

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 15, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Mr. Speaker: Good morning, colleagues. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, is there leave of the House to call Bill 211?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to call Bill 211? [*Agreed*]

We will now proceed with Bill 211.

Bill 211—The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for Morris, that Bill 211, The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur la transparence et la responsabilité (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: And I'm pleased to rise today and speak in favour of this bill, and I'm sure it's just some housekeeping measures. And I'm sure that members—all members of this House will be—to see fit to support this bill today. It's about transparency and accountability in government. It's a no-brainer, Mr. Speaker, so I look forward to all members of the House, in fact, supporting this Bill 211.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first piece of legislation in the PC Party's five-point alternative plan to the

NDP's tax hikes on Manitoba families, and I know a number of my colleagues have also introduced pieces of legislation that are also a part of that five-point plan. And they're all part of the alternative to this NDP government's plan of taxing—further taxing Manitoba families and breaking their promise from the last election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, our plan is based on putting forth a positive alternative to expand the economy and create jobs without raising taxes. And that's an important part of this, because we know in the last election campaign, of course, the NDP said that they wouldn't raise taxes, but we know from this budget they increased taxes by some \$184 million and also increased fees by some \$114 million.

Manitobans need to know the truth about the Province's finances, Mr. Speaker. They have a right to know exactly where provincial revenues will be raised. Manitobans cannot trust governments that hide \$1.12-billion deficits and then pay for them with hidden user fee increases and massive tax base expansions, which is what has happened in this recent budget that was introduced.

Mr. Speaker, this bill makes sure all Manitobans know what tax hikes and user fee increases are by mandating the budget papers to contain a schedule that breaks out all user fee increases and tax base expansions. And this is very important to create this kind of transparency for Manitobans so they can see exactly the fees that they pay for the various services that they use in our province and how they have increased from last year or the previous year.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a habit of using hidden user fees to fund its out-of-control spending addiction.

Since its first budget in 2000, user fee revenues have increased by some \$398 million per year. That's a rise of 177 per cent, nearly double over 12 years, Mr. Speaker. And this year alone, user fees are going up by \$114 million in Budget 2012, or 22 per cent from last year. And many of these fee increases apply to mandatory government services, services the public has no choice but to pay for and to pay now more for those mandatory services.

Mr. Speaker, vehicle registration fees are going up. Birth, death and marriage fees are going up.

Child abuse registry checks are going up. Land titles documentation fees are going up, and the list goes on and on and on.

The problem with all of this is that none of these fees were announced in the budget speech, Mr. Speaker, nor were they outlined on a fee-by-fee basis in the actual budget, and we all know that the budget lock-up—the government would not provide an explanation for what fee increases were coming. We know that there were certain members of—within the lock-up—members within the media who were privileged enough to receive this information, but, of course, the others in the third-party lock-up were not privileged enough to receive this information. And even that information that was given to the media lock-up was not an exhaustive list of all of the fee increases and tax base expansions that this government introduced in their budget.

Instead of leaving Manitobans in the dark on fee changes, Mr. Speaker, the budget should clearly outline the fee amount for the previous year, the fee amount for the upcoming year and the resulting revenue change. For example, one line would be for vehicle registration fee. It would state that the fee in 2011 was \$119 and the fee will increase to \$154 in 2012 and the expected revenue change is an additional \$16 million in revenue for the Province of Manitoba.

Now, it's bad enough, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP has chosen to hike this fee to pay for their spending addiction, but it's even worse that nowhere is it transparent in the budget books for Manitobans to see exactly how this is affecting them personally. So that is something that is addressed in this bill.

So, instead of hiding this information or spending hours, which is what Manitobans have to do, trying to find the true cost of these fee increases, Manitoba's budget should outline this information in an easy-to-access format.

Mr. Speaker, the same story of hidden information is true of public sector compensation disclosure documents. But before I get to talking about that, I want to go back to how I see that this would unfold. It basically could be put in the back of the budget documents, in the way of a schedule, and it lists what the fee was last year, what the fee is this year, what the expected revenue increases are, so that Manitobans can flip directly to that schedule and see exactly how those individual fees will affect them personally.

* (10:10)

And the more that we try to hide these fees and to make it very difficult for Manitobans to find what these fees are and how they compare to last year, so that Manitobans can address their own budget situations, so that they can prepare for the following year, Mr. Speaker, in their own budgets to know that these fee increases are taking place. At least they can prepare for it, but right now they can't even find what these fee increases are until they actually go and seek out that service where these fee increases have taken place. Until they actually go and see first-hand that they're paying that much more, it's going to be very difficult for Manitobans to understand the true impact of this budget on their wallets.

But instead of hiding this information or spending hours trying to find the true costs of the fees, Manitoba's budget should outline this information in an easy-to-access formula, which I have already stated how that should—how they should go about doing this.

The same story, Mr. Speaker, of hidden information is true of public sector 'compensature'—compensation disclosure documents. Since the Province has moved to summary budget, so should the compensation disclosure documents be reported on a summary basis. And although government organizations are required to publish a list of remuneration above the \$50,000 level, the information is not posted in an easy-to-access locations, such as online annual reports or the government public accounts books. In the worst case—and this is somewhat egregious—Manitoba Hydro actually charges a \$25 access fee to obtain the information directly from the company.

And as I understand, the NDP was actually charging Manitobans who wanted, came in off the street and wanted to find out or wanted to get access to the budget books, as I understands, and members opposite can correct me if I'm wrong, but I had heard from members of the public that they were actually charging for those books, Mr. Speaker. Well, that is not easy access for Manitobans. Manitobans should not be charged for access to information like that.

This bill requires all Crown corporations and other government entities to have their required public disclosure documents included in volume 2 of the public accounts. If these organizations' financial records are included in the Province's summary budget, their public disclosure requirements should

also be included in their summary public accounts. This is merely housecleaning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we consulted many Manitobans across this great province of ours. We heard loud and clear they want more transparency and accountability from this government. This bill will increase the accountability of this NDP government for their decisions and make information easy to access for all Manitobans. And I urge all parties in the Legislature to support this bill and the concept of transparent and honest accounting in government.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Good morning. I want to start by thanking the member opposite for at least engaging in a discussion about transparency and about accountability. I believe those are important terms in which we need to have discussions in this House and other forums about, because I think we all want to make the budget and the process leading up to the budget as transparent and as accountable as we can. I think that's a good goal, and we should all be working together towards that.

