarks?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: No. No. No. No. We've reached the agreed upon time of 10:30, and I just want to ensure for the record that the honourable member for Steinbach has concluded his remarks.

Mr. Goertzen: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Okay. He has—the honourable member for Steinbach will have two minutes remaining when this matter is again before the House.

Bill 205—The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act

Mr. Speaker: The time being 10:30 a.m., as previously agreed, we'll now proceed to call Bill 205, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I move, seconded by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), that Bill 205, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Graydon: It gives me great pleasure to stand in this House and put a few words on the record supporting this. This is not the first time that this bill has been brought forward to this House.

There's been a lot of research done in this particular bill. There's been a lot of people came and made representation, and I think the bill is very comprehensive and covers the needs of seniors in our province. These seniors deserve the right to age with

dignity and age in place if at all possible, and get the help that they need to enjoy the twilight years of their lives. These are individuals that were pioneers, that built this province and we need to show some respect.

We have too many seniors that can't afford to buy food and do not have adequate housing or access to adequate housing. We have too many seniors 'experiencing' elder abuse and they're not being presented with all the options they need to make informed decisions about their care, their finances and their benefits.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, as a senior who is in a facility somewhere and does receive some of this abuse, has a fear that they will be turfed, that they will be kicked out of these buildings. They don't know where to turn. They don't have someone there. Not all of them have relatives close by and, in fact, in rural Manitoba a lot of seniors are in places that are 30, 40 and up to 100 miles from their nearest relative. And in the city there are people also that don't have relatives and close friends that can help them over these types of humps, and so this bill addresses that. We've had many presentations by different groups that have suggested that this is what is required in the bill and we've incorporated that.

There's the other issues, too, that there's inadequate housing, and what we have found in some of the houses that—this is Manitoba Housing. And I know that they really should have the best interest of each one of their tenants in mind when they have these houses, but at the same time we have reports where there are people that are not seniors that are housed there. We have reports of violent altercations that are—go on in these particular places.

And then, of course, we have the most horrible of horrible; we have bed bugs and mould, and this is in homes that are being looked after by Manitoba government. This is shameful. These—this is where our seniors are being housed. These are the pioneers that have built this province; they built this building. They gave us the opportunity to do the things that we do, and that's how we treat them: without any dignity at all.

Seniors are looking to remain in their communities and in places where their families are and where they have built their lives for themselves. But at the same time, if they can't, they need to have some protection and this bill, I think, has provided an avenue for that protection, and I look forward to this House paying very close attention to what is in the

bill. Please, read the bill and I'd like to see it passed to committee today.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Now, open for questions.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): I'd like to ask the member who he has consulted with. This is obviously a bill that he has many nuances to, and I'm very curious who the parties were that he consulted with, were they provincial-wide, and around when did he do the consultations.

Mr. Graydon: I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker, and we've consulted province-wide, yes, we did. We've consulted in rural communities. We even consulted in communities like Brandon, Altona, Winkler, Steinbach. And also, as of latest today, we've had another meeting with the Alzheimer Society.

We've contacted and been contacted—not that we just went out and sourced a lot; we've been contacted by a number of different groups and organizations that brought forward their concerns.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this bill forward, although I have to say that it seems to require a fair amount of work. The bill actually involves several departments: Justice, Family Services, Housing and Community Development, on top of Healthy Living and Seniors.

Has the member considered the broad implications of this bill, and can he tell us how it's going to be seamlessly implemented without causing a lot of bureaucracy and red tape?

Mr. Graydon: Well, I thank the member for the question, and, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that it does cover a lot of different departments. There's no question about that. But, in each one of those departments, there is something missing, and it's brought forward in this bill.

And it doesn't mean that you have to consult with every department, but at the same time, if it does refer or does belong in that department, we can do that. We can go there. It gives you the opportunity then to consult with those departments to see if there has been any other reports of abuse or violation of a senior's rights.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that answer, although could he elaborate a little bit

on this notion that you maybe will consult or maybe you won't consult because we're a little uncertain on this side of the House just where he's going here. He seemed to suggest that there should be broad consultation with several departments in the government of Manitoba, and he seemed to suggest that maybe that could happen or maybe it won't happen. Maybe he could provide a little clarity to the rest of us as we try to understand exactly how he intends to implement this particular bill.

Mr. Graydon: Well, I thank the member for that question as well, Mr. Speaker, and it's clear if he had read the bill, he would understand exactly how that process would go forward.

The bill is to protect the rights of the seniors, of the people that are abused, also those that are doing the abuse, but at the same time a person could be accused of abuse which isn't true. So then you have to go and check that. You can check that if you feel that there's reason for that, if the people in this organization or this particular—the group that this particular bill will create, they have the right then to go and go further with it.

But it's—the bill is designed for the protection of the individuals, the seniors, and also those that are working with them that they won't be charged—like, we know that you brought in a whistleblower act, and we know what happens to those whistleblowers. As soon as that happens, they're unemployed. We want to make sure that they have some protection here as well.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The government has been working very closely with the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat around an elder abuse strategy with many front-line staff and seniors themselves, and there is a full implementation. And I'm curious about what information the member opposite has on the current elder abuse strategy in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Graydon: I thank the member for that question, and it's clear that there wouldn't have been as many people coming forward if that was working. What we have found from different organizations is that the seniors are afraid to report any abuse because they have no place to turn. They don't know where to turn.

So I would suggest that what is in place today is not working adequately. This here should rectify that.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd ask the member if he's familiar with the Safe Suite Program, with the 24-hour elder

abuse line that is available to everyone in the province of Manitoba.

* (10:40)

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the 24-hour abuse line, and I also know that many seniors don't have a telephone. They don't have access to a telephone, and they're afraid to say anything to the person—the caregiver that's working with them—because they're afraid that they will be turfed from the place that they're at.

It's fear and that seniors should not have to live in fear of being displaced from where they are if they're abused or—yes, if they're being abused. They just cannot live in fear. They should not have to live in fear. They should be able to age with dignity, and I would urge these members on this other side of the House to take that into consideration when they're making their statements.

Mr. Allum: I thank the member for providing that explanation, although it's hard to understand.

We have a 24-hour hotline now that they can be called—that can be called in the event of abuse. So maybe the member might explain to us how it is that his bill will encourage people to pick up the phone, maybe phones that they don't actually have, apparently, but how will this bill encourage people who are feeling threatened, feeling vulnerable. How will they be—how will this bill help them to feel confident that they should report it, because it's not clear to me in the bill how this is any different—what he's suggesting—what's already exists here in Manitoba?

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, he brings up a good point, because they don't have a phone or access to a phone and they have the fear that they could be turfed from whatever place they're at. At the same time, their caregiver is afraid to say anything about another caregiver. We have heard horror stories about how someone will spout off and then storm out of a place but could still cause hard feelings and/or could cause themselves to be dismissed if they report this to their superiors.

