

**Fifth Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
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<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 19, 2011

*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.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

## House Business

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader):** I just wonder if there is leave to proceed to Bill 218?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement to go directly to Bill 218? [*Agreed*]

## SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 218—The Elections Finances Amendment Act (Abolishing the Vote Tax)**

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** We have introduced—oh, Mr. Speaker, sorry, I'm just a rookie.

I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 218, The Elections Finances Amendment Act (Abolishing the Vote Tax); Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des campagnes électorales (abolition de la subvention sur les votes), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. McFadyen:** This bill is intended to remove those sections of The Elections Finances Act that were introduced a couple of years ago by the government, which introduced a third layer of taxpayer funding for political parties.

Mr. Speaker, it is a bill that was introduced by the NDP that contained several features, the set election date being one feature that we supported, but other features that, in our view, really run against the

grain of what's fair to taxpayers and what really is appropriate in a democratic province like Manitoba.

The reality is that political parties in Manitoba and in other jurisdictions and nationally benefit when people provide voluntary contributions to those parties through the availability of tax credits to those donors. In addition, Mr. Speaker, with the introduction of spending limits, it was—there was a decision made that parties ought to receive half of their qualifying expenditures back after an election is over, in part to support the activities of political parties and also, in part, to provide an incentive for parties to properly report all of their election expenses in order to ensure that elections are run in a way that is fair and appropriate for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of undisclosed donations or the idea of unlimited spending is something that I think all parties and Manitobans would view as being not an appropriate part of democracy in Manitoba and matters that we would want to keep out of Manitoba politics; but this third layer of taxpayer funding for political parties based on votes, so, in effect, when people go to vote for a political party, that money is triggered from taxpayers. The more you vote, the more expensive it gets for taxpayers. That's just completely wrong.

It is a—you know, we want to encourage people to come out and vote in Manitoba, and when you ask them to pay more when they come and vote, Mr. Speaker, through their taxes, it sends the wrong message to Manitobans. We want to say to Manitobans, when you come and vote you're doing your civic duty; you've done a good thing for your community. You don't want to penalize them, like members opposite, when they come out and vote by requiring them to pay through their taxes to political parties, and that is really at the heart of the concern.

In addition to that, it really becomes a question of priorities. It becomes a question of priorities for government. Your priority can be protecting taxpayers, protecting ratepayers. It can be investing in roads and hospitals and schools and police and all of those other things that provide a benefit to Manitobans, or your priority could be giving money to political parties, Mr. Speaker, to do things that political parties do.

And, you know, I know—and I want to just say we appreciated the last round of expenditures done by the NDP on advertising. We want them to keep doing that, Mr. Speaker, but we don't think it's right that taxpayers have to pay for it, and that really is what this amendment is all about.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a balance—before this bill was introduced, there was a balance in the way parties were financed. There was a role for taxpayers' money. There was a role for public money, and there was a role for voluntary donors to political parties, and they're both important components of the political system in our province. Those voluntary contributions are a reflection of people's desire to support political parties that they believe in, that they feel are fighting on their behalf and coming here and doing a good job on their behalf and reflecting their values and fighting for things that are important to them and their communities and their families.

And one tangible way that people can show that support is by making a voluntary contribution to a political party, and all parties in this province benefit from those contributions, Mr. Speaker. We, as a party, receive, on average, smaller donations than the NDP. They tend to rely on large donations from a smaller group of people that are tied in closely to their party. It's not quite as democratic as the base of support that our party gets, but they are voluntary contributions. The people who make those contributions have the right to do that.

\*(10:10)

We know that the NDP does a good job of representing the special interests that do give them money, and they have a right to support them in that way through their voluntary contributions, and it's all upfront. It's all disclosed, Mr. Speaker, through the annual filings, and everybody can get a feel for where the support is coming from, and that is a—that's a healthy part of that process.

It gives people more than one way of participating. It allows them to say to their local MLA or to their local candidate, we really like what you have to say on the issue of bipole, or we really like what you have to say on the issue of making our communities safer. We really like how hard you fought to get a hospital in Steinbach, or how hard you fought to get a personal care home in Morden. We like the work you're doing on behalf of your constituents in River East in order to fight for our community. And the people of Charleswood have the

right to say, we like the way you fight for our community, for our schools and our health care. People in Arthur-Virden have the opportunity to say, we appreciate the work that you've done to get us better roads and your opposition to the closure of emergency rooms in our community. And we appreciate the work being done to protect valuable farmland by the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen).

And the members have the opportunity to thank and show their appreciation to all of the members of the House: the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) for fighting on behalf of ranchers and producers; the member for Portage (Mr. Faurshou), fighting on behalf of his constituents, dealing with the flood situation; the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), fighting on behalf of his constituents in terms of the need to get work done on highways throughout that constituency; the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) who's been fighting on behalf of her constituents; and we look at the work being done by the member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), fighting hard on behalf of families, trying to build child-care centres in that constituency.

And the way—one way they can show their appreciation, Mr. Speaker, is to provide a contribution to that candidate. And if they don't like the job that they're doing, they can provide contributions to other people to get involved in the process. That's a healthy part of the democratic process in Manitoba.

And I know that members opposite also get contributions from individuals, and that's all done in a voluntary way. And that's a healthy part of the process. Why do we want to force people to give money through their taxes, more money than they already are, through their taxes to political parties?

The government has already run up record levels of debt. They've already—they're already running \$500-million deficits. They're already running around cutting cheques left, right and centre, Mr. Speaker, with other people's money. Let us have one ray of prudence shine into this Chamber and say, let's not be cutting those cheques to political parties every year.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? Members opposite know we're right, and the reason we know that they are right is that they haven't taken the money when it came down—when it came time for them—for them to fill out their annual return and check the box, they knew they were wrong. They turned down the money.

Now it's time to go all the way. Remove this section from the act. Vote for this bill.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines):** Mr. Speaker, I'm always pleased to have the opportunity to rise in this Chamber, particularly following the Leader of the Opposition who—whose arguments, I think, if we were debating them in court, would probably have been, for the most part, tossed out as not relevant to the issue. But I'll deal with those as we go through.

Just, I'd like to characterize the comments of—you know, Mr. Speaker, the members talk about priorities. They—we bring up bills in this Chamber everyday, and we bring up private members' bills, and the priorities of the members opposite only seem to be one thing, and that's wedge politics. That's the politics of sort of rope-a-dope and wedge politics. They don't talk about the big issues. They don't talk about health care. Their issues don't talk about the priorities of education. The issues don't talk about dealing with the many problems faced by Manitobans or the economic development. It's wedge issues. Wedges—only issues like, you know, crime, which is always used by right-wing parties when they have no issues to raise. Or issues—crime—and are used by right-wing parties when they don't have other issues to raise. Or issues of taxes: calling this a tax when members opposite took more money in public subsidy than anyone else in this Chamber, and they have the audacity, they have the audacity to criticize a measure that was brought in as part of a balance.

And that's the other thing that's wrong with this party. It used to be the Progressive Conservative Party. Now, it's the right-wing Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker, with the right wing's flipping on crime and flipping on taxes and saying very little on anything else. And the problem with this party is, as the right wing flips on taxes and as the right wing flips on issues of wedge politics, the real issues, to be assessed by Manitobans, gets hid.

And what's the history of this, Mr. Speaker? The history of this entire issue was probably the most-worst example of political scandal in the history of Manitoba. A book has been written called so many liars; so many liars is the title of the book about the political scandals, 1995.

I was in the Chamber. I could not believe the depths to which a party would go to win at a political—to win an election, Mr. Speaker. And the Monnin inquiry that looked at the falsified—that

looked at the phony—that looked at the, in fact, criminal actions of members opposite—let me quote what Judge Monnin said about the Conservative Party: It is disheartening to, indeed, to realize that people—an oath to tell the truth means so little to some people. A vote-rigging plot constitute an unconscionable debasement of citizens' right to vote. The basic premise of the plot was that Aboriginal peoples in these ridings had historically voted, but the Aboriginal vote would be split. Political mores have reached a dangerous low. I cannot ignore the fact that throughout this episode, especially the investigation, some of these witnesses exhibit degree of arrogance or an I-know-better attitude. A considerable amount of time, effort and money was expended by this commission to confirm what should have been freely admitted at the onset.

Mr. Speaker, and the members opposite broke the election law; they were punished for it. And part of the new provisions in The Elections Act, that were the changes that came in, was a result of this historical debasement of the political process.

And I'm not pointing my finger at members opposite, some of whom worked in that government. The member—the sheriff from Steinbach worked in that government—the member from Steinbach worked in that government, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) worked in that government. There's members on the front bench that worked in that government. They're all as culpable as we all are in allowing that to happen.

But, Mr. Speaker, so that act came in, in order to balance the voters' rights and part of that was to have no corporate or union donations, which members opposite voted against. The Leader of the Opposition talks about priorities; they have yet to support no corporate, no union donations.

You know, he had the tenacity to mention in his comments that there's a small group of people that supports the NDP, when the member and the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that the Manitoba Club supporters of members—and some of them, I know, don't as much appreciate the Leader of the Opposition. But that little group controls the forces, controls the finances and controls what goes on in elections.

We know what happens—we know what happened and part of this act, part of the purposes of this act, was to bring in a balanced approach to elections. And instead, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and others

took a part of this that dealt with a rebate portion that would provide some fair—some fairness. And all they could focus on, Mr. Speaker—they forgot about the fact that we're looking at legislative expenditure limits.

I was there. I discussed it with them. They forgot about the fact of corporate union donations. They forgot about the fact that it was a fixed election date and they focused on one issue, which is wedge politics, straight classic wedge politics.

**An Honourable Member:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Even the member says that's right, absolutely. Wedge politics, Mr. Speaker, to try to discredit the entire act, notwithstanding that the very purpose of the act in the first place was as the result of the historical 'traversity' and vote rigging and devious and wrong scandal that occurred by members.

**An Honourable Member:** Let's not go over the top.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Well, that's not over the top. In Saskatchewan, they changed the name of their party after their rigging scandal, Mr. Speaker. In Saskatchewan, there's no more Conservative Party because half of them ended up in jail on vote rigging.