I want my colleague across the way to know, though, that just calling an act by the names transparent and accountable doesn't mean it's actually transparent and accountable, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of this has to do with the baggage that members opposite bring to this discussion. I notice that you—the member opposite referred to some of these things as housekeeping.

Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker, if they're housekeeping now, they were housekeeping back when they were in government, and they didn't bring these measures forward back then. For some reason, all of a sudden, they've had this conversion on the road to Damascus, and they've all of a sudden got worried about accountability and transparency.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I sat right there in that seat at the back from between '95 and '99, right in the corner there, right behind where the current member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) is sitting, right at the back there. And I watched the Finance minister of the day on this side of the House hiding a complete set of books underneath the table—underneath the table. And they would stand here and they would preach about accountability and 'transparency'—transparency. And they would know all the buzzwords—that's the easy part—they'd know all the buzzwords, as our friends across the way today understand all the

buzzwords. They—at the same time as they were talking a good game, they had another set of books underneath that table.

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, you know, they sometimes get concerned about debt and deficit and those sorts of things. Once in a while they get worried about that. But, you know, when they were—when they had their opportunity to deal with debt and deficit, which they did a pretty good job of racking up themselves, they wouldn't even admit to some of that debt. They wouldn't—pensions they took to the side and put them way over here someplace and pretended like they didn't exist—had no plan to deal with debts or unfunded liabilities when it comes to pensions.

You know, it's pretty amazing that Tories today can pretend like they didn't make debt back in the '90s, Mr. Speaker. Well, that's just nonsense. They racked up debt. They didn't take responsibility for it and they had no plan to pay for it, and they wouldn't even report that to Manitobans. Deny, deny, deny is what their modus operandi was in those days.

And I would suspect, maybe this bill says to me that the member from Tuxedo learned those lessons of the past of her predecessor, the MLA for Tuxedo then. Maybe that's the case, Mr. Speaker, but then she talks about hidden fees—hidden fees. They were so hidden that, you know, in Estimates, when the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) asked me about them, I provided a complete list. And I didn't go to some vault somewhere covered in—you know, some vault in a dark room covered in spiderwebs and cobwebs; I went to the budget. I did the MLA for Tuxedo's homework for her on this issue. I provided a list, and I'm sure she has it in her file somewhere. It was just last week that I gave her the list, and it itemizes the fees and the changes and the revenues that these fees are going to generate.

I think it's important that Manitobans know what fees and taxes, what expenditures we're going to limit. I think it's important Manitobans know that. That's why I provided a list for the member for Tuxedo. That's why we put these things in the budget. Now, we covered some of these in the 30 minutes or so that I had a—the honour of presenting a budget in this House. But, Mr. Speaker, in the budget documents themselves, those—everything is available there that the member of—for Tuxedo has asked about. So the motivation behind the bill that she's putting forward, which we won't be

supporting, but the motivation, I think, is a little suspect.

The other thing that I notice the member for Tuxedo touched upon, was their grand scheme that they're putting forward to Manitobans having to do with taxes and how they're not going to raise taxes, Mr. Speaker. Well, that belies their history as well. That—I remember fees, park permit fees coming forward from members opposite. Fees, taxes, you know, they complain about, oh, this bad government over here. We've expanded the base of the provincial sales tax to include some more things. But you know what they did? The same thing. Do you know what they expanded the PST base to include? Baby food—baby food. Now they have the nerve to stand here in the House and complain that a government is expanding the PST to other items—baby food.

You know, Mr. Speaker, then they come along in the—and they—into this House with a resolution that says, we're going to balance this—the budget right away, and we're going to do it by slashing and hacking health care and education, and not investing in infrastructure, and not investing in kids—services for kids.

* (10:20)

And they brought a resolution into the House. This isn't me making this up. This is a resolution in this House, supported by members opposite, every one of them. We voted against that resolution. I'm very glad we did and protect important services to Manitobans.

And then we used this budget, not just to fend off the cuts that the Tories would bring forward, but we used this budget to underscore our commitment to health care and to kids—services for kids, and education, and strategic investments in infrastructure, historic—historic—levels of support for infrastructure in Manitoba. And that's what 20—the Budget 2012 is about, Mr. Speaker.

You know, it would be nice if the members opposite—and I realize they're opposition members and their prime objective every morning is to come in and be critical. That's the way the system works, I get that. But, you know, not once have they come forward and said that our plan to raise the basic personal amount a further \$250—this is a real benefit for Manitobans, by the way, to raise that and have it as—and a benefit for Manitoba. Do it over the next four years so that there's a benefit of \$1,000,

Mr. Speaker. We can do that and we've proposed doing that in Budget 2012.

Members opposite—and, you know, they can vote how they like on budgets, that's fine, I understand that, but they can still vote for the budget and they can be decent enough to say, that's a good measure, that's a real benefit for my constituents. That's going to, over the period of four years, take 22,000 Manitobans on the low-income scale, take 22,000 Manitobans off the rolls, off the tax rolls all together. That's not a bad thing, Mr. Speaker. And they can vote against our budget and they can say the basic personal exemption is a good thing to come forward with. They can say that, you know, what we did in terms of supporting seniors, with the education property tax credit, an increase, up to \$1,025, that's a good thing. No matter how you cut that, that's a good thing for seniors.

So, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can vote how they like on the budget, and I'm not going to lose sleep over—that's fine. I've been in opposition, and we voted against budgets before. That's okay. But they can't possibly be angry about support for seniors like this. They can't possibly be angry about the—raising the basic personal exemption. I don't believe that they're—that our friends across the way are that mean about things.

Budget 2012 contains the information that the member wants us to—wants to be kept abreast of. Budget 2012 and the documents that we put forward are transparent. And Mr. Speaker, I'll be accountable to the people of Manitoba any day—

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

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I rise today to speak in support of Bill 211, the increased 'transparitiby'—'transparency' and accountability act, and I'm very pleased to speak in support of this because, you know, I believe that Manitobans deserve to see what's out there and what the government is doing to them.