Now, there's protection there for those caregivers, as well, if they see abuse, or if they feel there's abuse. And it doesn't just have to be abuse by other caregivers in the facility, Mr. Speaker. It can also be abuse by a family member. It can be abuse by a friend of that individual. This bill not only gives the caregiver the right, but also demands that they report this. That's terribly important. And that is not

being done today, and they do not have any protection today. This here bill will rectify that situation.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I guess the question that I would have for the member on this bill, in light of the comments that he has made in response to the last two questions, is if he has any familiarity with the Protection for Persons in Care Office, which actually addresses all of those situations and, in fact, throughout facilities and throughout the province, there is the ability for anyone, not just the individual who feels that there is a situation of abuse or mistreatment, but, in fact, any family member, any employee—and they are, again, provided a safe environment. There are, in fact, protocols in place that create exactly that safe environment. And it is open to anyone in the province who believes there is any misgivings, any mistreatment of anyone, again, PCHs and other places.

So, again, I'm just wondering if the member is familiar with that because, not only does this office investigate, but it also works with facilities to ensure that, if there is an incident, that disciplinary actions and even policy changes, if necessary, are made. So I'm just curious how, again, with these systems already in place, how this member believes that this legislation could actually add anything to an already fulsome process.

Mr. Graydon: Well, obviously, by the amount of people that came forward with suggestions, who came forward and said there's a problem, they came forward and said that there's a number—number—of abuses that are not being reported because of fear. And, if the member opposite and the minister responsible for Health is so sure that they're all working, why would we approach, then—why were we approached to try and rectify the situation? And it came not to us from seniors; it came from the care workers; it came from family members and many family members, Mr. Speaker.

And we'll go into the home-care part of it, if you would like. Many, many of the family members have said, and the home-care workers have said, our time has been cut so terribly short, Mr. Speaker, that we can't do a proper bath, that we can't bath them every other day like they're supposed to get. We don't know if they've gone to the toilet or not. That's abuse. That's abuse under that system.

Here, this can be reported and can be dealt with. There is a change coming, and it will be for the better.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions on this matter have elapsed.

Any further debate on this matter?

Mr. Allum: I thank the member for tabling this bill. I know that he feels strongly about the subject matter. Like all members in this House, of course, we care very much for the safety and security of seniors in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, you know that my own dad died several months ago now, was living—had very severe Alzheimer's and lived in a very, very caring place that tried to address his many and multiple needs. And it was pretty clear to me, upon visiting him when I did, that the safety and security of the residents there was a primary consideration for the home. And I think that that's probably true all across the system, all across the provinces and all across the country in respect to making sure that our loved ones, in their senior years, who do feel vulnerable, who do feel open to things that none of us would like to encounter, we all want them to be safe and secure and to feel comfortable after having done so much to influence not only our family lives but our neighbourhood community lives.

So I thank the member for putting this bill up for debate today. But I have to say that it's hard for us to understand how the opposition continues most days to put out initiatives that will require significant resources and significant investments to implement it, and yet at the same time, get up every day and suggest that they're going to cut the budget by at least a half a billion dollars, likely more, once they get at it. And so at the heart of bills like these and so many others—it used to be, when some of us first were arrived here, members would get up and demand more spending here, more spending there, more spending here, and then they would sit down and expect us to—we'd provide them answers about how we actually are investing in new roads, in ensuring that our health-care system works very, very well, ensuring that there's the supports needed in Family Services, make sure that we're investing in classrooms, make sure that we're investing in children and youth opportunities. My friend from Burrows, of course, has put a very, very important prevention strategy on the table for us to consider.

And so we have responded when it comes to investing in the well-being of Manitobans. And yet at the heart of the opposition is this central contradiction which demands more investment and more spending, and yet at the same time gets up every day and says, well, actually, we're going to cut a half a billion dollars more from the budget and consequently remove, destroy, the very services that Manitobans depend on.

And so it's hard for us to understand the kind of the multiple voices that come from the opposition. There's no consistency in it. There's no 'herency' in their overall plan. And so when you see that overall plan, which calls for reckless cuts to the services that Manitobans rely on, it's hard for us to understand where a bill like this, with good intent though it may be, where it fits. The truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that were they ever to actually get their hands on the wheels of government, there would be significant across-the-board cuts to the many, many services, including for seniors, including for our elders, that would actually undermine the very safety and security that the member's looking to promote today.

* (10:50)

And so it's—and this is something that over the course of the next five or six weeks—and we're already doing it on this side of the House because I know every member on this side of the House is getting out, knocking on doors, talking to our residents, talking to people. And, when we explain to them, as we often do, that what our plan is, our comprehensive plan for ensuring steady growth in this province, making sure that there's a job available for every Manitoban, making sure that there's the education and training there that they would require in order to get that good job.

We explain our plan, and then we are same—on that same doorstep and we have to articulate what the opposition's plan is. And they say, well, that doesn't make sense. There's no consistency there. You mean, they get up each day and they ask for investments and say they're going to do this, but actually they're going to cut the budget by more than half a billion dollars? What kind of black magic is that, they'll say to us. What kind of flim-flam is this—flim-flammery—that is coming from the opposition, who suggest that they can be one thing and not another and then this thing but not that.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that Manitobans are recognizing the doublespeak coming

from the opposition when it comes to their non-plan for Manitoba because it's a one point plan, and that's to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget, destroy the very services that Manitobans depend on, and will send this province backward in a way that we haven't experienced since, oh, when they were last in government. And faced with a very difficult financial circumstance in the 1990s, what was the choice that they made? They made choices to cut, hack and slash. And they say, well, that was then, this is now, except that the Leader of the Opposition, the member of Fort Whyte, was there then, and here he is again. So we can only assume that what happened in the past will happen again in the present and going forward in the future.

And it's our obligation as MLAs and candidates in this election to go to the doorsteps of Manitobans and remind them what kind of government they would actually have if—if—in the frightening scenario that I'm articulating, if—[interjection] Yes, very much a Halloween scenario if, in fact, the opposition was ever to get their hands on the wheels of government, because Manitobans don't believe them. Manitobans recognize that they need investments in public services to have strong public services because that's the way that their families will not only thrive, but that's how their families will succeed.

And so, Mr. Speaker, while there's some good intent here for the member opposite to put this bill forward even though it ignores the many, many services already in place for our seniors in this province, it's as though he's taken a bill and just, I'm going to ignore everything that's currently going on. So, even though he has good intent, and even though it ignores what's currently going on and what we're continuing to do to ensure the safety and security of seniors all across Manitoba, at the heart of this bill is this central contradiction which says they're going to invest and—but we know. We certainly know from the member of Morden-Winkler who gets up every single day and complains about spending and investment because he doesn't seem to really care about the people of Manitoba. So it seems it's the central contradiction at the heart of this bill is one which says, we're going to invest in this, but, actually, we're going to cut 'phroom' everything else.