\* (10:20)

In Manitoba, you just went from being the Progressive Conservative Party to the Conservative Party, which, frankly, Mr. Speaker, which is what it is. We didn't change our name. You had to change your name. It's the Conservative Party.

And, Mr. Speaker, they have not, at—and the whole time, there's been no little—they haven't spent any time on reform of the democratic process. Have we seen any reforms? Have we seen any options dealing with voters' rights?

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) actually said, the more you vote the more you pay. I hadn't—you know, I had never heard a more ridiculous statement in a long time. First of all, you only vote once, Mr. Speaker, we hope. Now—and you only vote for a real political party, not one set up by scheme outside of the Premier's office or inside of the Premier's office. You don't do that, and you only vote once. So the proposition on its very surface is fallacious. Never mind the more you vote the more you pay. We want people to vote. We want people to participate in the democratic process.

And, you know, the option is provided in the act of taking or not taking the resources. It's not a mandatory payment, so to narrow it—it's, you know, it's this little wedge politics. We narrow, narrow, narrow it down. We ignore everything else. We don't talk about health care. We don't talk about working for people. Oh, we talk about the coalition. We talk about all of these issues, Mr. Speaker.

You know, they don't talk about the federal government when it comes to control of the Criminal Code. No, no, you don't even hear a word out of them when it comes to the Criminal Code, which is a federal government issue. But, no, Mr. Speaker, they love to talk about the federal government on issues of coalition and other issues related to the federal election that furthers their, quote, political interests.

I think, Mr. Speaker, this particular bill, which is a narrow, ill-framed, poorly argued, undemocratic, no reflection whatsoever on the balance and the rights of democracies, have very little to do with the priority of Manitobans in terms of getting out more vote, getting people more opportunities to vote, educating more people to vote, having more participation. And the fact that it's not mandatory means that it's a spacious argument on the part of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, they should be talking about real issues facing Manitobans. They don't want to. We know what the strategy is: it's rope-a-dope, it's hide the Opposition Leader going into the election. We know that. We know that. We know that senators campaign. We know what the senators told the candidates. We know that. We know what it is. We know what the campaign is. We know who the campaign manager is. We know where the campaign manager's office is located. We know what the campaign manager told some of the unfortunate people that aren't running for a party anymore. We know what happened. We know where the campaign's going.

And we know the strategy is to talk about narrow issues—narrow issues—Mr. Speaker, try to paint the brush in a particular area on wedge politics, not deal with the issues that are priorities of families in Manitoba and of the constituents of Manitoba. And as we go through one of the greatest difficulties in our provincial history in terms of a flood, while we deal with the economic recovery, while we deal with our health care, the members are going back and trying to reassert their positions in 2005 that they really weren't a bunch of—bad decisions made then.

And they only want to talk about a small, narrow part—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) doth protest too much in some of his comments, and I suspect that I know why. I was reminded, while he was in full flight, that he was the campaign manager when the NDP party falsified 13 election returns. Who was at the head of that campaign? Who was at the head of the campaign when there were campaigns that falsified their returns, when the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the then-candidate in St. Boniface, asked for a letter absolving himself of any wrongdoing, a letter that mysteriously disappeared, that somehow ended up in a shredder? Now, I don't know if it was the member for Kildonan when he was the campaign manager, if he would have advised the then-Finance minister to shred that letter, if the member for Kildonan would have said, well, get rid of that because someday, you know, there might be somebody looking into it, like an inquiry. Maybe the member for Kildonan wants to provide that. Maybe there'll be a book written someday that goes through the different machinations about what happened when 13 different candidates for the NDP—some Cabinet ministers and one Premier now—managed to falsify their returns.

So I can understand why the member for Kildonan is sensitive. I can understand why he's upset and angry in this House, but I would ask him to think about Manitobans, to try to get his head beyond the bubble here of the Legislature and to think about what Manitobans would want us to do this fine morning in Manitoba.

They would say, be responsible with what you're doing, and, you know, there's a lot of people in Manitoba, and I'm sure the members opposite have heard it, who believe that this is a tired and desperate government. I'm sure that they've heard that from their own constituents. I'm sure that they've heard that from their own constituents. I'm sure that they've heard that from others who feel that this is a government that's on its last gasp.

And if you ever wanted to know the definition of tired and desperate, you would look at the vote tax. You would look at what they're trying to do—a government that's so tired, so out of ideas that they don't want to go to the people and say, support us based on what we believe. They're so tired, they don't want to go to their own friends and supporters

and say, this is what we've done over the last number of years. Will you write a personal cheque out of your own funds to support our party based on our accomplishments?

Maybe they don't believe they have enough accomplishments to run on. Maybe they don't believe that people would support them to the level that they want to spend in a campaign. And so somewhere in the depths of the NDP machine—maybe the member for Kildonan was there, maybe the member for Fort Rouge was there, maybe the member for Transcona was there, they sat around a table and they said, well, if people aren't going to give to us based on our ideas, if we're too tired to go out and try to get our own money, Mr. Speaker, how are we going to do this?

And somebody said—maybe it was the member for Kildonan—I've got an idea, let's put in a vote tax. For every vote that we get, we'll force the taxpayers to give us a certain amount of money, and they all probably clapped hands and sang "Kumbaya" and said, what a great idea. We're so tired that we don't want to get our money, this is another way we can reach into the pockets of Manitobans and fund our own party.

And if the member for Fort Rouge wasn't there or the member for Transcona or the member for Southdale or the member for Kirkfield Park, if they weren't at that meeting, they could certainly stand up and say that and defend this decision. But that's the definition of a government that's too tired to go out and sell itself to the people of Manitoba.

And then you look at the desperate part—how desperate they were to get money into their own party. You know, we saw this play out in Ottawa. We saw it play it out in Ottawa a few years ago where the federal NDP were so desperate to hang on to that vote tax that they said, well, let's form a coalition. Let's desperately try to form a coalition with the Separatists in Québec and the Liberal Party—the now almost defunct Liberal Party—let's get together with them and form a coalition to save ourselves because the Prime Minister is talking about doing away with the vote tax in Ottawa.

And so they cooked this plan, they wanted to put the whole country at risk, at jeopardy, just because they were so desperate to hang on to that money, and that's what happened here, you know, in terms of the desperation with this NDP government. And we saw it play out federally. You know, federally, there was

a campaign run where the federal Conservatives stood on principle and said, if we're elected, if we're elected with a majority government, a strong, stable, national Conservative majority government, we're going to do away with the vote tax across Canada.

And Manitobans went—or Canadians—well, Manitobans went to the polls, too, and Canadians went to the polls, and they said, you're right, we shouldn't have this vote tax. It was one of a number of things that they voted on, but it was certainly one event where Canadians said, we shouldn't have this system where we're forced—where we're forced to donate to political parties through our vote and they rewarded the federal Conservative government with a majority government.

Now, I'm not here to give advice to the NDP. The last thing I want to do is give them campaign advice. I don't want to be involved by giving them any suggestions, Mr. Speaker. They've already taken ideas from a number of members on this side of the House. But, you know, I would because I try to be non-partisan; I try to be bipartisan.

I would say this: I'll give them this advice. If they want to be credible in the next election, they would stand up now and say, you're right. We shouldn't have this on the books anymore. We've been shamed out of it for the last three years, but now we're going to be principled and actually take it off of the books.

\* (10:30)

You know, we know that at their party convention, they were—their resolution was passed where their party members said they were entitled—entitled to their entitlements. They were entitled to take the vote tax and I'm sure that somewhere in the back room there at this conference hall with the member for Fort Rouge, maybe the member for Kirkfield Park and for Southdale, they took their members aside and they said okay, okay, you know, you can vote for it if you want, if you want to pass the resolution. But we can't take it this year, because how would it look? How would it look to Manitobans when, you know, we're running this great big deficit and the debt, you know; we ideologically believe that we should be able to reach into the hands of—pockets of Manitobans and take the money. We're tired and desperate. We don't want to raise the money on our own. We're too tired to do that. We're so desperate that we want to get the money, but not this year because there's an election coming in October, and what would it look like?

And so all of the NDP members of the caucus, they huddled together and they said, yes, that's right we can't take it this year but we absolutely want the money. We're too tired and desperate in the future to raise the money ourselves, and so it passed. The resolution passed at their convention. Everybody is saying "Kumbaya," and the resolution passed, and then the Premier (Mr. Selinger) came out and said okay, but, you know, this year we're not going to take it.

But they are ideologically believe that Manitobans should be forced to pay for a political party by virtue of their votes. They believe that. Each one of their members believe that, and I challenge them, you know. When they go door to door, whether they're—you know, some of them aren't running, I know, and I'm sure that some of them are happy they're not running with this vote tax sort of hanging over their head and other issues. But those that are running, those that are still on the list so to speak and who are running again, Mr. Speaker, go door to door and ask your constituents whether or not you believe that there should be a vote tax in Manitoba, whether or not they believe that every time they vote for a political party they should then be encumbered and forced to pay for the next four years for that political party.

I wonder if the member for Fort Rouge or the member for Kirkfield Park, for Southdale, for Seine River, for St. Norbert, whoever runs in that particular riding, would take me up on that challenge and, you know, maybe we could go together and I'd be happy to do that. We could pick 50 random doors and we could knock on 50 random doors and we'll ask the people who answer the door there: Do you think there should be a vote tax in Manitoba? Should Manitobans be forced to pay for the next four years for every vote you get?

And I'm guessing, Mr. Speaker, I'm guessing that they're going to say no. It'll be rejected. It was rejected nationally. I believe Manitobans are fair and have common sense, and they believe because Manitobans earn their own money. You know, each and every day they go out there and they—to the different jobs that they have and they earn their own money and they come home and they support their families and they believe that if you actually are going to do something, you should really earn it.