Apparently, you know, the minister across doesn't seem to understand that you have to learn something every day and you can be taught; you can learn from history. He brags about what a—what the previous Conservative government did, but inadvertently, he left out what his government has done here. Obviously, he's not very proud of that, so.

The bill speaks to the disclosure of fees and fee increases. And I've often watched governments promise not to raise taxes and promise not to raise fees, and then they raise fees as if, you know, they don't have the same effect on taxpayers. This government did both; they promised not to raise taxes and then burdened Manitobans with the highest increase in taxes and fees in recent memory.

Most taxpayers see fees as a tax. Anything that the government takes out of their pocket—of taxpayers is really a tax, and fees have been one of the most abused forms of taxation. People can understand a reasonable fee for service. What is reasonable is a question that this government does not understand.

Manitobans deserve to have clarity, 'transparency' and accountability. Manitobans plan and they need to know what those fees will be, and what they have been, how much they have gone up, how they will be affected by them.

When the minister had his prebudget consultation meeting in Brandon, a very cold evening, but we had, you know, there was a good turnout. A lot of the rural areas came out to ask about flood and reparations and that type of thing. You know, there was a lot of discussion there about taxes and there was a commitment from this minister not to raise them. Now we know that commitment was broken.

You know—there—and there was a question from the audience about fees because they were concerned, not only about taxes, but they were concerned about fee increases. They were worried that the fees were going to go up and this minister stood up and said, you know, that's a really good idea. As if he'd never thought of that before, Mr. Speaker.

How naive are we? How naive is this minister? I mean, where are you going to go with this? You're going to raise fees until we can't afford to pay any more and it's just comes out of the blue.

There's a plumber in western Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, that has done a lot of work there. I call him a plumber because that's what he's proud about—of doing. He's not a mechanical engineer, but he has installed most of the boilers in western Manitoba. Not installed them once, but maintained them, reinstalled another boiler to replace them when they weren't working efficiently anymore. And just a few years ago, this government came up with a fee for

that individual, \$5,000 fee, just for the right to install boilers, something he had been doing for well over 50 years in Manitoba. What did the \$5,000 go to? Nothing more than it used to do before. No more inspections, nothing. Just another lump sum fee that he had to pass on in his business to his customers. Those are the types of fees that we're talking about here.

We have a vehicle registration fee, doesn't go through Public Utilities Board. This government can just raise that fee whenever they want. We don't have to go and check out, see if it's appropriate. It's a fee that goes directly to the government from Manitoba Public Insurance. It's a fee that has to be charged at the retail sector and it's a fee that those agents have to defend to people that come in. It's not this government that has to defend it apparently, because they just raise them at will.

When we asked, several times, in committee, in this House, what that fee applied to, no one could tell us. I don't know. Does it apply to cars? Well, probably. Does it apply to trucks? I don't know. Does it apply to trailers? I don't know. When we going to find this out? When you go in to pay your registration, that's when you're going to find out.

And this government pretends that they don't know. They know what those fees are; they've got numbers in the budget. Those numbers came from somewhere, there—those numbers came from the basic estimates that all—that they want all along to know which vehicles that fee applied to. Why won't they disclose that to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker? They—[interjection] Apparently, they are ashamed.

You know, I've long been shocked by this government's lack of transparency. They believe they know what's best for Manitobans but, as we've seen in recent scandals, they don't.

It's apparent, Mr. Speaker, that we need this legislation for Manitobans and we have to have this House pass it to make it more transparent all the way along. Thank you.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to get up and speak to this particular bill, The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act. Note that it says, The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act, which suggests to me there's already a significant amount of transparency and accountability in this government.

And the fact of the matter is, we were elected in 1999 because the people of Manitoba regard us as

open and honest government. We were re-elected in 2003 because the people of Manitoba regard us as an open and honest government. We were re-elected in 2007, just so we're getting the facts straight, because the people of Manitoba regarded us as an open and honest government. And then in 2011, we were re-elected again, fourth term, because the people of Manitoba regard us as an open and honest government.

But, you know Mr. Speaker, this is what happens, this is the kind of bill that gets put out by the opposition when they have nothing else to come forward with. I mean, really, this is the best you got on the budget? This is it? We want to look at your list of fees because we can't find them, we don't know where they are? I think the member from Tuxedo has been in this House for a long time, she should know her way through the budget book. Honestly. He should know where they're, but you can't find them. You can't find them. I'm not even sure where you're looking for. It's a sad commentary. You should know your way through after all these years, and yet, can't find them.

*(10:30)

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

I want to caution all honourable members, especially the member for Fort Garry-Riverview, please place your comments through the Chair.

Mr. Allum: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, please accept my apologies, I will certainly do that.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, this is kind of what happens when the opposition accepts their political agenda from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. This is what happens. They follow the lead of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and they come forward with this minimalist vision—or, actually, non-vision. It's a small-minded, paranoid view of the political world that says, oh my God, something must be hidden. I can't find it. It's not there. So we need more accountability and transparency, but, you know, the funny thing is, it's all laid out for the people of Manitoba and, frankly, they understand it.

The people of Manitoba have repeatedly endorsed this side of the House because they know us to be honest and open, accountable and transparent, and they contrast that with the 1990s when this big cloak was spread over the province and nobody knew what was going on. It was a sad commentary. And since 1999, the people of

Manitoba have repeatedly endorsed this side of the House, the way that we conduct ourselves, the way that we speak to the people of Manitoba, our honesty in talking to them, our transparency and accountability. And through four elections it's all happened. And that's why you're on that side of the House and we, fortunately, are on this side of the House.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, Budget 2012 protects what matters most to Manitobans. When the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) stepped up and delivered the budget, his major theme was to say, we're going to protect the things that matter most to Manitoba. So what are we going to do? We're going to do what we've always done. We're going to invest in hospitals. We're going to invest in schools. We're going to invest in child care. We're going to make sure that the things that matter most to Manitobans are taken care of.

And you know what the people of Manitoba are saying back to that? Thank God that's what you're doing. Thank God you haven't taken a gigantic axe and hatch the budget. But, you know, we didn't do it.

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Allum: No. The people of Manitoba don't want us to do that. They don't want us to take a gigantic axe to the budget and hack and chop and hack and chop and lay people off, which is what you want to do. That's what you want, always to lay people off, create unemployment in our province. We don't do that. We invest in Manitobans, but we do it in a way that's responsible and accountable—responsible and accountable.