And so we're not going to stand idly by and let that happen. We're not going to—we're going to remind Manitobans at the doorsteps—and we're already doing it, every single one of us—out knocking on doors, talking to people, reminding them of the steady progress this government has made in

ensuring a broad range of services to Manitobans while also being cognizant of social justice, equity, fairness and environmental protection. At the same time that we're doing that, we're also going to remind them that the opposition is, in fact, the biggest threat that those—to those services that they rely on. And, at the same time, we're going to remind them that the Liberal Party has actually gone 'voomph' even further down the right wing of the spectrum by giving tax breaks to big banks and corporations.

With all of that information, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans will surely decide on April 19th, to continue to support the New Democratic Party, continue to support this government because on this side of the House, every Manitoban matters.

Thank you so much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to just put a few words on the record on this important measure, which was designed to help seniors and to improve the care of seniors in our province.

I want to say, first of all, that the treatment of seniors—the help for seniors is very important, that it is important because our seniors have contributed so much over so many years to our province. They do not need to be left alone and forgotten and poorly treated as they get age. Their contributions need to be recognized. They need to be treated with dignity, with respect, with love and with caring. And it is vital that we do this to the extent that we can.

I appreciate the statement in the bill which deals with the importance of aging in place because, as seniors get older, it is important for them to have familiar things around them, familiar people, familiar structures, familiar places and that this is an important aspect. It is important that we do what we can to improve the help, the care for and the treatment of seniors, and this bill provides the direction in order to do that.

This bill provides some measures to protect those who would come forward to report concerns about seniors. One would hope that those reports would be welcomed, and measures would be taken to correct them and improve the care.

But, sadly, that's not always the case and so we do need to make sure there are protection from those who would report, whether it is the senior themselves or others, because that is important.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we're able to get this measure to committee. I'm sure we will have plenty of people ready to come forward and talk about their experiences. And, if there are suggestions for improvement, we can consider those. With those remarks, thank you, merci.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): The member for—sorry, the Liberal member—actually, I have to—River Heights, there we go. I actually have to agree with him on something, that he says that seniors should be treated with dignity and respect and love and caring. That's why our side of the House has fought for a better pension plan for all seniors, and we support raising the CPP and creating a better pension plan.

I also want to tell—he was talking about a personal story—I'm going to tell a personal story. My mother was diagnosed in 2000 with Leukemia—CLL is what she was diagnosed with. She fought it for 10 years and, in 2010, unfortunately, she lost her battle with cancer. But—and she never got to see me stand in this House, or be part of this government, but one of the first votes that I did in this house—very proud of—is that I stood up and voted for free cancer-care drugs. Because I saw what that meant to my mom, who was a senior, who was fighting a very terrible illness, and it took her too soon from this Earth. And I saw what that did for my family.

And then I saw what my father went through. He needed a hip replacement. And, during the course of his treatment, they found out that he needed a bypass. He had to have a triple-bypass before he could get his hips done. Then he got hips done and, now, he cycles from his house to my house and he's all—and he's mobile. You know, they travel, they do lots of great things in his retirement.

And you know why? Because we put healthcare top priority on this side of the House, adding new doctors, adding new hospitals, adding healthcare, adding cancer-care drugs. So, when I see a motion like this, I think: Well, what would happen if the members opposite were in government? What would happen with the cuts to the doctors and the cuts to capital spending?

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for St. Norbert will have eight minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 4—Broken Trust Means Higher Hydro Rates

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., it is now time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution under consideration this morning is entitled Broken Trust Means Higher Hydro Rates.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I move, seconded by the member from Midland,

WHEREAS since the First Minister took office in 2009, hydro rates in Manitoba have increased more than double the rate of inflation, or almost 30 per cent, and are expected to at least double over the next 20 years; and

WHEREAS in practical terms this means a Manitoba family that is currently charged \$154 on their monthly bill—hydro bill will pay more than \$320 for the same amount of power by 2032; and

WHEREAS Manitobans are trusting people that expect their trust to be respected through an honest and open government that keeps its promises; and

WHEREAS in 2011, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) broke the trust of Manitobans when he told them that the Bipole III transmission line would not cost Manitobans a single cent and which directly contradicted the testimony of the former Manitoba Hydro CEO who told a committee of the Legislative Assembly that Manitobans would pay for the full \$4.65-billion cost of the transmission line; and

WHEREAS the trust of Manitobans has been broken by the provincial government when it comes to the handling of Manitoba Hydro; and

WHEREAS Manitobans value common sense and a government that does things the right way, which is letting experts for Manitoba Hydro make operational decisions; and

WHEREAS in 2007, the Premier refused to employ common sense when he wrote to the board of Manitoba Hydro directing the corporation where to construct a transmission line.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the provincial government for breaking the trust of Manitobans and not using common sense in making decisions, resulting in at least the doubling of hydro rates for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Lakeside, seconded by the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen):

WHEREAS since the First Minister took office—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

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

WHEREAS since the First Minister took office in 2009, hydro rates in Manitoba have increased more than double the rate of inflation or almost 30% and are expected to at least double over the next 20 years; and

WHEREAS in practical terms this means a Manitoba family that is currently charged one hundred and fifty four dollars on their monthly hydro bill will pay more than three hundred and twenty dollars for the same amount of power by 2032; and

WHEREAS Manitobans are trusting people that expect their trust to be respected through honest and open government that keeps its promises; and

WHEREAS in 2011 the Premier broke the trust of Manitobans when he told them the Bipole III transmission line would not cost Manitobans a single cent, which directly contradicted the testimony of the former Manitoba Hydro CEO who told a Committee of the Legislative Assembly that Manitobans would pay for the full \$4.65 billion dollar cost of the transmission line; and

WHEREAS the trust of Manitobans has been broken by the Provincial Government when it comes to the handling of Manitoba Hydro; and

WHEREAS Manitobans value common sense and a government that does things the right way such as letting experts for Manitoba Hydro make operational decisions; and

WHEREAS in 2007 the Premier refused to employ common sense when he wrote to the Board of Manitoba Hydro directing the corporation where to construct a transmission line.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the Provincial Government for breaking the trust of Manitobans and not using common sense in making decisions, resulting in at least the doubling of hydro rates for all Manitobans.

Mr. Eichler: What we've seen from this government since 2011, and prior to the election, we know that every member opposite went to every door, every apartment, every senior home, every personal-care home and we know that what this government had told those people at those doors: that Bipole III would not cost them one single cent.

Now, that would make sense, because most people that's in business—and I know that's a lot more common on this side of the House than that side of the House—but they do understand, when they go to the store and they buy whatever product they're going to buy, the cost of manufacturing that good or that box of cereal or whatever, that that business has to make a profit, and Manitoba Hydro is in the business to make a profit.

Now, when you sell something, especially to our neighbours to the south, our good American friends, they were expected to pay a fair market price for that product. In fact, what they were told by this government, that they would be paying for the cost of Bipole III, and of course we find out through committee—this very Legislative Assembly—that that information was, in fact, wrong.

The current CEO at the time, Mr. Scott Thomson, said no, no, no, no, hold the line. Hold the line, here. What we have now found out, that Manitobans—everyday, hard-working Manitobans—will be on the hook for paying for that transmission line.