But their own government, their own government in Manitoba doesn't have the same conviction. This NDP government, this NDP party,

believes they're entitled to the money of Manitobans, and I would say to each of them—each of them—to think about it and to search their own hearts to believe whether their constituents, the people that sent them here to represent them in this Legislature, whether they'd feel the same way. And if they really believe that, then go out onto the campaign hustings, go out into your communities and publicly say we don't believe in earning our own money in the NDP party. We don't believe in earning our own support because we're too tired and desperate to do so. You go and tell them that and see what the results are on October 4th, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** It's my pleasure to rise to speak in this debate, a debate that should be about how we see democracy in this province, how we see our responsibility to support and encourage democracy. And I think, you know, for those of us who choose to run for office, we have a very high responsibility to promote and encourage citizen participation in that process.

And so it was interesting for me to listen to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) introduce this bill by talking about how much in favour they are of encouraging people to vote and people to participate. And when I heard that, you know, I couldn't help but reflect on the actions that his party took in 1995 when they, cynically, at the height of what I think is cynicism in this province, thought: You know what we could do perhaps to win this election, what we should try to do is we should try to go out and run a phony party called Aboriginal Voice. We should try to target constituencies where there are high Aboriginal populations and try to split that vote off from the NDP. We shouldn't go out and try to encourage people who haven't traditionally participated in democracy to participate. No, we should cynically exploit their non-participation for our own political gain.

So that is the not-so-recent history, and it is really that history of that vote-rigging scandal and the consequences of that that have led us over time to bring in legislation to strengthen democracy in Manitoba.

And one of the first pieces of legislation that we brought in was to ban union and corporate donations to political parties in Manitoba. And I'm proud that we did that. I'm proud that we took that step and said that in Manitoba people should not be able—corporations and unions should not be able to buy

influence of political parties. People should be able to participate in the political process and you should be able to participate whether you have money or whether you don't have money.

And I remember the debate in this Chamber, at the time that we brought in that banning of union and corporate donations, I remember the high dudgeon of the members across the way that we would dare—that we would dare to take out the special interest influence that they had so depended on for so long for the running of their party. I remember it because I remember their commitment to repeal that law as soon as they came into office, a commitment they've never backed away from, Mr. Speaker.

So, it's very, very clear to me what would happen in this province under a Conservative government. We'd be right back to that special interest influence in politics. We'd be right back to the cynicism that we saw evidenced in the 1995 vote-rigging scandal.

You know, I think when the Leader of the Official Opposition was speaking he left out a word. I know he was, you know, paying attention to his notes. I know he always—when he speaks, he has to compete against the voices of his own members. Maybe they don't get enough time to speak in their caucus; they have to come in here and just try to drown out each other. I don't know how it goes in their caucus room, but I think he missed a word when he was speaking. I think what he meant to say was, the more you vote Tory, the more you pay. I think that's what he was trying to say. I think he just missed that key word in his phrase. Because, certainly, you know, we have seen from their positions what they would do to Manitobans if they ever formed government in this province again.

And one of the things we know that people would see, would—and have already seen is higher rates for their telephones because they privatized the telephone system. Now they didn't go out and campaign on it. They didn't go out—and they weren't transparent, they weren't accountable. I guess they didn't embrace those values then. They didn't go out and say, you know, vote for us because the first thing we're going to do is privatize the telephone system. That's not what they did. And I know the Leader of the Official Opposition has very proudly listed, in the past in his resumé, the strategic role he played in the privatization of that Crown corporation and the privatization of lots of other Crown corporations. Now that bit of his resumé's mysteriously

disappeared but, thankfully, you know, you can never completely erase things from the Internet.

So we know people pay more already for their telephones as a result of actions by the Tories. And we know that if they were ever to get into power again they would raise hydro rates. They've said that. They voted against the bill that would equalize hydro rates for people living in rural areas, and we know that they have had the position that hydro rates should be raised to market rates. So, they are correct. The more you vote Tory, indeed, the more you pay.

And we also know, in the past, they've said they have no problem with paying more for private health care. They have no problem with some scheme of private health insurance that would allow people to jump the queue and get care faster than people who couldn't afford it. That is their philosophy, that is their ideology.

But, I think, you know, it's interesting when we talk about public financing, to look at the whole picture of public financing. And I know the Leader of the Opposition talked about different levels and different layers and, I guess, you know, they're okay with the first two layers, they were happy to accept the public financing that they accepted in the last election, all \$1.1 million worth of it. Certainly more than our party accepted. They were happy to do that. And you look at what each of them accepted in the last election. I know the Leader of the Opposition got a nice cheque for \$14,299 after the last campaign. Maybe he's endorsed that back to the people of Manitoba; I don't think so. In fact, you know, if you look at the average rebate per MLA, for every one of the MLAs that they elected in 2007, every one of the 19 MLAs that they elected, they got an average rebate of \$59,428. Almost \$60,000 a head.

\* (10:40)

And if you look at the average rebate for people—*[interjection]* That is the rebate that they got. Now, I am not going to argue that they're worth every cent of that \$60,000 rebate. I'm not going to argue about that. In fact, I'm sure some of my taxes are going into that rebate. But, you know what, I'm happy to support democracy in this province. I don't argue against it on one hand and then accept the cheque on the other hand, which is what the members opposite are doing and have been doing.

But I would, you know—there is one member opposite who actually wasn't afraid to stand on the principle of public financing and speak about it, and

I would like to quote him, the MLA for Brandon West. And maybe it's his support for that that meant that he didn't get the senatorial stamp of approval on his nomination papers this time around. Maybe that's why he has decided after one term not to run again, because I knew the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) in Brandon. In fact, I ran against him in '97 in the federal election, and he beat me soundly. And he was always a Progressive Conservative.

I know that it troubled him deeply when his national party was overtaken by values that he didn't believe in. And I'm sure he sits today and watches what's happening in the provincial party and I'm sure that has some part to play in his decision not to run again.

But let's look at what he said about the issue of public financing. When we brought in the law in—of corporate and union donations, he said in 2003 that a lack of public financing would create a democratic deficit. And I'll quote him. He said: In Manitoba there's a piece of legislation that has in fact banned all corporate and union donations, labour donations; however, they do not have a public financing component. As a matter of fact, I would suggest, sir, that there is now a democratic deficit with that piece of legislation being put into place in Manitoba.

Now, he said that in a standing committee in the House of Commons. He argued that Québec's system of political party financing worked better than Manitoba's. And, you know, I just reflect on something that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) said. The member for Steinbach, who accepted \$12,660.76 in public money after the last election—and worth every dime. I don't begrudge him a cent of it. I don't begrudge—if he wants to use my quote, if he thinks it'll help his chances in Steinbach, I welcome it.

And, you know, when he was speaking, I was listening to him and he, of course, you know, dredging up that old bogeyman of the coalition. I would just ask him, you know, who is it that was responsible in the last election for finally driving out the Bloc Québécois in Québec? Who is it that did that? That was the federal NDP, Mr. Speaker. That is who has brought back federal politics to the province of Québec, and I am proud that there is now a federalist presence in Québec. I'm proud of that fact, and I think all members in this House should all together be proud of the fact that there is now a party working for the people of Québec who believes in Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, and I think the member for Steinbach has missed his calling, really. I think he should be writing novels because his storytelling, when it comes to what he imagines might've happened at the NDP convention—you know what, you don't have to imagine; you can come. You can come. The doors are open. I'll sit with you, and I'll go through you—I'll go through every motion with you. I'll provide you a guide to democracy as you watch it happen, live in front of your eyes.

You don't have to imagine; you can come. I can't go to their convention, Mr. Speaker. I would be shut out of the door. I'd be shut out at the door—not an open transparent process at all. They don't want us to see what their members are talking about at their convention. That's part of their strategy: Don't let Manitobans know what we're going to do. Don't let them know; just keep your head down and hope for the best.

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think Manitobans know that actions definitely speak louder than any words in this House—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable member's time's up.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** It's a privilege to be able to stand on this important bill that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) has brought forward today, and that I had the privilege of seconding in first reading.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that's just a no-brainer. It should pass unanimously by the full support of the Legislature, except that, you know, the New Democrats feel that they are—that they have an entitlement and, of course, I guess they feel very proud of the fact that they just took over the Bloc in Québec dealing with that word entitlement.

There's a bit of other history there as well. Having the vote tax has been described here today, Mr. Speaker—it first came out of the Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien at that time, and, of course, Mr. Harper just campaigned on the fact that he would get rid of it in Canada. And I believe he will because it's the wrong tax. It's a very wrong tax. It's a tax on the public for voting, and that is a shame in regards to the freedom and the rights of individuals.

They shouldn't feel like census Canada, that, you know, the government runs around on one hand telling us all to make sure we fill out our forms so we can be eligible for the \$40,000 to continue to make Manitoba, you know, that's their idea of working

towards a have province in Canada for our transfer payments, instead of trying to get out and build the economy and grow the economy so that we can be self-sufficient in our own province ourselves and not be the only ones west of Québec dependent on welfare from Ottawa in regards to some of those areas.

But the Finance Minister and the minister, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) now, the former Finance minister, certainly don't feel that way, Mr. Speaker. They have no imagination when it comes to the future of Manitoba and no vision. And that's shown by the actions of the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak) here today. You know, this—one of my colleagues, I think it was, indicated that he was so energized today that they thought his batteries were working in the Energizer Bunny.

But, you know, I think he was way over the top today. I mean, he was doing another action that Mr. Trudeau finally showed in Canada today. And I think that that was a concern, as well—to, you know, I mean—and I think it shows the level of debate and the concern that the NDP have for this bill going forward. They're embarrassed that they actually brought it forward, Mr. Speaker, and they can't bring themselves to repeal it and pull it out of there and just get rid of it, because they know it's wrong. They didn't take the money. They chastised us in the House when we were in debate on this bill and saying, oh, yeah, but you'll take the money—you'll take the money. You'll—you won't vote for the bill but you'll take the money.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the leadership on this side of the House said, we'll hold a news conference and we'll tell all Manitobans that we aren't taking the money and we've never taken the money. And why would you start when you're 60,000 behind. I don't know where they thought they were—you know, the New Democrats were going to benefit to about a quarter of a million a year, a million dollars between elections. They thought that they, instead of going out and working for this money and actually asking for support on the doorsteps of Manitobans, that they could just say, well, we'll take her out of general revenue, and we'll get a million dollars every year. Oh, and, by the way, the opposition will get \$760,000 and the lone Liberal in the House will get quarter of a million. And over the four years, there's only been one party that's taken the money.