And you can say, well, you're creating more debt, but I don't need to tell you—although maybe you don't read the paper, Mr. Speaker, maybe the member some—from Emerson has no—has—doesn't read, look at the news, doesn't read the paper, doesn't take advantage of reading in any of the journals out there, to know that almost every government across the western world went into debt in 2008 because of the kind of tactics that's supported by the members from—member from Emerson.

But we don't do that. We don't cut costs at the expense of people and we don't put profits ahead of people. No, what we do is we invest in people, we invest in amenities, we invest in the kind of things that make Manitobans—Manitoba a better place for all Manitobans. It's a simple thing. We're not taking care of our friends on this side of the House. We

don't sell the telephone company. Don't tell the telephone company to our friends, Mr. Speaker. We don't do that. In fact, we conduct ourselves in a most accountable and transparent way so that the people of Manitoba know that they can trust us.

That's why we've been elected one, two, three, four times in a row. And it will be five if you keep it up, because the people of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, have no respect for a political agenda that's been hijacked by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. It's minimalist. It has no leadership. It's no vision. They don't know where they want to take the people of Manitoba. The best they can do about the budget is come back and say, there's the fees? What happened to the fees? It's an amazing kind of thing that you—that the people of Manitoba actually have higher expectations of the opposition. They have a higher bar for the members opposite.

An Honourable Member: We have a high bar. We didn't put it so low that you could step over it.

Mr. Allum: My guess is that you've been to the bar more than you care to admit, but that's what happens.

On the key issues of accountability and transparency, I don't need to remind you that we instituted GAAP, Canadian generally accepted accounting principles, for senior government. We combined the books. You had two separate sets of books: one the public saw, one they probably didn't see. Two sets of book; just the one now. That's what accountability is, Mr. Speaker, and that's what transparency is.

Not only that, all of our summary statements since then have received an unqualified audit opinion—an unqualified audit opinion. That's no small achievement. Between 2001 to 2005, the Auditor General commended the government in his reports on the public accounts for the continuous improvements achieved in accounting and reporting practices. This is the Auditor General, independent office of this Legislature, saying that we have achieved continuous improvement in accountability and in transparency since this government came to power in 1999 and we've done so every year since.

But, Mr. Speaker, the main thing, and the thing that really makes it hard for the opposition, is that what the Minister of Finance has done and what this government has done in the budget has maintained Manitoba's affordability advantage, and that's what really gets under their skin. We're going to make sure—and have already made sure through legislation

introduced in this House—in a bundle together, those key things that make for an affordable household, your heating, your auto insurance. Those are the things that really make for affordability. And then we're going to say, but we really want your kids to go to university. And so what do we do? The second lowest tuition for colleges in Canada, the third lowest for universities in Canada. Manitoba's affordability advantage.

And that's what really irks them. You see it still, even through this attempt to educate and elucidate for the members opposite about how they might improve their performance here in the House, they still go back to the mean-spirited, small-minded, Canadian Taxpayers Federation view of the world.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Manitoba have a broader vision for Manitoba. That's why they endorsed this government, not through one, through two, through three, through four elections. We'll continue to represent Manitobans with pride and have a privilege. Thank you.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): It's a pleasure for me to rise today in the House and to support Bill 211, increased transparency and accountability act, and I want to congratulate the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) for bringing this bill forward. I believe that this is a first piece of legislation that we'll be bringing forward that will provide a five-point alternative plan to the NDP's tax hikes on Manitoba families.

And listening to the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), his comment—only thing that I could probably agree on with in his rant would be the sad commentary, and that would be his sad commentary on the importance and the significance of this bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, he put on the record that this government will not cut costs at the expense of people. Well, he obviously is new, so he hasn't been around the Legislature for some time, but I do recall a few years back where the former member for Swan River, actually, when she was minister of Agriculture, cut positions in Minnedosa, the Crown lands positions, right out of the community. And her statements were, it—we're going to be cutting costs, we have to be more efficient. And actually, she didn't even want to meet with those women that lost their jobs.

* (10:40)

An Honourable Member: Neepawa too.

Mrs. Rowat: Women—and Neepawa. That's correct, for the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese). They were women from that area of the province who lost their jobs. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) even deleted an email that they had sent to him without looking at it. And the minister, the former minister of Agriculture, the MLA for Swan River, came in through the back door to meet with other Ag staff, but wouldn't meet with those women who were losing their jobs.

So, you know, I think the member for Fort Garry-Riverview really should get his facts straight, Mr. Speaker, and take into consideration that this government is supposed to represent all Manitobans. So when he puts comments on the record like that, it's a slap in the face to these women who have lost their positions because this government was looking for efficiencies, or so-called efficiencies.

Manitobans need to know the truth about provinces—the Province's finances, and they have a right to know exactly where provincial revenues will be raised, Mr. Speaker. So when the member for Tuxedo has asked for this government to provide a transparent list of the rate increases, and compare them to what the fees were the year before, she has clearly indicated the reason why; so that households can actually take the time to budget, to manage their finances over the next year. It's a very—I think a very intelligent and a very wise suggestion by this member, and I think that the Minister for Finance should take heed and actually listen to the advice of the member for Tuxedo.

Mr. Speaker, the member for—or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) talked about raising we—that when we were in government we raised the fees or added PST to baby food. Well, they've been in government for 12 years; take the PST off baby food. You know, I guess, like, my question is that there has to be some accountability that this government's been in power for 12 years, and they need to be reflective and—of the things they're putting on the record and know that they are in control. They can take those fees off baby food.

But you know what? What I found rather interesting is that this minister mentions baby food and how PST is—was put on baby food. But he has now put on—the PST on birth certificates, marriage certificates, house insurance, vehicles. So how is he really actually looking out in the—for the best interests of Manitoba families, when he's actually spread PST so that pretty much every service that a family has to utilize is being hit by a fee increase, fee

increases that were not identified in the budget, Mr. Speaker. And that is shameful. What are they afraid of—what are they afraid of being accountable to Manitoba families?