Fast forward a couple of more months, about a year, and then we have a committee called by this government to the Public Utilities Board to discuss Keyask and whether or not it should go forward. Again, this government, heavy-handed, blocked the committee, the PUB, from being allowed to talk about Bipole III.

There were several organizations that made presentations saying, look, we better have another look at this thing; the government's went the wrong direction. Manitobans are, in fact, on the hook for this line. And it was ruled out of order, and there was plenty of opportunity to get it right.

And now we see this government forcing this through. In fact, the member from Carman raised the other day on a matter of urgent public importance in regards to some farmers that were very concerned—very concerned—and reason they were concerned: because this is how they make a living. You can't just go on to someone's land and transfer disease from

one field to the other. It's very important that their livelihood be protected.

Now, we know that on this side of the House that the rates are going to double. I don't know if members opposite do. I think that they will see here shortly whether or not the minister from Hydro's going to get up and talk about this, and make an apology. It might be the acting deputy, we don't know. We'll see what happens, but every member opposite—every member opposite is responsible.

Now, I know they don't like to talk about that, but they did go to the door. It was their opportunity to make sure, and I've never heard but one member ever get up in this House and say that, in fact, they were sorry for increasing the hydro rates for all Manitobans—just one—just one.

Now, what are we going to hear later on this morning? We're going to hear from members opposite say that we're going to sell Manitoba Hydro. Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, we're not selling Manitoba Hydro. We're going to protect Manitoba Hydro from what has happened. We're going to give it the authority to organize and run hydro as it should be. We're going to give Manitoba Hydro the opportunity to make those decisions. It's not going to be a heavy-handed government that's going to dictate policy to everyday Manitobans. They have a board that's in place that was appointed by this government, by this very government, but yet they won't give them the authority to do anything. They've got to have their hand in it.

We've seen water rates go through the roof. We've seen costs go through the roof. We've got \$34 billion right now budgeted for the expansion and it's called the Preferred Development Plan, and they call this good for Manitobans? I don't think so.

What they've done—what they've done—has mismanaged this file so badly that the new CEO—the new CEO—his hands are tied just as bad as the last one was. And I think he got out of Dodge for a reason and he went to BC because he was tired of this government dictating policy to him, and I don't blame him. That is not way any CEO should be running a company. Either they're in charge, or they're not. What we've seen by this government is that the rate increase since this First Minister coming to power, rates have went up 30 per cent—30 per cent.

Now, I know the member from Kildonan, he's going to get up in a minute and he's going to apologize. I can see it coming—that, really, we should

not have done that. That's higher—twice the rate of inflation—twice the rate of inflation this government has put on the backs of hard-working Manitobans.

Now, we talk about the last couple of days about demand-side management as well, and what we've seen there is no help for those that have low incomes, those that cannot afford the higher rate increase that's been put on the backs of all Manitobans. There's no plan in place. They've had an opportunity, in fact, they hired Philippe Dunsky, one of the renowned experts who has got good advice, sound advice—sound advice—and they had a report for well over a year, and what do they do? They threw it on the shelf. The minister goes out in the hallway and says, I don't know, I don't know, give me the break, give me some time.

So the member from Kildonan does come to his rescue and says, no, we have a plan. We have a plan, I'll tell you about it. But the First Minister—or the minister for Manitoba Hydro was not in that loop. Then yesterday, the member from Fort Garry-Riverview gets up and said, no, no, we've got a plan. We've got a real good plan. Well, they haven't tabled it. They haven't brought it forward, and I know the member from Kildonan, yesterday in question period, said stay tuned—stay tuned—we got a great piece of legislation that's going to come forward that's going to solve all that.

* (11:10)

So maybe we will see this before the House rises, Mr. Speaker, but one thing I'm going to ask every member opposite—they talked about going door to door in the debate earlier this morning, and what I want to know is, are they going to stand in their place and say to every Manitoban, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I misled you in the last election. I did not mean to double your hydro rates or triple them in the years to come. I did not mean for your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren to have to carry this burden—this burden.

Now, my grandchildren, and I'm so proud of them, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, as most of us in this House that do have grandchildren and children, that's not a legacy I want to live and hand on to that next generation.

So I'm going to ask members opposite: Will they stand in their place today and apologize and go door to door and say, yes, we misled you?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, unbelievable the gall the opposition has to title this particular private member's resolution, broken trust, when we don't have to look too far, the members opposite certainly know a thing or two about broken trust when it comes to publicly owned assets for the people of Manitoba. We don't have to look too far, Mr. Speaker, to look around this—the room and see folks who are here, who are a part of the government, that said, no, we won't sell MTS; no, we won't privatize something that Manitobans count on. We won't privatize something that is so vital to the future of Manitoba.

And what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They sold it off. They sold it not to—they didn't just sell it off; they sold it to their friends. They sold it to their friends in this province. And so when we talk about Manitoba Hydro, it's a very clear line between what they did then and what they want to do now. It's as clear to me standing here as it is to my constituents and to the people of Manitoba.

So it's just absolutely unbelievable that they would talk about broken trust when we've seen this movie before; we've seen how this plays out; we've seen how members opposite will take Manitoba Hydro. They'll piece it off; they'll criticize it; they'll say, you know, that there's no way it's sustainable, there's no way we can do this when we know that Manitoba Hydro is one of our most valuable assets and the people of Manitoba certainly know that.

I also—I think it's pretty rich that the members opposite will talk about our rates, Manitoba Hydro's rates. We all know, Manitobans know, that we have the lowest rates in—some of the lowest rates in North America, Mr. Speaker. You know, folks in the Chamber here on this side of the House like to talk about the land of milk and honey. Some of them wear green. They come in, they—you know, we might call them Rider fans; I don't know; I won't go that far, but what I will say is that their land of milk and honey next door, they pay \$700 more on average for their hydro than we do here.

Ontario, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people in Manitoba vacation in northern Ontario. They have experience there. Maybe they have a cottage or they know somebody with a cottage. You don't have to go too far to speak to one of them to find out what their rates are. There, it's—the national average—we're spending about \$500 less here in Manitoba and Manitobans know that. Manitobans understand the value that they're getting for their money here.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is jealous, I think, of our opportunity that we have here, so much so now that they're looking to us to help solve their energy crisis by signing deals—long-term, profitable deals—for us into the future, because they know that Manitoba Hydro is the clean, green option for the future and we're ready to work with them to supply that electricity.

You know, we're looking over in Ontario, so I'm talking about how some of the rates are high already. They're just beginning to skyrocket there, and this is directly tied to the privatization of Hydro One. And that has been in the works for a long time. Members opposite know this very well. Some of their folks that were very involved in their government just recently, of course, and going back into the Filmon era have been—were directly tied to that goal and that drive to privatize Hydro One, and so they know; they know exactly how this plays out. They know that if they privatize it, they're going to get, you know, a big chunk of money off the top and they're going to make sure all their friends are well-paid and well-taken care of, and it will be the people who get hit with the higher costs and, quite frankly, worse service. I can tell you that first hand, that that's the case in Ontario.