So, anyway, I guess I'd just like to say that—

**An Honourable Member:** Who? Who? Who took it?

**Mr. Maguire:** The government hasn't taken the money either, Mr. Speaker, and certainly the Progressive Conservative Party hasn't and won't be because, of course, as brought forward by our leader in the House today in this opposition bill, we believe that you should actually go out and knock on doors to find support for your political positions, for political parties. I've always certainly felt that as a farm leader in western Canada and in Manitoba, that you need to go out and talk to the people on the street, find out what's going on in—whether it's in politics in Manitoba or whether it's in a farm organization or whether it's in any volunteer organization in the province that you would get support from talking to those people, finding out what they're at. And then if you've got a platform that you feel is very strong, you ask them for their financial support as well, at the door, or they will volunteer to give you that money on their own to help you run your party.

But the New Democrats don't believe in that, obviously shown by the resolution that came forward at their convention and the members from the Lac du Bonnet riding that came in, feeling that they could push their entitlement. That was the concern that they had, Mr. Speaker. And yeah, so it was a "Kumbaya" at the New Democrat convention this spring, and they voted to take the money. Well, of course, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had to stand up and say, the party doesn't know what it's talking about. We aren't taking the money either. We're still not there—wait till, you know—and, of course, he might be too late because after the next election, when Manitobans do speak, he might not have that opportunity to repeal this bill and we will. It's been brought forward by the leader and I think that's an indication.

You know, the member from Kildonan, I believe it is, the one with his back turned—yeah, he said, I can't believe it. He said I can't believe it a number of times in his chair, Mr. Speaker, today. And I can't believe he'd say that. You know, this is—you know, I've always thought he was a bit of a principled individual in debating in the House. And he has given the credit to the oil companies from coming in and drilling in southwest Manitoba, actually growing that area of the province faster than any other area due to the good member that they have in the

Legislature there as well and the leadership that it takes to understand what taxation is all about.

\* (10:50)

Mr. Speaker, but here he is, he wants those individuals to run his party now. He wants them to run his party. Oh, and they pay—oh, and he's going to take it out of their general revenue—that's it. Well, if it was a priority for him to actually win the next election, why isn't he out knocking on doors and asking for that support? Why isn't he out there asking for voluntary donations to his party? And I'm sure that in his own area, he will get enough money to run his campaign. I have no doubt that he will. He's a good, solid individual, and he feels at times that—you know, I've always felt and had some presence for him in the House, but, you know, today he's just a little over the top and off message because he can't figure out why he, as the—when he was the campaign chairman, ended up with an act that forged the documents on all of these—on 13 returns, that he was the chairman of that election. And I sense that that is very—that bothers him. I'm sure that bothers his core principles, and it showed today in his flippant answers here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I'd say that, you know, there's only one group here, one group that doesn't want to get rid of this tax, and that's the government of the House—in the House today. And yet, here they are talking about, you know, falsified election returns from the '99 election and the '03 election perhaps. He hasn't—he wouldn't go back and tell us how far. They had to pay back \$78,000 to Elections Manitoba. They kept it all quiet at the same time as they were suing someone else in the—that had run provincially and is now a federal Cabinet minister. It shows you how audacious, I guess you could say, that this government—how far they'll go to try to cover things up. They certainly did.

The public has been asking for a public inquiry on those actions of this government for ages and ages and ages, years, and the government won't go forward with a—they won't have a public inquiry. They won't put it on there. You know, Mr. Speaker, they are so embarrassed—so embarrassed.

And the member from Swan River laughs in her chair. As the Finance Minister of this province, I think that's very sad. It's very sad that the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), the Deputy Premier of this Province, sitting in her chair laughing about this issue. And I think that's atrocious, that she would

have the audacity to say that, you know, it's okay. We did wrong. We fraudulently—we falsified election returns. We paid—we got caught, we had to pay \$78,000 back, but it's okay because I was the Finance Minister. I'm the Finance Minister. I'm in charge. Manitobans are very reluctant to re-elect her again on those issues.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about wedge politics. Well, this is certainly a wedge issue. I can't believe that they would call this a wedge issue. That shows you how lack of priority they put on how to spend Manitobans' money.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I guess I just have to go back and say we've raised more money. We've raised more small amounts of money because we've gone out and knocked on doors and Manitobans are telling us it's time for a change and Manitobans are saying Progressive Conservatives are doing the right thing. They're out there telling us what they're doing. They're out there asking for our support. And they're also donating their volunteering dollars to us, actually, about twice as much as the New Democrats have received, according to the public record.

And so no wonder they feel that they have to take from the general revenue of the Province to have to put—to pad their pockets, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the vote tax. Taking a dollar and a quarter out of every voter that votes in Manitoba, the equivalent of that—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** I'm pleased to be able to put a few words on record on proposed Bill 218. I'm sure people do want to hear a little bit from a northerner, somewhat fossilized, and his best-before date is already expired, but—I will admit to that, but, however, I will be replaced by younger and more nimble and more astute and intelligent people, so that makes me feel good.

I think we're all, in this Chamber, very serious about strengthening democracy, Mr. Speaker, and all of us want greater participation and greater transparency in democracy. I don't think there's any member in this House that doesn't agree to that.

I guess I take some exception to the word "vote tax" because I think that's a bit of a misnomer. I do know that it is a per-vote subsidy and it can be looked at from different ideological perspectives.

There—but when you're strengthening democracy, sometimes you have to use tools that

may, in some jurisdictions, look a little awkward or odd. I'm referencing the fact that there are jurisdictions in the world where voters actually are penalized if they don't vote; you pay a fine. I think Australia does that. And I think there are jurisdictions where you actually pay voters for actually voting. Might only be a nominal sum, but at least you're rewarding them. And you could argue, you know, that that's right or wrong, but there are places in the world where they want to increase the participation in the democratic process.

In my own riding, Mr. Speaker, we have turnout of less than 40 per cent. There's something wrong with that picture, when 60 per cent of our people, my people, our constituents, are not turning up to vote. And we have to ask questions why that is the case.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) argues that support should come only from donors, and I know that sounds—I know that on the surface that sounds very democratic. But I said on the surface. How do you help the smaller parties such as Greens, beginning parties? How do you address the imbalances, the ideological imbalances, where, let's say, a certain group of poor people vote one direction and the rich people vote a different direction? It's always easy for a millionaire to say, you know, I don't need that, that little gift. But maybe down below, that can be a hugely important something for the poor person.

Now, we do know we have this ideological split in this province, as well, Mr. Speaker. We don't like to talk about it, but I know it when I knock on doors. And even if I go into a different riding, I know already that you can take me in any riding in this province and I knock-knock on doors, let's say for my particular party, I always start at the trailer courts. Why? Well, it builds up my morale, because people receive me very well and usually are quite supportive. If I were to go to an area where I see, let's say, four boats outside, a couple of Mercedes Benzes, five, you know, garage doors, 120 rooms or whatever, I know they're not going to vote for me. So I mean, we do have those obvious ideological differences.

Now, in the past, I know the members opposite have said, well, we really don't like what you're doing because your union bosses are subsidizing you, giving you all kinds of money and support. And I, being a naive, young politician—well, okay, naive but not young—a number of years ago, I was expecting these union bosses to show up and actually

put big bundles of money on my desk and say, run the election. You know, it never materialized. Not only that, I could never find union bosses. And if I did find them and talk to them, they sounded sensible and they weren't bossy at all. They were democratically elected, and that was a surprise. I cannot say that they didn't make modest contributions individually, or even as a group, at the time. But it wasn't huge, Mr. Speaker.

It certainly was nothing compared to what the Tory party was getting with regard to corporations and banks and huge businesses. Not that I envy them, but—well, yes, I did envy them a bit. But, you know, we weren't getting those kinds of donations. We were getting donations from the working class, and, in fact, if you look at the lists—in those days, we used to get these lists with donors over \$250 and we could compare the Liberal list and the Tory list and the NDP list—the thing that I always noticed, like, we get these fairly poor lunch-bucket-crowd people giving us a few bucks here and there, and a lot of the Tory donations, in fact, the majority of it, much of it, came from fairly rich sources. Now, they had their own smaller sources, as well, but I think if you compare them, you would find that ordinary Manitobans were supporting us proportionately much more than they were the other parties, Mr. Speaker.

So anyway, the union support that I was asking for I obviously got in a theoretical sense, but there wasn't this huge amount of money that the Tories used to talk about. And there certainly were never any union bosses. Like I said before, Mr. Speaker, we want to make democracy transparent. We want more people voting. We want to address imbalances, if there are imbalances there.

And we've done that to some degree. We have set election dates now. I think that's a wonderful way forward. It isn't always good for the party in power. I hope it's good for this party in power, but it may not always be. But we removed that element—you remove that element from the process to make it more transparent and to make it more honest and more democratic. We want electoral fairness, Mr. Speaker, and setting election dates is one way of doing it. And as I said before, this government has banned corporate and union donations.

Now the federal government has this \$1.25 offset for—per vote. You know, people argue against it; they argue for it. Québec has such a system in place. I don't hear too many people argue against it. Maybe some people in the west argue

against it, but a lot of people are not arguing against it. Mr. Speaker, is the per vote subsidy such a bad idea? I think that's the serious thing we want to look at. And I know there are good arguments—

\* (11:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have four minutes remaining. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Flin Flon will have four minutes remaining.

The hour now being 11—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I'm trying to do some House business here.

The hour now being 11 a.m., we will move on to resolutions, and we will deal with Resolution No. 11, Moose Management.

#### House Business

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business?

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

In accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private member's resolution that we will consider next Thursday is the resolution on mandatory bedbug reporting, sponsored by the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, in accordance with rule 31(9), it's been announced that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on mandatory bedbug reporting, which will be sponsored by the honourable member for Springfield.