And I think that this bill provides a lot of good information, and it asks this government to be accountable to Manitobans. And I think that this bill, by increasing the accountability of this NDP government for its decisions and make information easy to access to all Manitobans, is a win, Mr. Speaker. It's a win. So I urge all parties in the Legislature to support this bill and the concept of transparent and honest accounting in government. That's what Manitobans are asking for and they have not received it from this NDP government when they brought in a budget without identifying those fees.

So I would like to say that, as the member for Riding Mountain, my constituents are expecting this government to be more transparent and accountable, and I support this bill, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Well, the—Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to rise in this Chamber—

An Honourable Member: Oh, and the 'jobinator' speaks.

Mr. Bjornson: —and speak to accountability. And it's fascinating, right off the hop, the member from St. Paul's got a new nickname for me. That's interesting, because he's talking about the jobs in the economy. Well, I have a few for you as well, but they're unparliamentary.

The jobs in the economy issue, he's raising this right now, talking about the jobs. This is fascinating, because they were quiet when the Wheat Board was being shut down by their partners in Ottawa. They were quiet when the National Research Council—they were quiet about all the things that are happening at the direction of the federal government, and it's costing a lot of jobs here in Manitoba. So maybe instead of yelling across the Chamber he can put some action to his words and stand up for Manitobans instead of standing down for Manitoban. And they'll be held accountable for that, Mr. Speaker, just as I expect they will be federally as well.

But let's talk about accountability, Mr. Speaker. And it's really fascinating because members opposite, if you want to look at accountability and keeping our records in order, I think we've done a very good job of doing so when you look at our

funding announcements, for example, in education. When they were in office, they kept cutting education funding, and we put it out there in a nice big chart for everyone to see, that this is what 10 years of Conservative government was, this is what 12 years of NDP government has been for funding in education in Manitoba—a very clear graph and chart that showed the records of members opposite compared to our government.

And we've done the same when it comes to accountability on university tuitions, showing how tuition fees went up 168 per cent in their tenure in office, showing how we brought tuition fees down 10 per cent and kept it flat for 11 years, and brought in legislation to be accountable to the students of Manitoba to make sure that ancillary fees are levied in a very respectful manner and a manner that would not be a hardship to the students. That's accountability, Mr. Speaker.

You want to talk accountability? I do recall the whole issue of our expenses as members in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, and how we, of course, now post that online, and all the expenses are posted online. And I find that rather fascinating because the former member from Russell who used to give me the gears all the time about my living expenses, and, coincidentally, when you went online and discovered that he had higher living expenses than I did. So you want to talk about accountability, those who live in glass houses shouldn't be casting stones.

But I also remember, in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker, reading an article that talked about the members—rural members from the former Conservative government, where there were two of them living one—in one apartment but claiming two rents for one apartment. And I remember Mr. Orchard's response in the paper, in the *Free Press*. You want to talk about accountability? His response in the *Free Press* was no, expletive deleted, none of your, expletive deleted, business. None of your business. That's what he said to the *Free Press*. You want to talk about accountability? That's why we do things the way we do on this side of the House. That's why we post our expenses online. That's why we are accountable every single day.

And, Mr. Speaker, of course, this whole issue with the tickets and our full disclosure on the tickets, I know members opposite must have some friends that took them to hockey games, but they're not going to put their list out there. They're not offering that information. And, you know, you talk about that

in terms of being accountable, the suggestion is that, you know, that there could be some influence, et cetera, et cetera. Well, I guess members opposite don't feel like they'll be in the government side of the Chamber any time soon if they don't think they should disclose what games they're going to and who they're going to the games with. So I guess they're not expecting to be held to the same standard as we are.

So you want to talk about accountability, we are accountable to the voters of Manitoba every single day. We're accountable on the promises that we make and the—and our ability to deliver those promises and we'll continue to do so. And, you know, it's rather interesting when some members stand up in this Chamber and give petitions. They say there's thousands and thousands of signatures. I see one piece of paper, but they're giving this illusion that thousands and thousands of signatures are on this piece of paper, Mr. Speaker. So it's rather interesting to hear from members opposite about being accountable for what we say and what we do in this Chamber every single day.

So, if you want to talk about the budget and what matters most, the member from Riding Mountain was saying how is he, being my good friend, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), how is he looking out for the best interests of Manitoba families? Well, he's done so, as has previous ministers of Finance in this government, year after year after year, in the budget documents that we produce. And if you want to compare year after year after year what we have done compared to what members opposite have done, I think there's no comparison. And I go back to education funding. I go back to university tuitions. I go back to the funding for the regional health authorities. I go back to the measures that we put in place to make the administration accountable in our regional health authorities, in our school divisions, and all the steps that we have taken. But members opposite have this delusion about what it means to be accountable, it seems.

If you look at our position in Budget 2012, it is what matters most to Manitoba families. We have modest new measures that will raise revenue fairly. We are doing so because we committed to Manitobans to protect the services that matter most to Manitobans, and I think it's quite a sharp contrast between what we're doing here provincially and what we're seeing federally. In fact, on the news today, the fact that they're cutting Parks Canada and the impact

that that would have in Riding Mountain. The member from Riding Mountain did not stand up and say the federal government's cutting services to Riding Mountain National Park; the federal government is shutting down the office two days of the week in Riding Mountain National Park; the federal government is not going to be maintaining the—I think it's the cross-country ski trails in riding park—Riding Mountain National Park. Member opposite isn't saying anything about that and about the federal government being accountable to her constituents in that area, about what's happening because of their budget, their choices that they made. They chose to cut funding; we're 'choosing'—or—pardon me, we're choosing to do what matters most to Manitobans, and that is to continue to support the services that are important to Manitobans: hospitals, schools, and roads, which members opposite always stand up and ask for one in this Chamber.

In the Estimates, they're always saying, pave me next, pave me next, pave me next. But then they're saying, but don't increase taxes, don't spend more money. Just spend it in my constituency and pave that one kilometre of road that you missed in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. So it's an interesting contrast.

* (10:50)

But in lean times, families and businesses find ways to be creative and find ways to save, and we're certainly looking at the way that we can save and at the same time protect services that are important Manitoba families, while cutting costs and investing in programs that we know'll work.