So, you know, the folks opposite here like to talk about how, you know, they understand business, they understand investment, they get this. What they're not seeing, though, Mr. Speaker, is that right now Manitoba Hydro is going through an unprecedented growth period. And we're building not only reliable capacity here at home but, of course, a reliable capacity that can be exported and can help keep us sustainable into the future.

We—we're betting on Manitoba in the future, here on this side of the House. Manitoba Hydro believes in this, as well. They understand that if we're investing now, and that's everything from, you know, right in our own communities where they're upgrading to LED lights, they're working with folks on the demand side to make sure that there's—that they're being as energy efficient as they can.

But we're also investing in the big projects, the big projects that require a lot of investment up front, they require a lot of partnership, a lot of work up front. But the payoff goes generation to generation. And that's something that I'd be very proud to leave my children, the legacy of a strong, publicly owned Hydro Crown corporation into the future.

So how are—how is Manitoba Hydro investing? Right now, of course, Wuskwatim, it will break even in approximately eight years. After that, Manitobans will take a profit on this project for 70 years, 70 years, Mr. Speaker. This is—these are big projects that will invest into the future. There's no question about that. We've entered into agreements for over \$9 billion in firm power sales, right. These aren't spot market prices; these are long-term deals to the south of us, to the west of us and hopefully to the east of us—would be a great way to build our national system. We signed a 100-megawatt deal with Saskatchewan just recently that I mentioned earlier and that's a great boon to our western partners there.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that climate change is real. We understand it. Folks all over the world understand that clean energy is the future. There doesn't get any more clean than Manitoba Hydro, and that's in all ways, in working with our indigenous partners, and we're very proud of that.

Right now, currently, one in five Manitoba Hydro employees is Aboriginal. And 45 per cent of those employees in northern Manitoba are Aboriginal. So we've got a very high commitment to working with Aboriginal people, something that the members opposite would know nothing about, because when they were running Hydro, it was conflict, it was working against indigenous peoples. We understand we have to work as partners with them and we have to work together to build something that works for all Manitobans and is sustainable into the future.

We've got such a high standard now for environmental licensing in consultation with indigenous people and our partnership with indigenous communities. It ensures a respect, Mr. Speaker, for traditional knowledge and protects the indigenous territories from those environmental impacts which they suffered in the past.

We're also proud of Hydro's partnership with Aki Energy, which is bringing environmental energy like geothermal, Mr. Speaker, to First Nations communities. And we know that the opposition's plan to privatize Hydro would mean destroying those partnerships with Aboriginal communities who benefit as partners with equity in our new projects as well as from training and good jobs.

Now, let's talk about those good jobs, Mr. Speaker, because this is an important part of the overall strategy of Manitoba Hydro, which would be lost under the Conservatives' plan to privatize Hydro

and to lose that ability to work with our partners and to build good jobs. The construction of Keeyask and bipole will boost the 'economy' by more than \$1.5 billion. We're looking at the creation of 10,000 jobs in this province.

And this is something that would be absolutely lost under the opposition, Mr. Speaker. Their reckless plan, we know, would mean good union jobs would be lost. They'd be replaced with non-union contractors from outside of Manitoba. The opposition's plan would jeopardize Manitoba Hydro's world-class training program and would end the ability to run our own electrical grid.

* (11:20)

Mr. Speaker, we have partnerships around the world with Manitoba Hydro, partnerships that we're proud to export our knowledge and our training and work with—in partnership in other parts of the world to let them know that a model—that our model of a publicly owned—owned by the people, for the people, Manitoba Hydro is a system that can benefit a province. It can benefit the people of Manitoba, but only if it's kept in the hands of Manitobans, that it's kept out of the hands of the Opposition who wants to parcel it off, who wants to sell it off, who wants to give up everything that we have built here, and our legacy for our children.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Speaking to this resolution, and I'd welcome our young people to the gallery this morning and having a lively debate about the future of Manitoba Hydro and the—we're talking about the financial mismanagement that's been imposed on Manitoba Hydro by this government, because you only have to look at their own financial mismanagement to see how they have imposed their financial mismanagement on Manitoba Hydro.

You go back to 2011, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) told everyone—and, I believe, it was the former, former, former Finance minister—I don't know, it's so hard to keep track of how many they've gone through—but, they both went out there and promised Manitobans that these—that the Americanization of Manitoba Hydro would not cost Manitobans one cent for Bipole III and to build Keeyask.

Well, this has been proven wrong again, because in committee, when the former CEO who got—I guess he just got tired of having to work under this NDP government, returned to BC—but the former CEO came to committee and, under questioning from us, admitted that, yes, Manitobans would pay the full

\$4.65 billion cost of Bipole III. That's not what the former Finance minister said, it's not what the Premier said, but we know now that it is true.

And we've seen this in hydro rates continuing to go up each and every year at the expense of the infrastructure in—of Manitoba Hydro at—both here in the city of Winnipeg, and across Manitoba—rural Manitoba, northern Manitoba, the infrastructure is falling apart. Manitoba Hydro does not have the money to rebuild our infrastructure within the province because they've been directed to spend all the money to Americanize Manitoba Hydro, to sell power into the US at a discount rate so that Manitobans, then, are forced to pick up the cost of the sales to the US.

And it's—and these rate increases are hitting low-income people, rural and northern Manitobans the hardest. A large part of my own constituency across south-central Manitoba does not have access to natural gas, so the only—the main source of heat, other than using propane, which is very expensive also—but the main source of heat is hydroelectricity, and their rates, having gone up 30 per cent and are going to double again in the next number of years—this is hitting Manitobans very hard. This is a hidden tax to Manitobans for the NDP's financial mismanagement.

My own area has a group put together right now, trying to put together a plan to bring in natural gas to south-central Manitoba. It's very expensive. We need to move forward with this project because it would allow a number of large energy users to be able to access a cheaper form of heating for their businesses, for our community centres. So we have to put this together. But this is not an option right now and it's—this is—this project is probably going to take years to do—to complete—if it is, in fact, completed. And, in the meantime, they're hit hard with rising hydro rates.

We only have to look at the City of Winnipeg, yesterday when they released their budget, and turn the radio on today and hear the outcry from citizens across Winnipeg worried about the extra tax burden that they're going to face. And this is what is happening within Manitoba Hydro and the hydro rates to all Manitobans because there is less money. There's only one taxpayer, and yet this current NDP government seems to think that they can continue to tax Manitobans and tax them and tax them until there is—there won't be any money left. And Manitobans are smart shoppers, and they're very economical.

They know how to manage their own money. And it—they don't do it by borrowing more money than they can ever hope to pay. They don't do it by trying to sell a commodity into the US at a loss because they have to pick up the bill on this.