Okay, now we will move on to resolution, and we'll deal with Resolution No. 11, Moose Management.

#### RESOLUTION

##### Res. 11—Moose Management

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler):

WHEREAS stemming plummeting Manitoba moose populations, particularly in certain game hunting areas in the Duck Mountain and Lac du Bonnet regions, requires meaningful action and leadership from the provincial government; and

WHEREAS the Premier admitted in a March 18th, 2011 news release, quote: "If moose populations decline too much there is a risk the population may not recover or the recovery period will be extended over many years . . ." end quote; and

WHEREAS the Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation has recognized the decimation of the moose population in three hunting areas in their traditional territory; and

WHEREAS Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation recently passed a historic resolution enacting a five-year moose hunting closure on all their lands applicable to all hunters to protect the recovery of the moose population; and

WHEREAS other stakeholders such as the Manitoba Wildlife Federation have stated their support for temporary conservation closures in targeted game hunting areas to protect vulnerable moose populations and to facilitate their recovery; and

WHEREAS the provincial government was woefully slow in developing a plan to address declining moose populations and the plan did not include a critical tool, namely the use of temporary conservation closures; and

WHEREAS population surveys indicate temporary conservation closures are needed immediately and though these closures will not allow—or, pardon me—will allow time for consultations to be completed.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to concede that it erred in not planning and—pardon me—in not announcing that it would use temporary conservation closures as a tool to protect vulnerable moose populations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately make use of temporary moose conservation closures in select game hunting areas so that moose populations can recover to sustainable levels.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, we'll deal with the resolution as printed.

*WHEREAS stemming plummeting Manitoba moose populations, particularly in certain Game Hunting Areas in the Duck Mountain and Lac du Bonnet regions, requires meaningful action and leadership from the Provincial Government; and*

*WHEREAS the Premier admitted in a March 18, 2011 news release, "If moose populations decline too much there is a risk the population may not recover or the recovery period will be extended over many years . . ."; and*

*WHEREAS the Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation has recognized the decimation of the moose population in three hunting areas in their traditional territory; and*

*WHEREAS the Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation recently passed an historic resolution enacting a five-year moose hunting closure on all their lands applicable to all hunters to protect the recovery of the moose population; and*

*WHEREAS other stakeholders such as the Manitoba Wildlife Federation have stated their support for temporary conservation closures in targeted Game Hunting Areas to help protect vulnerable moose populations and to facilitate their recovery; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government was woefully slow in developing a plan to address declining moose populations and the plan did not include a critical tool, namely the use of temporary conservation closures; and*

*WHEREAS population surveys indicate temporary conservation closures are needed immediately and these closures will allow time for consultations to be completed.*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to concede that it erred in not announcing that it would use temporary conservation closures as a tool to protect vulnerable moose populations; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to immediately make use of temporary moose conservation closures in select Game Hunting Areas so that moose populations can recover to sustainable levels.*

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, seconded by the honourable member for Lakeside:

WHEREAS stemming—dispense?

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense.

**Mr. Maguire:** I think that this is a very important concern in Manitoba at this very time, Mr. Speaker. There are areas in this province that the moose populations have been virtually decimated over the last number of years, and I rise today to put a few words on the record about this private member's resolution, supporting the repopulation of moose in—and these declining areas.

Mr. Speaker, the areas that I'm speaking of mainly are in the area of the Duck and Porcupine Mountains—I'll get to the game hunting area numbers that they have in a moment—but, and the other area is in the Lac du Bonnet area which is Game Hunting Area 26, basically, Beausejour to Pine Falls and everything east of Lake Manitoba to the Ontario border.

Game Hunting Areas 18, 18A, B and C around the Ducks, and 14, 14A are critical in that area around the community of Swan River, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, we feel that No. 13 needs to be looked at as well because you can't just say you're not going to hunt in those when it would put pressure on the numbers of moose, the dwindling number of moose that are left in that particular area as well.

I think a key issue in trying to repopulate the moose in these areas, Mr. Speaker, is to remember that a temporary conservation closure is just that; it's only temporary. I even thought maybe we should do this for three years, and put that in place. But the local citizens on the ground, in Swan River and Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation, and in other First Nations there, have felt that it needs to be at least five. I will take the word of the people on the ground looking after this, and I've taken their advice in bringing this private member's resolution forward.

Mr. Speaker, there are a great many people concerned about the loss of moose in these areas and what they see as illegal hunting in these areas. Through a temporary conservation closure, no one is saying that First Nations people shouldn't have the right to hunt for culture and their heritage and sustenance. They would have the right to do that in all other areas of Manitoba, under the plan that we put forward and announced back in late February; my colleague from Lakeside announced that at the Manitoba Wildlife Federation meeting.

And apart from the wildlife federation, there's the Lac du Bonnet Wildlife Association is very concerned about this, Mr. Speaker. A group of—a very diverse group of people from all over the region of the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) in—is

come together to call themselves Moose for Tomorrow in the Swan River area, and they've been doing their very best to raise awareness on this—these important issues for some time now. I've had the opportunity of meeting them a few times, and they cannot believe that the government won't put a temporary conservation closure there that prohibits everyone from hunting in those areas.

And that includes First Nations, Mr. Speaker. It includes those who have had permits in the past, tags in the past. And it would mean that there would be none of those issues in those areas for a period of time. I'm saying five years under this resolution because that's what the people on the ground told me that would be required to repopulate the numbers of moose in that area.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just—for the record, I want to put it on the record that the reason we're speaking about this is because the government just finished surveys in January themselves that showed the decimation of this population. And, I guess I would want to say in the Swan-Pelican Provincial Forest area that the moose population has gone from nearly 2,500 in 1992 to 148 this past January, in that survey, this past spring, at least, in 2011.

There's also a 58 per cent decline in the moose numbers between '93—since 1993 in the Duck Mountains, and a 65 per cent decline since 2000 in the Nopiming Park area. So, Mr. Speaker, one can see that this is something that needs to be dealt with and there's urgency to this.

I had Craig Stevens, the land manager for Wuskwi Sipiik, tell me himself that he doesn't even hunt, but he believes strongly in this resolution. And so much so that he actually got his own band, his own people, to pass an historic resolution on the Wuskwi Sipiik First Nations themselves that goes even further. It says that no one will be able to hunt on our land, and if you're caught hunting on our land you will be fined \$50,000. If you—if you're found with a dead moose in that area, Mr. Speaker, one that you've shot or otherwise captured, you will be fined. And I think that speaks very tellingly to the seriousness that not just First Nations people, but others who are co-operating and working with them, believe that this has to be dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, I think that, you know, it's very important that we react to this in a timely manner. I know the government came out and said, we're going to put \$800,000 towards this, we're going to have some more natural resources officers put in place.

Well, if they hadn't of taken them out of Swan River in the first place, maybe this issue would have been dealt with. But they only left one in the Swan River-Dauphin area, in the whole area. And I know, when my colleague, Glen Cummings, was the natural resource and environment minister in this province, that there was a—that there were natural resource officers there.

\*(11:10)

Nothing's perfect, Mr. Speaker, I understand that, but as the government did in my own community of Melita in the southwest, and right after the '99 election, and took the natural resource officer out of that area, it's very—you know, it's important that these people be on the ground in those areas to police these kinds of circumstances, and to talk to the people on a regular basis, so that they get a first-hand understanding of the criticalness—critical nature of this area of concern.

And so that's why that they're saying that the government erred in not announcing that it would use temporary conservation closures as a tool to protect vulnerable moose populations, Mr. Speaker, and I think that that speaks to itself, and we've recommended the use of temporary moose conservation closures in these select game hunting areas so that moose populations can recover to sustainable levels.

I think that this is a concept that could be put in place at the same time as the government moves these people into place and everything else, and I understand that there's concerns about, you know, speaking with the individuals and having discussions with the Western Tribal Council itself and with other groups in those areas. But certainly, they have seen the light in regards to wanting to protect those moose. I go back to Mr. Stevens who said: I don't hunt myself, but my family might want to at least be able to look at a moose someday. And he said, at the rate we're going, when you get down to 148 moose left in that Swan-Pelican Provincial Forest area, he's afraid that, you know, you lose a few to wolves, you lose a few to being hit on the highway, Mr. Speaker, on No. 10 or in that area, and, you know, and there's—they feel that there's poaching going on as well that needs to be controlled.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's not about these people wanting to even have these moose repopulated so they can go out and hunt them in the future. They've suggested many ways, in fact, that that could be controlled once the moose population comes back to

normal as well, and they've given me ideas on that, but I think it's important to note that this is about repopulating the moose so that a big part of Manitoba can be enjoyed by future generations throughout the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not in danger—I don't feel personally that there is a danger of losing all the moose in Manitoba, that—we won't go there with what's happening in the hockey world right now—but the moose are even moving down into—we've got repopulated ones in southwest Manitoba that, you know, over my period of time when I used to farm there, we hardly ever saw a moose in southwest Manitoba, and there's many in that area now. There's many in the Turtle Mountains and all over Manitoba.

But I say it needs to be controlled in these areas where they are being decimated. And we know that there are wolves and other diseases that take these animals as from time to time as well, but we need to be very, very cognizant of the development. And I think that the types of organizations, the conservation-minded groups that have come forward, the hunting organizations, whether it's the Manitoba outfitters and trappers associations, Mr. Speaker, who are very concerned about the roads that the government has closed in regards to some of these areas in a manner—helter-skelter manner. They certainly don't think that that's going to stop people from going around the closed zones and hunting moose at particular times.

They never were consulted in regards to these closures, even though they have bait programs and bear hunting programs where Americans come up and hunt moose and trap bears and take these bears all the time. And so, I've been on some of those roads with the people in the Swan River area, and I believe strongly that they have it right. They have got some very good ideas in regards to how to solve this problem, but, Mr. Speaker, they don't feel that the government is listening to them.

So I guess—

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

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance):** I'm very pleased to stand up and speak on this bill, and I want to thank the Minister for—of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) for allowing me to go ahead of him in order that I can accommodate a schedule that I have for some meetings.