So, when you want—if you want to compare members opposite to this side of the House, it's a very easy comparison. And if you want to compare members opposite to—they always talk about Saskatchewan, et cetera, and as my colleague, the Minister of Finance has said repeatedly, in the Saskatchewan budget, they hold up that example of Manitoba as the most affordable province in the west and how we are a very affordable province.

And, of course, we're introducing legislation that will be ensuring that we have a basket of services that our publicly owned assets delivered to Manitobans that will be the most affordable in the country. Are they going to vote for that? Probably not. But, of course, it would be great if we were introducing that legislation that not only included hydroelectric power, not only included gas, not only included auto insurance, but it would be great if that

basket of services included telecommunication services, but unfortunately, to balance the budget, members opposite sold the telephone company and that can't be included in that particular list.

But it's also curious, Mr. Speaker. You want to talk about accountability. Members opposite stand up in this Chamber with petitions for more cell service, more cell service, more cell service. Well, I hope they're talking to that private company of theirs which will probably say there's no economic argument for providing that service because they'd be cutting the profits to the shareholders, which are currently sitting on that side of the House. So it's rather curious.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk accountability, I'll compare our record any day, any time, Mr. Speaker. And I think, as I said, we are—we have seen in annual reports that were introduced in 2001 as part of the public accounts to increase—pardon me, introduce greater accountability in reporting. We have seen significant improvements in completeness and transparency in reporting the Province's financial status. We are the government that committed to implementing fully the generally accepted accounting principles as of 2007, 2008. We've had an increase in information that's published and available on a number of public—key government-funded programs, such as the comparable health indicator report, early childhood development progress reports, educational statistical profiles report.

We have seen a significant increase in the amount of information available on departmental websites that allows for greater public awareness and scrutiny of programs, Mr. Speaker. Departmental annual reports are now required to be made available online.

There're a number of things that we have done to improve reporting and accountability, but, Mr. Speaker, most importantly, we're also doing so in an environment where we are able to maintain services, provide better services for Manitobans, and do so in a fair, reasonable, and balanced way.

Now, if you go back to the 1990s, Mr. Speaker, and look at some of the cuts that they implemented when they were in office, and what they appear to be advocating for yet again in 2012 in terms of cutting expenditures, I think there's clearly a contrast here, and we are held accountable every day, and members opposite are certainly going to be held accountable for what they put on the record here in this Chamber.

Thank you very much. Appreciate the opportunity to speak to them.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I'm proud to stand up today and support Bill 211, brought forward by our member from Tuxedo.

Manitobans elected us to this Legislature, and they expect to know the truth about the Province's finances. They have the right to know exactly where provincial revenues will be raised. Manitobans cannot trust governments that hide \$1.12-billion deficits, then pay for them with hidden user fees and massive PST expansions.

Since this government's first budget in 2000, user fees have increased by 177 per cent, nearly double in the last 12 years. This year alone, user fees are going up by \$114 million in Budget 2012, or 22 per cent up from last year. Many of these fee increases apply to mandatory government services—services to the public, and they have no choice but to pay. Vehicle registrations are going up; birth, death, and marriage certificates are going up; child abuse registry checks are going up; land title documentation fees are going up. These are added cost to the consumer, who has no choice but to pay.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that none of these fees were announced in the budget speech or outlined on a fee-by-fee basis in the budget. Instead of leaving Manitobans in the dark on fee changes, the budget should clearly outline the fee amount for the previous year, the fee in the upcoming year, and the resulting revenue change. The government should not be hiding this information from the public. The public have the right to know at budget time what the increases are.

During Estimates, a list of fee changes was asked for and received. In this list of fee changes that the public deserves to know about there is a lot of major changes. The surprising part is, that is, the list of fees was only four pages long. This list would've been no problem to include in the budget.

This bill 'wincrease' the accountability of the NDP government. This bill will make information easy to access for all Manitobans. Everyone will know at budget time what all the fee increases are.

I urge all parties in this Legislature to support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I've read this bill carefully. I believe that it's in the interests of all of us to have

improved accountability and transparency—that we don't want information to be hidden. When you hide information, it—you know, it's actually slimy and sleazy. We should have it open and easily accessible to people on budget day and at other times. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to address Bill 211 here, which obviously has a lot of interest on the part of MLAs in the House here, especially the opposition. And it speaks about—and to the point about accountability. And I know that I'm looking forward to the Conservatives finally standing up for Manitoba and Manitoba issues.

We had a member here yesterday stand up and talk about decreases in employment in Manitoba, and not looking at the fact that the decreases in employment are directly tied to federal Conservative policies regarding the Wheat Board, job losses due to their actions at the Wheat Board. Job actions at the—job losses to—directly attributable to Aveos, which the Mulroney government promised to keep these overhaul bases operating in the three cities. And what they've done is they managed to, essentially, allow Air Canada to shirk its responsibilities and leave these employees in the lurch in Vancouver, in Mississauga, and in Ottawa. The jobs eventually will end up in El Salvador. They knew that was going to happen.

Where are these members, and why are they not standing up for people in Manitoba?

So the accountability really boils down to their accountability as it relates the people of Manitoba, and I note their new leader—the Conservative answer to Ronald Reagan, you know, back to the future—the former member for Portage la Prairie has entered the building, so I know they're on their bested—best behaviour this morning. Perhaps he's in the gallery making notes on their performance. And if they're not aware that he's there, I'm making them aware now so that they can start working on their performance here and improve their performance to him—impress their—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

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

* (11:00)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to moving to private members' resolutions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the St. Norbert Water Stewardship Coalition, Janice Lukes, Dr. Ron Buzahora, Sara Guillemard, Sylvie Vermette, Norm Gousseau, Jenny Chudley and Alexandre Guillemard, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. Norbert.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

So the hour being 11—the honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): On House business, I would like to announce, pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private member's resolution for next Tuesday will be one put forth by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). The title of the resolution is Lord Selkirk Settlers.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one—will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Selkirk, and the title of the resolution is Lord Selkirk Settlers.

RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Speaker: Now, the hour being 11 a.m., it's time for a private member's resolution, and today we're considering the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for St. Norbert, titled Drainage Inside the Dike.