But this is what this government has forced Manitoba Hydro to do, to build this, this infrastructure, and to Americanize Manitoba Hydro because our entire system right now seems to be built at the direction of this—at the behest of this NDP government is to make sure that we sell power into the US at a loss. They talk about \$9 billion in sales, but they're going to spend \$34 billion to get there. Manitobans will pick up that cost of that. And they will continue to pay for years and years to come because this government is so short-sighted, such bad fiscal management. If they had any fiscal management, perhaps the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) would bring forth a budget. But he doesn't want to. He wants to hide behind—hide the bad news that's inevitably there.

So, Mr. Speaker, this resolution really speaks to the broken trust, the higher hydro rates, that the impact of these rates are having on Manitobans, particularly the low income and those who don't have access to an alternate power source or to heating source. This is—you know, we've been fairly fortunate this winter. With the exception of the last couple of days, it's been, on the average, a milder winter. And that has eased the heating costs for many of these low income and people who are not—don't have access to natural gas. But that also comes at the expense to Manitobans in general because Manitoba Hydro hasn't sold as much power. And we only need to look at the last quarterly results of Manitoba Hydro. The quarterly losses continue to grow year over year. And, if you continue to push them to spend this amount of money, it can only be recouped through higher rate increases to all Manitobans, and that's what hurts Manitobans. This is a tax on Manitobans from NDP incompetence.

So I would urge members opposite to really try to justify how a 30 per cent increase in rates is good for Manitobans and how a doubling of rates in the next number of years is going to help Manitobans. I know the Americans like this plan because it's selling power to them very cheap. They're in favour of it. But how does it help Manitobans to continue to raise power rates at the expense of all Manitobans? Mr. Speaker, I would urge the members opposite to try and justify how these types of rate increases actually help all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, now, I want to put some facts on the record and talk about how the opposition—I want to explain it very carefully for them because they don't seem to understand what spot sales are.

So, when we have a dam and water's running over it, we sell power to the US on set contracts. We say we're going to give them so many megawatts or kilowatts per hour or per day, whatever the contract states. So when excess water—because sometimes the water levels are higher or the flows are faster because we have excess water—flows over the dam, we do what's called spot sales. Those can't be guaranteed. A spot sale is something that happens when water happens to flow faster or more.

So we then sell that power on a spot sale to the US.

Now, the opposition tries to say that, oh, we're selling it for dirt cheap. It's a spot sale; it's extra power. We could just let that water flow over the dam and do nothing with it. We could allow that power to just be absorbed into the system and not sold to the US. Or we could get something for it. Now, the opposition argues that that's wrong, that we shouldn't get—even though it's a little lesser rate than what we sell the guaranteed contracts for, the spot sales are a lesser rate because they're just that. They're excess power and spot sales.

* (11:30)

So the opposition's saying that he would rather have no money in his pocket than have a little bit of money in this pocket. He's saying he'd rather have water and power spill over the dam and be wasted and not used than take advantage of that little spot sale and actually generate money.

And, when we're talking about spot sales, we're talking about millions of dollars even though it's sold at a lesser rate because it is a spot sale. I don't know how to be much clearer than that, Mr. Speaker. The average Manitoban understands that. Only the people on the other side of the House don't seem to get that. You know, the people on the other side of the House, the Conservatives, also don't believe in climate change. We saw their plan, their one-point plan to privatize the little section of Hydro, which makes it easier to break it off. Our plan is to have an arm's-length organization that looks at Power Smart within Hydro; it doesn't bust it off into a separate entity.

So they're playing games with that too, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, they want to talk about Hydro sales. Well, if we didn't sell Hydro to Minnesota and to North Dakota and to Saskatchewan, you know how they would generate that power? They would fire up their coal plants. Now, the Leader of the Opposition hasn't disclosed to the House if he's made any money off the sale and the privatization of MTS. So I wonder if he'll come forward now and tell the House if the coal industry's backing him, because he doesn't want to send power to Saskatchewan which burns coal to generate power. So now that leads to the question, was why would he want to burn coal, creating greenhouse emissions, instead of our clean, green power being developed and sold to Saskatchewan, taking coal plants offline? The same thing goes for North Dakota, and the same thing goes for Minnesota.

So, now, I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition will stand up and tell us where he stands with coal. Stand up and say he's going to—that the coal industry is supporting him because his plan supports the coal industry. Our plan supports green hydro.

And, if you look at it, decades ago, Manitobans decided to invest in Manitoba Hydro. They decided to create a clean power system that was good for Manitobans. And what's the benefit for Manitobans? We pay among the lowest rates in North America, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, the system has aged. So, right now, we're going underneath a lot of renewal. They're replacing poles, they're replacing substations. That has to happen because, decades ago, people decided that they were going to build it; now it's time for some renewal.

Now, we've got a group on our side of the House that's looking towards the future. We're looking at how Manitoba's growing, more people here. We're looking at how, you know, all over the world we're seeing more power usage. So we're building Manitoba Hydro for the future, just like they did decades ago. Now, I'll remind the members opposite: they're the same ones that said that Limestone was Lemonstone. They cancelled the project. They mothballed it when they were in power. When we came back in we built it. And you know what? Limestone is now paid for. It generates power for Manitobans, and it actually generates excess power so we can sell that power to Saskatchewan, North Dakota and Minnesota.

Now, the member of the opposition has been clear—the Leader of the Opposition has been very clear. His record is saying that he would not sell power. He would cancel export sales, billions of dollars of Hydro wasted. He will let water spill over the dams, and he won't sell that power to anybody else. What good is that for Manitobans? Well, they want to talk about Americanize, how about we Saskatchewanize or Ontarioize our system? That's what the Leader of the Opposition would do. Ontarioize the system, Mr. Speaker. He would break it off into pieces, just like the Liberal government did in Saskatchewan—or in, sorry—in Ontario, and then they would sell it off.

And what are the rates in Ontario? Double ours. In fact, almost triple. And I have a friend who lives in Ottawa. Same house as mine—almost identical house. They pay \$500 a month; I pay \$170 a month. That's gas and hydro included together, Mr. Speaker. He pays \$500 a month just for electricity. They do their laundry at night because they have peak power sales, so they have to do it in the middle of the night because that costs more to do it during peak power time. That's the plan for the Opposition. They want to see us Ontarioize our system, break it apart, sell it off, that's the plan.

If you make sure that we're not selling power sales to Ontario and we're not selling power to Saskatchewan and we're not selling power to North Dakota and Minnesota, it makes the system ripe for the selling because the system would then post losses. They'd be looking at massive losses because the billions of dollars in set contracts would not be there; they would cancel them. He's made it very clear. He's on record saying he doesn't believe in selling power to anybody else. So those power sales get cancelled and, then, the system starts to fail.

That's exactly the way they did it with MTS. They broke MTS off into little chunks, then they said, well, you know what, it's not doing so well because they didn't invest in it. And then they sold it off and the Leader of the Opposition has yet to disclose if he's made any money on that. We know that the former leader of the PC Party was on the board of Hydro—or of MTS after the—it was sold off. We know that. We know he got a plum position with that. So how much did they make on that? Mr. Speaker, how much did the PCs make on that?