This is a very important issue, and it's one that we have been working on for some time, Mr. Speaker, and there is sincerely a recognition that moose population is declining. I want to also recognize the work that the Minister of Conservation is doing. The members opposite talk as if no work has been done. I can assure the members opposite that this has been worked on for a long time, and, in fact, we begin some of the meetings with some of the First Nations communities, particularly the Pine Creek First Nation, last year when we were—when the minister and I had the opportunity to visit with them and talk about these important issues.

I find the resolution—for somebody that says they want to work together on an issue, then put into a resolution that the Province concede it erred in not announcing it would be—it would have a temporary closure as a tool to prevent vulnerable—protect vulnerable moose population, if the member opposite really wanted to work with us on these issues and work with Moose for Tomorrow, if he has ideas, he could share them. But certainly the way they have handled this was they never said a word about this. All of these years, they've never said a word about the moose population declining, and then on the eve of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation's annual meeting, they ended up with making this announcement at—just before that meeting. That is not the way you work together.

This is a very serious and a very challenging issue, Mr. Speaker, and one that you have to take into consideration all of the people that are impacted, and certainly our government has been taking action. The member opposite doesn't acknowledge that there was a cancellation of the spring hunt for the season of 2010. There was increased control of predators through a longer season and increased quota on wolves and bear. There's increased deer tags to limit the transmission of fatal brain worm disease. We've invested \$2.5 million for the east-side authority to monitor moose and caribou populations on the east side. There's a decrease in moose licences available since 2004 by 41 per cent.

Now, the member opposite—I want to acknowledge the Moose for Tomorrow group, and this is a group that is composed of a wide range of people who want to see a temporary closure. But there has to be a recognition. There has to be a recognition that there is a responsibility to do consultations with the First Nations involvement, and that is what is happening. This decline in moose population does impact First Nations, but we also

have to recognize that they have rights to—a right to hunt and we have to work with them. I commend Wuskwi Sipihk First Nation for taking a step in announcing that they were going to have a five-year closure on the land that is in their area. But there are other First Nations that have to go through that same process. You cannot say, one person has done it, okay, let's do a closure. There's a responsibility to do consultation and that is happening. But, Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the situation here and, certainly, having those closures, but in recognition of the situation and after discussion with Moose for Tomorrow—and there was a lot of discussion with Moose for Tomorrow—they did make some suggestions, and as a government we have taken action.

We've taken action by announcing \$800,000 for moose population restoration and to help end the decline and to restore the population to a sustainable level. As the member opposite said—I would agree with him—we all want to see moose in the area. Some people want to hunt them. Some people hunt in—for sports hunting. Others hunt for sustenance, Mr. Speaker, and there are others who want to see the moose in the area and maybe want to do photography and—but they just—they're part of the landscape, and they want to see that population restored.

So there's \$800 million. There is going to be \$190,000 for a wildlife survey related to moose management. There's going to be increased enforcement. There's going to be two natural resources officers in the Duck Mountain, bringing it for a total of six. And now the member opposite said, oh, you shouldn't have let them go.

I wonder what the members opposite would do when they wanted to cut \$500 million out of last year's budget, how many other officers they would've had to let go. I'm sure they might've even had to shut down the Department of Conservation if they didn't want to fire teachers and nurses. You know, you cannot have it both ways. You cannot say you support these kinds of things and then bring in an amendment to the budget saying that you're going to balance in one year and save \$500 million. So you can't talk out of both sides of your mouth, going into the Swan River constituency and talking to Moose for Tomorrow and saying, we'll put all of this money in, and then come into this House and put an amendment to balance the budget. You can't do that. People know better than that, and they don't believe that you would do it. They know what you would do,

Mr. Speaker, because they remember what you did when you were in office.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is—it is important to remember that we have to do these kinds of things, and we have put money in place to hire two new wildlife biologists to implement the program.

\* (11:20)

There's \$37,000 for decommissioning of roads. I heard the member opposite say that there was no consultation on the decommissioning of roads. Well, in fact, I will tell him that there was consultation, and it was local people—some local people that recommended closing the roads and others who disagreed.

And that's the whole juxt of this, the whole argument. One group of First Nations has said they agree with it; there's another group that hasn't agreed with it yet and you have to cover the whole—all of this. You have to work together and that's what this government is doing. That's what this Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) is doing, looking for a way that we can meet the needs of all people and come to consensus in a way that will address First Nation issues and address issues of groups like Moose For Tomorrow and other people, particularly—and there is the Lac du Bonnet area. I'm more familiar with the area in Swan River and that's where we have challenges, Mr. Speaker, but certainly making these kinds of investments are important.

Will it be resolved overnight? No, it will not. This moose population started to decline in the '90s and it declined dramatically in the '90s and there were other issues. There was wolves, there was disease, there was other issues that caused the decline of this population. It cannot just come back and be restored just by saying we're going to have a closure. You have to work with the people. We have to look at all of the options and we have to involve the people.

We have put an advisory committee together and the staff have met with them, first on April 7th. They've—there's a second—the second meeting was held on April 28th. So the people are working to resolve this. There is a variety of stakeholders in this. There are the hunters who want to be able to hunt. There are the Aboriginal and Métis people who have a right to take this population to meet the needs of their families.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I want to say to the member opposite, you know, they look for

wedge issues, but—and then try to criticize the government, rather than offering support—going out into the community and saying, oh, they're not doing anything and then coming back here and trying to be critical of the minister, rather than offer solutions. This is one we have to all work on.

And then I would ask the member: There's another very important issue that's coming up, you know. We just heard that the federal government is going to take down the Canadian Wheat Board. That is not an issue that Manitoban farmers support, Mr. Speaker. They don't support them up—and we—just like they—when you look at the votes and, you know, this side of the House, our government has taken a strong position to support Manitobans.

And just as we could all join together to support restoring the moose population, rather than be critical, we could all stand together and support farmers' rights to have a wheat board that they have voted for collectively the—pro-wheat board. I wonder if the members opposite would be so bold as to stand up in his House and say, just like we support the—restoring the moose population, Mr. Speaker, we're going to stand together, and we're going to support the Canadian Wheat Board because that's what Manitobas want and it's important for the city of Winnipeg and it's important for farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I'm pleased to second the motion brought forward by the member from Arthur-Virden and, as the member from Swan River had mentioned, that we want to work together on this. Certainly we welcome amendments to this particular resolution. If the members so wish, we'd be happy to entertain looking at those amendments if she wants to bring them forward.

I know the government's dropped the ball on this particular issue with the plummeting moose populations, in particular, some of the regions in Duck Mountain, Lac du Bonnet regions. However, I do appreciate the support that the government did in supporting the rights to fish, hunt and trap. That is one of the issues that we wouldn't want to take for granted, and I certainly want to thank the—all members of the House for their support there.

However, we do have a serious, serious problem in regards to the moose population, and that's why the member from Arthur-Virden did bring this resolution forward. I know I had an opportunity to go out and represent our party at the annual wildlife

annual meeting in Brandon and I can tell you that we had called for a closure then. And why we asked for that closure is because we did a lot of consultation with the members, with families, with tourist industries, saying this is a very important issue. And they hadn't been getting the attention of the government. So now what we find ourself in is the eleventh hour, trying to move forward with a program that's going to address this particular issue.

Now, the government's own data shows that moose population have been declining in some of the areas for a number of time—number of years. Swan-Pelican Provincial Forest area, the moose population has gone from nearly 2,500 in 1992 to a mere 148 in 2011. This follows a 58 per cent decline in moose numbers since 1993 in the Duck Mountain area and a 65 per cent decline since 2000 in the Nopiming Park area.

Also, in 2009-2010 annual report of Manitoba Conservation stated, and I quote: Moose populations remain low in the Turtle Mountain, Interlake, Whiteshell, Duck Mountain and GHA 26 areas. Recent aerial surveys had confirmed that moose populations in GHAs 21 and 36 are low. End quote. The same annual report observed that Game Hunting Area 36 had to be closed to moose hunting due to significant population declines in the area.

Also, to go on, in May of 2010, in a news release, the provincial government confirmed ongoing problems in some parts of Manitoba. The release stated, and I quote: A recent survey shows a 50 per cent decline since 2006 and 65 per cent decline in 2000, Game Hunting Area 26 from Lake Winnipeg to Ontario border between Winnipeg and Wanipigow rivers, including Nopiming Provincial Park. End of quote.

So, Mr. Speaker, this issue has not just come to light in the last few days. In fact, I have to agree with the member from Swan River. This has been going on since the 1990s and they've had 11 years to do something about this significant issue that has been brought forward. This is a resolution that we're asking them to support, and if they want to amend it, we're certainly open to listen to their amendments.

In talking to various groups, and they have raised questions about whether population surveys are taking place frequently enough. In fact, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) and I heard this very clear when we were at the Manitoba Wildlife Federation AGM, and this issue was very

clear that we needed to do more to protect moose populations.

In fact, the member from Swan River talked about one of the groups in her area that was advocating for temporary closures where moose populations are threatened. And we met with those people, and the minister also, of Conservation, had an opportunity to hear their questions and comments at the Wildlife Federation.

And we have supported closure of tributaries like Lake Dauphin, for example, to try and protect vulnerable walleye populations during the spawning season. It has also been successfully used on the Winnipeg River to protect sturgeon populations from over fishing.

The Manitoba Wildlife Federation president, Reid Woods, indicated that a temporary closure in target area is the only approach to maintain critical mass of animals.

Now, I'm not a hunter anymore. I used to be an avid hunter and I can tell you that I was very proud to be able to go out and be with the group that I was with, and we would hunt in a way that was—had conservation in mind. And I want to be able to hand that down to the next generation and those tourists that want to come in, whether it be with a camera, whether it be for whatever needs that they want. But we certainly have to make sure we do our part in protecting those moose numbers.