Res. 4—Drainage Inside the Dike

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross),

WHEREAS properly managed the impact of the Red—water in the Red River Valley is essential to the future economic development of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the history and development of the community of St. Norbert are tied directly to the Red River; and

WHEREAS St. Norbert remains—maintains the dike along the Red River that, while keeping water

out of the community, also artificially keeps rainwater and runoff inside the dike; and

WHEREAS St. Norbert is defined by a strong sense of community and commitment to environmental sustainability; and

WHEREAS the residents of St. Norbert have combined these attributes to their history along the Red River into the community initiated Drainage Inside the Dike project; and

WHEREAS Drainage Inside the Dike is the pilot project for economic development and land reclamation through environmentally and socially responsible best practices representing a model for future projects to follow; and

WHEREAS the Drainage Inside the Dike project will employ innovative water stewardship models to reclaim and purpose 11 hectares of land around the St. Norbert Farmers' Market site; and

WHEREAS the Drainage Inside the Dike project promotes community and environmental responsibility by utilizing and reclaiming the land for educational, cultural and agricultural spaces.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Manitoba Legislature commend the people of St. Norbert for their dedication to the community and the environment through their initiative of Drainage Inside the Dike project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Manitoba Legislature Assembly urge the provincial government to continue its support of community-driven projects that contribute to the well-being of people in Manitoba and the environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the resolution as printed? *[Agreed]*

WHEREAS properly managing the impact of water in the Red River Valley is essential to the future economic development of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the history and development of the community of St. Norbert are tied directly to the Red River; and

WHEREAS St. Norbert maintains a dike along the Red River that, while keeping water out of the community, also artificially keeps rainwater and runoff inside the dike; and

WHEREAS St. Norbert is defined by its strong sense of community and its commitment to environmental sustainability; and

WHEREAS the residents of St. Norbert have combined these attributes with their history along the Red River into the community initiated Drainage Inside the Dike project; and

WHEREAS Drainage Inside the Dike is a pilot project for economic development and land reclamation through environmentally and socially responsible best practices representing a model for future projects to follow; and

WHEREAS the Drainage Inside the Dike project will employ innovative water stewardship models to reclaim and repurpose 11 hectares of land around the St. Norbert Farmers' Market site; and

WHEREAS the Drainage Inside the Dike project promotes community and environmental responsibility by utilizing the reclaimed land for educational, cultural and agricultural spaces.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Manitoba Legislative Assembly commend the people of St. Norbert for their dedication to their community and the environment through their initiation of the Drainage Inside the Dike project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Manitoba Legislative Assembly urge the Provincial Government to continue its support for community driven projects that contribute to the well-being of the people of Manitoba and the environment.

Mr. Gaudreau: Mr. Speaker, this project is driven by various community groups that realize the land shared by all properties was presenting a challenge. Being inside the dike that holds the Red River back and protects the property means that the water cannot follow its natural path into the river and drain the land properly. So the BHF, the St. Norbert Farmers Market, the DFSM, Entreprises Riel, St. Norbert Foundation, St. Norbert Community Club, St. Norbert Childrens' Centre and the Renaissance corporation—

Mr. Speaker: I forgot to put the question—the resolution back to the House.

It had been moved by the honourable member for St. Norbert, seconded by the honourable Minister of Housing, that,

WHEREAS property—properly managing the impact—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

The honourable member for St. Norbert, my apologies for the interruption.

Mr. Gaudreau: No problem, Mr. Speaker.

So all of these people, all of these organizations that I mentioned have come together to form a partnership and work on a plan that transforms the land around the property into usable space that families can gather and play and for work with the St. Norbert Farmers' Market.

Members of the community like Dr. Ron Buzahora, Janice Lukes, Sylvie Vermette, Norm Gousseau, Alexandre Guillemard, Serge Carrière, Sara Guillemard are—some of the people who are here today in the gallery have worked together and started down the road to redeveloping this land into usable space for the community.

Space—the space is going to be used for such things as soccer. There's going to be six soccer fields, traditional sweat lodges, walking paths, community gardens, an amphitheatre, multiple play structures, a football field for St. Norbert Collegiate, who had their field cut in half by the '97 flood—they had to put a dike across half of their field, a baseball field, performing stages and educational venues with history of the area. This project will benefit every Manitoban by showcasing community co-operation and new ways to manage water. Through the use of bioswales and landscaping, this space will transform into a wonderful place for plan—families to play, work and educate. This will make gathering for residents in St. Norbert, and it will make a destination for people in Manitoba and the surrounding areas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to be able to put some words on the record in regards to the private member's resolution that has been brought forward by the member from St. Norbert, and that is to deal with Drainage Inside the Dike in the community of St. Norbert. And I welcome the citizens that have worked so diligently on this project to be with us here today in the gallery.

The—my colleague from St. Norbert has mentioned the different groups that have been involved in the formation of the coalition, from the St. Norbert Community Centre, St. Norbert Farmers' Market, Place Saint-Norbert, École Noël-Ritchot and

the Behavioural Health Foundation, to name a few. I'm assuming that those are the list that I have. I don't know if it's complete or not but, certainly, I commend the citizens for their efforts in regards to trying to provide an opportunity for better management of our water resources in the province, for looking at improvements in the Red River, as we look at all rivers in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, to try to come up with better means of being able to facilitate better water quality, as the goal, regards to whether it's land, air or water. This particular project is in relation to the—to water.

Mr. Speaker, dikes are a great opportunity to protect ourselves and our properties and our citizens in many areas of the province, and we saw that, no more diligently, all over the province of Manitoba, than last year on the Assiniboine and Souris rivers out on the western side of the province. But more often than not it's the Red River that has caused these problems, and these citizens have certainly been aware of that and taken the initiative to move forward in projects that will help with the drainage of water out of the inside of the dike in that area.

And there are many projects across the province of Manitoba that I would like to talk about, in regards to the value that they have provided in better water quality, whether it's for drinking or for swimming or for other uses. And this would be one of them to be added to the many. I know in the west side of the province, the southwest where I am, there are 'waterfication' projects taking place in many areas of the region. And it's, you know, historically mentioned in the House many times, the southwest is the drier part of Manitoba, historically, if you look at resource maps. But, I always like to say, we have lots of water in the southwest; we just don't manage it well. And, until we got to last year, because, of course, it was everywhere, and we're still dealing with the aftermath of that, Mr. Speaker, as these citizens are, in regards to St. Norbert on an annual basis. Because no matter whether it's caused from the flooding, or from excessive rainfall, there will be water gathering inside the 11-hectare area that they are looking at in St. Norbert.