How about when they look at selling Manitoba Hydro, who's going to benefit from that? Not the average Manitoban. I don't—I can't afford to buy

shares in the company. But their rich buddies will, Mr. Speaker, and that's who's going to benefit, is the 1 per cent across the way who are going to benefit from buying off Manitoba Hydro.

Our plan is keeping it public. We've got a record of keeping it public. It's been public the whole time we're—we've ever been in office and we've never sold off the Crown corporation. They sell Crown corporations. Right before the last election when they were in power they said—in 1995 they said we will not sell Manitoba Telephone System. Within weeks, the Manitoba Telephone System was sold. *[interjection]*

The member opposite is chirping about the Property Registry. The Property Registry is on a lease, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans still own it and there's a clause in there where we can take it back at any time if we wanted to. The system needed to have some upgrades, and we looked at it and there was a company who was willing to do those upgrades and work with us on a lease. It is not sold off. It is not gone from public ownership. We retain all of the data that's on the system and we can take it back at any time, unlike the telephone system that they sold off. We cannot just call up MTS and say, hello, we would like to have our phone system back. We can't do that because they sold it off and they sold it at undervalue shares. Look at the history, it's a fact. The shares were undervalued; they bought into them and then the shares skyrocketed, and a bunch of them made money. Not us, nobody on this side of the House made money from MTS being sold off and Manitobans certainly didn't make money from MTS being sold off. In fact, they pay more now because of MTS being sold off.

And that is what we can expect from them on Manitoba Hydro. They say they won't sell it, but then they're going to stop imports—or export sales. They—that's going to set it up ripe for the picking. That's exactly how you bust up a Crown corporation, is to start making it fail and then saying, oh, the system is failing; we need to sell it off, and that's what they're going to do.

And the member of the opposite, I'd love to see if the Leader of the Opposition is going to stand up and tell us where he stands on coal-fired plants, because our plan is taking coal-fired plants offline, helping greenhouse gases go down. We have a great record on that with Manitoba Hydro and we're building for the future so that way we can continue taking coal-fired plants offline.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition wants to stand up and tell us he's now found that he believes in global warming and climate change. I would love to hear that, because his plan to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget certainly won't address any of the infrastructure needs that we're going to need to defend against climate change—which the insurance industry last year put out a big article saying that we need to invest more in protection to protect us for the future because climate change is real, because that is happening in Manitoba. It's happening all over the world, and the Leader of the Opposition is the one who doesn't believe in it and going to sell hydro off.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure to stand up and put a few words on the record. I know that the member from St. Norbert is playing fast and loose with the truth as usual, and it'll be interesting to see, basically, today on Twitter who's fighting with who in the NDP caucus. So it will be an interesting day, I am sure, as he keeps being the gift that keeps on giving.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to put a few words on the record in regards to the resolution brought forward by my colleague from Lakeside, the resolution on broken trust means higher hydro rates.

* (11:40)

I know that one of the WHEREASes in regards to the higher hydro rates resolution that we're speaking about today—and I am looking forward to hearing what the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), the minister in charge of Manitoba Hydro, has to say on this resolution. Because he's also the Deputy Premier, and I believe that when you hold offices of that stature within our province, a big portion has to—you have to exhibit those character traits of being able to be trustworthy and honourable, and so it is going to be very interesting to hear what the Deputy Premier has to say, the member from Kewatinook, on this resolution.

One of the WHEREASes says in 2011 the Premier broke the trust of Manitobans when he told them that the Bipole III transmission line would not cost Manitobans a single cent, which directly contradicted the testimony of the former Manitoba Hydro CEO who told a committee of the Legislative Assembly that Manitobans would pay for the full \$4.65-billion cost of the transmission line.

It's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the member from St. Norbert and the other members of the NDP government feel that it's their right to stand up and, again, put various things on the record when they don't have a solid record to stand on even for themselves.

I'm going to use my time to speak about another issue, and it does come down to trust and keeping people at their word, Mr. Speaker. And the topic is—I brought it up yesterday in question period and I found that the Minister for Education stood up and he decided to put his two cents in on the Hydro file because he strongly feels that he can be the minister for absolutely everything on that side of the House, and you know what happens when you have—when you feel that you can bring all that to the table, you know, a master of none basically. So I strongly encourage the Minister of Education to maybe stick to something that he can actually speak on.

There's been a couple correspondence that have been sent to the minister in charge of Hydro and it's basically coming down to the Lake Winnipeg East System Improvement Project which basically involves quite a few of the northern communities within my constituency. And two in particular pieces of correspondence that was sent to the minister's office absolutely revolved around these—this broken trust and the NDP government not keeping their word with communities and various surrounding communities in regards to transmission projects.

In 2013, the community of Bissett had started some conversations around the Lake Winnipeg east transmission project and they were assured back then that the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and people from Manitoba Hydro in which the Deputy Minister is in charge of, the member from Kewatinook, basically had said that they would be involved in the consultation process for this transmission line all the way through, and this was in 2013. Well, back in December of 2013 the community of Bissett had actually asked—had written a letter on some of their feedback on that transmission project and basically said how they would be—like to be kept in the loop with exactly the transmission project.

Fast forward to 2015 and the projects appear to be under way and the cleaning efforts were beginning to be carried out. Council that had heard—that the Bissett council had heard that the work was provided through negotiations with First Nation communities in our area, which was Hollow Water, Black River and Sagkeeng, and again we're all in

favour of the consultation process, but why was this Deputy Premier, the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) picking and choosing who he was having these conversations with, Mr. Speaker?

So the community of Bissett has written and had asked for some answers in regards to this process, and they—they're strongly feeling that the minister has not treated all the communities fairly. And, that being said, I mean, all they're—we're—all they were asking was that they would get a fair and equal opportunity to participate in, No. 1, the dialogue as far as the transmission project but also in regards to how some of the training was being done in regards to employing a lot of the community members from those various communities out in our neck of the woods.

We know that under this NDP government, the Lac du Bonnet constituency and the northern portion of it has lost, you know, well over, you know, a couple thousand jobs over the last nine, 10 years under this NDP government. And not one of those ministers had ever stepped up, Mr. Speaker, had ever stepped up and come out and had those conversations with those various community members. But, you know what, there's hope on the horizon because after April 19th, there is going—the Manitobans are going to make a change in the provincial government, and we are going to be a strong voice for not only the Lac du Bonnet constituency but also for all Manitobans, who seem to be getting a raw deal under this NDP government.

I have to also mention a correspondence that was sent to the minister, and it has gotten so far to the point that the Manigotagan community had decided that they had been left out of the consultative process, as far as work and some agreements and that, all throughout this whole transmission line project, that they've decided to actually do a community council resolution. And the resolution was—basically states as follows: Whereas contact staff from Manitoba Hydro requested a meeting with council to discuss and get approval for a corridor to access their line within our community boundary, be it resolved that a full quorum of council has decided to reject all their requests within our community boundary and also be it resolved this council end all discussions with Manitoba Hydro as of today due to this council was never considered a stakeholder at the beginning and are not getting any benefits to our governing body to help our community residents in any form or way.