I know that the member from Swan River was talking about the First Nation communities, and they have also been speaking out about the importance of protecting moose populations. And the member from Arthur-Virden talked about one of the First Nations—for poaching have been increased to \$50,000. That's a significant amount of money. And I know that also their lands manager, Craig Stevens, says, it's our duty to ensure we protect the animals that cannot speak for themselves. This is our own way to show the Conservation Department that this is an important issue.

So I know that the government knows there's a problem. In fact, March 18th, a news release, the First Minister himself stated, and I quote: If moose populations decline too much, there will be a risk of the population not recovering and recovery period will extend over many years. End of quote.

\* (11:30)

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that a motion brought forward by the member from Arthur-Virden is a motion that I'm certainly, as I said, very happy to second. I know that the people that we've been consulting with over the past year, and, in fact, I know it's been talked about even prior to me being elected in 2003. So I think it's time for action. I know it's the time for action.

This is a resolution that will be able to bring significant light to the issue at hand and we encourage the government to support this resolution. If they don't want to support it in its entirety, then we look forward to amendments on this resolution and hope that all members of the House get in touch with not only their Wildlife Federation in their area but also talk to the people out there on the ground in the grassroots so that they can have the information they need to make sure that a conservation is closure—is the right way to go in order to make sure this issue is dealt with for now and future generations to come.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation):** *[interjection]* The sound of one hand clapping, Mr. Speaker, but the—*[interjection]*—for the previous speaker, not for me. I want to make that clear.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to have an opportunity to comment on the motion that's before the House this morning. You know, you would've thought that perhaps, if the opposition had been paying attention, that we would have had a motion this morning congratulating the government for putting another \$800,000 into the budget to deal with a moose recovery strategy. Maybe they missed that. Maybe they didn't—I mean, the honourable member did raise it in Estimates and I explained to him all the things that we were doing apropos of the moose recovery strategy. But a more honest rendering of the situation would have been to have brought forth a motion congratulating the government for allocating those extra resources to deal with the decline in the moose population in those particular areas that we all agree on.

We all agree it's a problem, whether it's the—although the opposition was somewhat late in coming to this conclusion. Last fall, they had opportunities to raise this in the House and they never did, but while they were not raising it in the House, Mr. Speaker, we were out there in the communities meeting with people, with stakeholders and with First Nations communities and with chiefs, working on what we knew were going to be difficult decisions facing the government with respect to next

fall's hunting season and with respect—there's no question we have to come to some kind of decision for late August when the moose again become vulnerable and when the hunting of moose begins in earnest, even not licensed hunting, but other hunting.

So we are looking at a timeline here, Mr. Speaker, but we did have the time to do it properly and were required to do it properly. This is—the honourable member from Arthur-Virden is—and his colleagues don't seem to get this, that section 35 of the Constitution and subsequent court judgments require governments, when they are considering doing something that would infringe on treaty rights, to go through a proper process of consultation with those affected communities. And that's what we are doing because we want to do this right, and we will do it in a timely way and we will do it in a way that respects the fact that we have to come to a decision by a certain time.

And I've made it clear that we are considering a conservation closure. I would say all conservation closures are temporary, presumably, because you—you know, you—the honourable members want to make a big deal out of the fact that they're only calling for a temporary conservation closure. Well, all conservation closures are temporary, Mr. Speaker, that—in the sense that the reason you have a conservation closure is so that you can bring a population back up to what's perceived as normal so that you can return to the situation where you don't have to have a conservation closure. So, you know, the fact that it's—they somehow want to hang everything on the fact that it's temporary. The fact of the matter is that whenever you initiate a temporary closure, you don't know how temporary it will be. It could be one year. It could be two years. It could be however long it takes to bring that population back up, whether it's fish or moose or whatever the case may be.

So we are considering a conservation closure for as long as it takes to bring that population back up, and in order to do that properly and in order to do that in a way that respects both our constitutional obligations and our ethical obligations to communities that would be affected by such a conservation closure, we've engaged in the—in a consultation process with those communities, and that is still taking place, Mr. Speaker. But, obviously, at a certain point the government will have to make a decision about a conservation closure and that is something that we are actively considering.

And the honourable member's motion points out that, at this point, we have the obvious and, on the record support, of Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation, who did recently pass a resolution calling for a five-year moose hunting closure on all their lands. But as the honourable member himself recognized, Mr. Speaker, there are many other First Nations, and while we welcome that one band council resolution, that cannot take the place of the full and proper consultation with all the other First Nations communities. Because when we do have a conservation closure, we don't want it to be something that's challenged in the courts. We don't want something that's going to be an object of contention in the field between natural resource officers who are enforcing a conservation closure and others who think that somehow it's not constitutionally appropriate, because the consultations that should have taken place didn't take place.

We want to have all that in order, Mr. Speaker, in order that when we do have the conservation closure, it's something that as many people as possible can be on board with because that's what's going to make it work.

You can't have a natural resource officer behind every tree. You've got to have a certain amount of buy in, a certain amount of opting in, a certain amount of agreement in order for a conservation closure to work, Mr. Speaker. And that is the goal of the government when it comes to this, because we know that that's the way it's going to work.

In the meantime, as I said before, we have been moving on other fronts to deal with the decline in the moose population.

The \$800,000 that I refer to, perhaps I should just go into a little detail about what that's going to be spent on. For one thing, it's going to be spent on more moose surveys so that we have a better and more ongoing knowledge of what the moose population is on the ground. That'll be particularly important after a conservation closure so that we can determine whether it's working and whether the population is going up. I mean the honourable member on the—seemed to be contradicting himself because on the one hand he says, we should have known and we should have done this beforehand. And yet he refers to a—the surveys, the results of which were only just released, with respect to the Swan-Pelican valley. It's only in the last few months that we've come to know just how bad things are in

that particular area. So that's not something that we could have—that's not information that we had at our disposal last year, Mr. Speaker. So the honourable member, you know, should make up his mind. He wants to base actions that should have taken place last year on the basis of information that just came forward.

This information has come forward and it's one of the reasons why there is a greater sense of urgency about the matter than perhaps there was last year. Obviously, there wasn't a great sense of urgency on the honourable members' part, because they weren't raising it in the House at the time.

But the government had a sense of urgency even before that, which has now been augmented by this new information. As one of the other reasons—one of the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, that in this \$800,000 we've—that's going to provide the resources to hire another three natural resource officers, two for the west side and one for the east side, two more wildlife biologists to work with First Nations communities and others to implement whatever policies are ultimately decided, including the ones that have already been decided, which is a number of things, including limiting access.

Now we've closed a number of roads in the Duck Mountains. I found out, to my chagrin, that that's, you know, that's not always an easy thing to do because when you shut down access for moose hunting, you also shut down access for a number of other things, Mr. Speaker. So why—so we've been working with the Manitoba Trappers Association, with lodgers and outfitters and everyone else who is concerned that, you know, an action intended to deal with one problem doesn't have an unintended consequence in another area, insofar as we can integrate all this in a way that does the least possible harm to everyone, but at the same time, brings about a genuine moose recovery, then that's what we want to do.

In terms of predators, we know anecdotally and soon we're going to have the figures, because one of the things that we've been able to do is to have a new study of wolf populations in the area. And we expect that that data will probably reinforce anecdotal evidence that there are a great many more wolves, and that that's part of the problem. And we are looking at, Mr. Speaker, at increasing the incentive for trappers to go out there and trap wolves. And to that end, we've already had a number of trappers' workshops to encourage more young people to go

into trapping. But, of course, we need to make it worthwhile for trappers to trap wolves and—because we know at the moment, that's not necessarily the case. A lot of wolves have mange; the pelts aren't worth anything. So it has to be worthwhile for them to trap them in the first place, regardless of the worth of the pelt.

\* (11:40)

These are all things that we're working—I see, Mr. Speaker, my time is almost up, but we are working on what needs to be done. In the meantime, we already have taken a number of significant actions, allocated significant resources. We're doing the appropriate consultations and, at the appropriate time, we will make the decision that is required in order to save the moose population in the Duck Mountains and on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

And we're looking at it regionally, Mr. Speaker. We know we can't just close down the two out of the three areas in the Duck Mountain area. We're going to have to look at a regional closure on that side so not everybody will just rush in and hunt in the other areas. It's going to be difficult, but time—the proof will be in the pudding and we will make the right decision, but when we make it, it will be one that holds and that will work instead of what would happen if the people on the other side were in charge.

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** And I'm pleased to rise today and support the resolution that has been put forward by my colleague the member from Virden, and, Mr. Speaker, I do have to say that I listened carefully to what the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) said regarding this issue and to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), and I just heard the Minister of Conservation say that we will do what is right when the time is appropriate. The time has now passed when something should have been done, and when you have the declining populations that we see before us here, action should have been started on this issue some time ago.

Mr. Speaker, I happen to have a gentleman who is an acquaintance and a friend who lives at the north gate at Duck Mountain Provincial Park. His name is George Bullock and he's been there for many, many years, and it's an area that I used to hunt in. Years ago, we hunted both moose and elk in that area. We used to go to an area called the Roaring River where we had a camp, and we hunted from that camp.

Now, Mr. Speaker, at that time, wildlife were plentiful. The forest was plentiful. Trapping was

plentiful, and if you were to go to that area today, you wouldn't even recognize it, and the reason I say that is because human activity and I guess an exaggeration of human activity has changed the landscape, and it's changed it to the extent where today the wolf population—now, the minister says that they're going to do a count on wolf populations. I can tell him that if he were to check with the trappers in the area—and this is according to Mr. Bullock again—that there are more than 400 timber wolves in the Duck Mountain park today.

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, timber wolves, there may have been a—or half a dozen or a dozen timber wolves in the area but not nearly the hundreds that we have today, and if you combine that with the clear cutting that is taking place in that Roaring River area and north of that, it is no wonder that our moose population can't survive. There is no way that a moose or an elk can outrun a wolf through the debris that is left behind a clear-cutting operation. They just don't have a chance, and it's been witnessed how these animals are taken down by the wolves in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, they have no longer a habitat to hide in in order to be able to raise their young. They are too easily preyed upon by the wolf population and that continues to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also—[interjection] And the member maybe is correct when he says: and who signed that agreement? Well, I think when we see things happening of this nature, we have to take corrective steps, whether it's leaving blocks of land so that there is habitat for wildlife and perhaps it is an aging forest that we have to leave behind, but I think it's more important to leave a habitat where animals can survive and raise their young, especially when it comes to our provincial parks and also our national parks, and I live very near both the Riding Mountain National Park and Duck Mountain Provincial Park.