This is what's wrong with the current state of the NDP government, Mr. Speaker. The fact is they pick and choose. We've heard, over the last few weeks, as far as their tendering process, they pick and choose their friends, who gets the multi-million-dollars' worth of contracts. This has been happening for years, and it's going to come to an abrupt end because this government has far outlived their shelf life. It is this way of governing that this NDP government has done that has forced communities to take it into their own hands as far as rejecting some of these things that very easily, if the consultative process was followed properly right off the bat, that these things could have been worked on, could have been worked out, and everybody could have been moving forward.

But it's things like this that this NDP government feels that they have the right to do that stalls out various projects like this. And it's due to their lack of caring, their lack of consultative process and their just lack of being good leaders within this province.

So thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record.

Hon. Melanie Wight (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): Well, it's a pleasure, as always, to get up and speak on something that's so important to the people of Manitoba. I'm pleased to get that opportunity today.

The words in the proposal from the member from—

An Honourable Member: Lakeside.

Ms. Wight: Lakeside. I know this man's—I know that. I know he's from Lakeside. I know.

An Honourable Member: He's easy to forget.

Ms. Wight: No, he's not easy to forget at all. It's not true.

But the words—that he was able to put into his proposal the words common sense and then come out with something so entirely nonsensical is fascinating. It's not only the member, of course, from Lakeside. I mean, really, what we're talking about is the Leader of the Opposition's decisions. And the most important decision, I think, that he's made is this idea that he's not going to sell to the Americans.

* (11:50)

And it just shows—it's frightening—it's frightening—that anyone could be actually a government in waiting, as they call themselves, and

be incapable of understanding the difference between signed contract rates and spot-market rates. The member from St. Norbert very kindly attempted to explain it. We've spent years trying to explain it. It's almost impossible for me to believe that the members opposite are really unable to grasp such a simple concept. But the reason that we are able to maintain the lowest rates almost in—probably in North America, very close to in the entire continent, perhaps even the world, some of the lowest rates, is because we're selling to other places, okay, so, it's—we tried to explain it.

Maybe I can explain it in a simpler way. Let's say you buy a house and then you rent that house to somebody, and they make payments on that house's mortgage. Okay, so maybe they'll be able to understand it with that analogy. And then when you take over the house, you're paying way less on that mortgage because you were able to get that money from the renters. It's the same—similar concept here, Mr. Speaker. But we see, as we hear them speak, always putting down Hydro and the desire to break off pieces of it. I couldn't agree more with those folks who connected that back to the past when MTS was sold off by this very same party and group and people. I mean, the Leader of the Opposition was in that same Cabinet. So—and we are still paying for that.

People may wonder, well, why do they talk about that now? It was so many years ago. Well, because Manitobans have been paying extra on their phone bills ever since that terrible, terrible decision was made. So that's why we continue to speak about it. We see the same pattern happening here, an inability to understand how it works. And I can only guess, like, I don't know if that's just a complete lack of knowledge or if they're pretending to not understand. I just—I'm not quite clear on how that—which that is. But we pay, as others mentioned, about \$700 less a year for a home using 1,000 kilowatt hours per month than someone with that same home in their favourite province, Saskatchewan. We hear a lot about how wonderful Saskatchewan is from members opposite, and I've often wondered why they simply don't move if they like it so much better than their own province. But we on this side of the House are incredibly proud of what's going on in Manitoba, in the incredible businesses and Crown corporations that we have in this province.

So the member from Lakeside mentioned his grandchildren and that somehow, these terrible

decisions that they're coming out with, like to not sell hydro to anyone else, is somehow going to save his grandchildren. Well, it's the absolute opposite. We will be paying massive rate increases if that were to happen because where would we be getting the money from? It could only come from Manitobans. And as they see those losses, that's when they'll be selling Hydro off to their friends as they did with MTS. And his grandchildren and great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren will be paying for that decision forever. You cannot get Hydro back if you sell it off. And we're looking at places that have done it: the Liberal government in Ontario and what it's cost to those people. Ontario are about to lose over \$300 million in revenue annually from the privatization of their electricity.

So it's not just one opposition that is interested in selling off Crown corporations. We see they're interested to selling off Hydro. We know that the Liberal leader for Manitoba has suggested selling off our liquor stores and that she wants to do that. Another massive loss to the people of Manitoba, not only a loss to Manitobans in revenue that should be coming to them, but also in social responsibility and in money coming into addictions.

So we see that both opposition parties are very willing to sell off the assets of Manitobans so that their own friends will be able to profit, as they did in the sale of MTS. But it hurt Manitobans forever. Privatizing Hydro would mean that we just are going to pay so much more. Rates will absolutely be soaring, and if they privatize Hydro, it would kill \$9 billion in power deals to the west and the south. Nine billion—I know, it's so big a number it's hard for you to understand it. It will also kill, Mr. Speaker, 10,000 jobs that's tied to Keeyask and the bipole.

So anyone in Manitoba who's sitting down to, you know, look at their family budget knows that home heating, electricity, auto insurance are the biggest factors in their life. And we are able to keep those the lowest in the country. That bundle is the lowest in the country. It absolutely is. We audited, we have guaranteed it in legislation and we audit it every year, and we are the most affordable place to live in the whole country under those three things.

And I'm incredibly proud of that. We are always connected with working to keep things for the average working family. We saw earlier today in a bill brought forward by the member from St. Norbert that, once again, members opposite were not

standing with the working people, Mr. Speaker. No, they were, again, standing with the big corporations, just as the Liberal leader is in her cut that would cost \$471 million so that corporations don't have to pay their fair share.

I guess I would ask on that front: Why on Earth anyone would ever even consider such a thing, and how will they replenish the budget as they pull that out of it from big banks and things like that?

So I guess on both ends, whether I'm looking at the Tory side or whether I'm looking at the leader of the Liberal side, it's—frightening thing for Manitobans.

So we know that Hydro will not be safe, Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite are to get into power. They are unable to even understand the simple concept of the spot market versus the signed contracts where we charge considerably more than the average Manitoban pays. So, the inability for you—for them to understand that means they should absolutely never be in government.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to speak to this resolution today. At the outset, I would like to say that there is, and should be, support for an east-west power grid in this country so that Manitoba can sell power east-west in addition to the north-south sales we have right now.

Over the years we have kept hydro rates among the lowest in North America by virtue of the fact that we're able to generate the power and sell it through the United States customers at very high prices—market prices, that have helped us pay off, you know, Limestone. And the Liberals of the day complained about the cost of building Limestone—I think we made something like \$6-billion profit just on that one dam alone over the years.

So the economics are certainly in favour of expanding Hydro. The issue is whether we should be trying to provide the power on an east-west basis—and we are making some strides in that now with a 100 megawatt sale—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Elmwood will have eight minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 3, 2016

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