Mr. Speaker, the other problem that we have, and I'll allude to this not to pick on anybody, but what I witnessed north of Grandview a few years ago was appalling, and the member from Dauphin-Roblin will know this because I'm sure it's been reported to him, where just north of Grandview there were reefers, not one, not two, but four reefers parked in right next to the Duck Mountain and were being used as coolers for wild meat, specifically moose, but elk as well. And when you see that kind of activity, that is not taking meat for sustenance; that is not hunting

for sustenance; that is simply people abusing their privileges, if you like; people abusing the right to hunt, and they don't do anyone any favours.

And I'm glad that in—the minister acknowledged in—and we also have had confirmation that First Nations communities are concerned about this, and they are prepared to work with government to address this issue.

But, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the same thing doesn't happen as we have seen on Lake Dauphin. Now, what I saw there this spring was absolutely absurd. And anybody who fishes and understands anything about fish habitat will tell you that what happened this spring in Dauphin, it was just simply wrong. You don't shut down the season and then open it up a few days after a rally is held or a function is held. And the spawning season hasn't even begun and you've already lifted the ban.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these aren't my words. I'm asking the member from Dauphin, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers), to go and check this out with the people who live in the Dauphin area. And I ask him—and if he doesn't believe them, then to ask his own fish biologists because they will tell you that it was absolutely wrong to do that.

And, Mr. Speaker, those kinds of decisions are the responsibility of the government. You can't point the finger, Mr. Minister of Agriculture, you cannot point the finger at a bureaucrat and say, and who do you think made that decision? It is your government's responsibility. It is the responsibility of the minister responsible for those kinds of decisions. Don't point the finger at staff because that doesn't work.

Mr. Speaker, and that's why there's suspicion. We have been in Dauphin many—and I know the member for Dauphin, the Minister of Agriculture, gets a little bit of exercise when you talk about that issue because he knows he's made an error. He knows he's responsible, and he will not accept that responsibility. That's his problem, not mine.

**An Honourable Member:** I know you're making it up.

**Mr. Derkach:** And, Mr. Speaker, and he says I'm making it up. Ask the people in the Dauphin area. There's a lot of them making things up and you'd better talk to them about it.

And, Mr. Speaker, so you have to talk about trust. And when you—when we see what's happening

with the moose population in the north—and we see that in the Duck Mountains the percentage has dropped by something like 58 per cent from where it was a few years ago—you have to say to yourself, someone has not been paying attention. And who has responsibility for that? The responsibility, again, falls not on staff, but it falls on the minister, because I know that the minister's responsibility is to get those statistics and to be able to analyze them and then to make decisions, policy decisions based on that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, steps have been taken, yes. I'm not going to say that the government is completely wrong because steps have been taken, but, in my view and in our view, not urgent enough and too late. Now we'll have to have closures of hunting in that area for a long, long time before that population comes back up, if it ever is going to come back up. But when it's—when we say a conservation closure, we have to ensure that it applies to everybody equally, that we don't just pick and choose, and we don't open it before that deadline for some and then, again, do the pick and choose as we have seen in—on other issues.

\* (11:50)

So, Mr. Speaker, I support this resolution. I think it is a right resolution, and it's simply asking the government—yes, and we're prepared to support the government when they make good decisions and when they move forward. And what this resolution is calling for is for the government to take more immediate steps and giving government some suggestions on what our side thinks that may be some good, plausible solutions to a problem we're all facing could be.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) will take this as advice and will not be offended by it and simply use it as a helpful way to approach a problem that we in Manitoba and all of the people who have an interest in wildlife see facing us as a province.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Well, let me begin by assuring the member for Russell that the Minister of Conservation is a very patient, very open-minded person, and he will consider all kinds of possibilities, but that I do remind the member for Russell that the one—only thing maybe that I agreed with what he just said is that this a question of trust and that the Minister of Conservation will patiently listen to what

the member for Russell and his colleagues have to say across there.

But, you know what, Mr. Speaker? They don't speak with one ounce of credibility on this issue or the fishing issue in Dauphin, not one ounce. This is pretty clear; this resolution and their approach on this is all about politics, all about politics and nothing else—nothing else, end of sentence, period. They can come up to the Sport Fishing Enhancement, drink a little bit of whiskey with my constituents, and spread all the rumours they like, but they're out to lunch on this issue and they've done nothing, either in government or in opposition, to be helpful on this issue, either the moose or the protection of the walleye in our area, and that is shameful.

It tells me that we on this side of the House are up to making those big, tough decisions that need to be made—made, and the folks across the way just aren't ready to do that yet. They're not ready to do it. Their attitude is that you can sit back, you can wave a magic wand at the 11th hour, like they're doing. We didn't hear from the member from—member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for months and months and months on this issue. We didn't hear from the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) or the member from Russell for months on this issue.

On the eve of a Manitoba Wildlife Federation dinner, oh, they come out of the woods. They come out of the woods. They step up and they say, oh, we're tough on this issue. Oh, the government isn't doing anything. Oh, it's so awful. I'm sure glad there was a dinner that they could try to make some political points at or we'd still be waiting for the Conservatives across the way to come forward and say anything on this issue, Mr. Speaker, let alone anything that would be helpful or useful or let alone anything that would protect the moose, or the walleye on Lake Dauphin for that matter.

They're playing politics on this, plain and simple. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? They're not even doing a good job of playing politics on this, quite frankly. But that is something that we'll work on over the next number of months.

Mr. Speaker, they're clearly not ready to make decisions. They either know, or they don't care to know, what has to happen in order to have a moose closure—*[interjection]* They tried to retire him but, no, he's hanging in there.

We have some tough decisions to be made on both moose and on fish, and we're making those

decisions. The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) talked about an \$800,000 item that is very basic, very basic to provide the kind of data that's necessary to make these decisions. I don't know what members opposite have against collecting data to do that—oh we're just throwing money at a problem, the same old line the Tories have used for generations, same old rhetoric. But that investment in counting moose and considering moose habitat is going to pay off in good decisions.

And, Mr. Speaker, the toughest decision, the toughest decision which members opposite aren't prepared to make, aren't capable of making just quite yet, is that you have to respect section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. You can play little local politics all you like, but you're still bound by that. You're still bound unless you think you're smarter than the Supreme Court judges that have been ruling on this since—back through the '80s and '90s into this area.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court judges who have backed this province's and any province's duty to consult or obligation—not whether we want to do it or not, it's an obligation. Our Canadian Constitution says we have to do that. We can do a closure. We can do a conservation closure and that is clear. And we have shown we can do those conservation closures and we've done them on Lake Dauphin three years in a row. And every one of those three years, we've fulfilled our duty to consult with First Nations and Métis people who hold the right in our area.

Now, they can stick their heads in the sand across the way and pretend that that doesn't exist. But you know what that produces, Mr. Speaker? That produces the kind of news release that went out in May of 1999 from the members opposite when they were in government. What did they do? They put a news release out and didn't enforce a single part of what they said they were going to do. Not one. As a matter of fact, out come this news release saying, oh, we're doing a conservation closure, because we have to protect pickerel stocks.

And you know what they did? And I know this. I remember at the time, they asked resource officers from Dauphin to be relocated temporarily into other parts of the province.

Do you know how many warnings they issued in '99? Do you know how many charges they issued? Do you know how many nets they took out of that—those rivers leading into Lake Dauphin? Not a single

one. So you can talk, and you can have all the rhetoric you like. On moose and on walleye, you have no credibility, Mr Speaker.

Not you, Mr. Speaker, through you to the people across the way who aren't ready yet to make these big, tough decisions. They're better off staying on the other side of the House where they are.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation right now where there's a lot of people who are depending on the government to make good decisions, to make decisions that don't mess it up going—on a go-forward basis. We have people who are looking to us to make decisions based on the data that we can put together. And that's what the \$800,000 is for that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) was just speaking about. We have to—we have to get that data together, and we have been putting that data together.

And we have to meet with the Moose for Tomorrow crew in Swan River, which we've done. We have to get together with the First Nations in the area, even set aside our duty to consult. It makes good sense to talk to people who are stakeholders there to begin with. And the First Nations are more than just stakeholders. They do have that right that does exist, Mr. Speaker. We are doing that work. Unlike members opposite, we're doing the work that's necessary to make sure we can put a conservation closure in place, and we can make it stick. And we can defend it in the courts of the land; that's key.

If there had been a charge laid in the '99 spring spawn season, there would have been a challenge in the courts. And I know this because the minister of the day was honest enough to admit this to me. The predecessor of the guy who's chirping at me right

now, Mr. Speaker, the predecessor of that member, he said very clearly that we had not done our consultation. We had not met with the chiefs. We couldn't actually go ahead with the conservation closure in 1999 because we didn't do our homework. That's exactly what the former minister said. He was being honest; the current member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) is being somewhat other than that.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to doing the right thing. We're committed to doing the right thing with all the homework that needs to be done along the way. There's no sense embarking on something that is counter to what the Canadian Constitution says. But I do want to emphasize: the Canadian Constitution makes it possible, makes it possible for us to protect the moose. It makes it possible to protect the pickerel. It makes it possible to make decisions to conserve right across the board.

It makes that possible, if you have a government that's willing to do the consultation work that is required and necessary. It's possible, if you've got a government that's going to sit down with all the people involved and speak with them and listen to them and enact many of the suggestions that they come forward with. Mr. Speaker, that is when you can do a conservation closure, not winding up with a—not thinking that you can sit in your desk in your office with a magic wand in your hand, with a magic wand that you think you can wave around and just solve these little political problems that you're concerned about. That won't work for anybody. This is—it takes hard work. It takes the time—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have one minute remaining.

The hour now being 12 noon, we will recess and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, May 19, 2011**

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