St. Norbert, as I say—as a colleague indicated is, of course, historic, as the venture people coming in from the rest of Manitoba and the southern Manitoba, it's the first area of visitation that they have when they see themselves coming into Winnipeg. It's the entrance to the city, if you will. And, it's had a—historic assimilation of culture and heritage over the years, to develop a strong

community-minded community in that area, Mr. Speaker. The people are—feel very passionate about the types of venues and the cultural and heritage opportunities that they have.

This project would be one that would help move—make it a little easier, I guess, for not only the farmers' market, but the soccer being played in that region, and a number of other sport venues that take place. The existence of the primary diking system, although valuable in protecting people and property, does come with problems when it comes to water getting away from the community, as I've indicated.

There has certainly had—it's certainly had a negative impact on the local recreation opportunities and, you know, standing water will—causes other things that I've mentioned you can't do, but it also is a birthing place for mosquitos and other insects that certainly are invaluable nuisance to good outdoors opportunities as well, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say that, out of problems, though, also come opportunities, and the number of stakeholders that are there, are just trying to find—trying—find to—trying to find creative ways to manage the stormwater that will provide economic and social benefits to the community without harming the environment.

* (11:10)

And so the water steward—the St. Norbert Water Stewardship Coalition and we, too, would like to acknowledge the positive work being done by this coalition. They, like countless other Manitobans, recognize the importance of excess storm water and to do it in an environmentally sustainable manner.

The bioretention systems that I've talked about and that have been used in various communities to help manage storm water can be a number of components in these systems. They can—they're just not one; there's multiples involved, Mr. Speaker. Examples: bioswales are a type of drainage ditch in which native plants are used to help remove silt and pollution from the surface water runoff as it's channeled into larger rain—garden areas. Other systems also use dry creek beds to move water to the lowest point of land where it's stored and reused.

The proposed drainage inside the park project involves reclaiming and repurposing 11 hectares of land around the farmers' market site and other key facilities, including the community centre. The St. Norbert bioretention system would use native plants, trees, materials to help store and run and filter

runoff water that would otherwise enter the storm sewer system. There would be considerable green space, as well, that would be well utilized by local residents and visitors, Mr. Speaker.

And, as I mentioned earlier, there are other communities with similar venues in the province of Manitoba. The community of Roblin is using similar styles of natural vegetation in their lagoon systems, Mr. Speaker, and there are many new opportunities in that area.

I've had the opportunity, myself, of being in Prince Edward Island and looking at some of the projects that they have there that would be utilized in recycling water of this nature, Mr. Speaker.

And, of course, then, being able to provide that water back to the Red River in a more clean manner allows for the retention of improvements to Lake Winnipeg as well, where that water eventually ends up, as well as the betterment of the citizens and the community of St. Norbert.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that there are other similar projects. There is the Deerwood Soil and Water Management Association and their South Tobacco Creek project in Manitoba that captures water and holds it back at certain times. And I've spoken a number of times in the Legislature here on being able to store that kind of water, recycle it, and being able to hold it back and let it go at—once the peak—the floods are off of a river like the Red River. And I know that this is part and parcel of what is being proposed here.

It is being used in other areas, and our American neighbours, I've spoke a number of times, the Red River Basin Commission are utilizing this type of storage to hold water back, allow some of the sediments to settle out and then allow the water to proceed through conduits after the peak floods are off of these major rivers, in this case, the Red, south of the American border, Mr. Speaker.

And—but, on the Tobacco Creek project, it involved the participation of approximately 150 landowners who farm and have property along the Manitoba escarpment on the south central part of Manitoba, west of Miami, Mr. Speaker. And so that project has, for several years, investigated the effects of agriculture on land and water ecosystems in the Red River basin. And, for example, they've studied the movement of water, soil and nutrients on the landscape and assessed the impact of various land-use practices.

And I know the international institute of sustainable development has worked—and the government—I know that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Mackintosh) has worked with the institute of international sustainable development and I've had opportunities to speak with them as well on similar types of projects that will be used to—as we go down the road, Mr. Speaker—to improve water quality.

I think we need to look at areas like the Libau marsh, and I know that they're taking some—this—the St. Norbert coalition is looking at the Drainage Inside the Dike—project looks at some of the opportunities that the Libau marsh and Netley Marsh areas are using to use natural vegetation to take out nutrients, unwanted nutrients, from this water, Mr. Speaker, to be able to have a purer product to put back into Lake Winnipeg. In that case, this is a similar venue; all of the same water would end up in Lake Winnipeg through those area marshes. Just the nutrients would be taken out of it before it gets there, and some of the vegetation that—and filtration on the site that I've looked at, at the—with the venues that have been proposed by this organization—coalition.

From our perspective, I'd just like to close, Mr. Speaker, by saying that this is a project that we—I was very well versed in, in the election campaign last fall. Our Ecological Goods and Services program, I think, was very much along these lines and looking forward to being able to implement this kind of a project in the future.

My colleague from Portage la Prairie has had experience in the ALUS program, the all land use systems program that we have in the province, and all of these put together, Mr. Speaker, are going to provide great opportunities for Manitoba to be a leader in regards to—

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

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): It's my pleasure to stand up and endorse the MLA for St. Norbert's private member's resolution about Drainage Inside the Dike, phase 1.

I had the privilege on Friday, May 11th, to be joined by the Premier (Mr. Selinger), by the MLAs from St. Norbert as well as Fort Garry-Riverview, where we announced this year's Community Places grants. And what we were able to announce is 273 community organizations getting funding of

\$3.5 million, but what's most important, Mr. Speaker, is that \$3.5 million can multiply to approximately \$37 million across this province. And that makes a difference for people of all ages, of communities across this province, enabling them to keep the lights on, the ice going and ensuring that they're protecting our environment.

We have to acknowledge the volunteerism that goes into the creation of these applications, the vision that goes into the development of the plan and the hard work that goes into the implementation. I often say that I have the easy part. I have the part where I can say, great project, good luck, can't wait to see it finished, while the volunteers continue to toil over the end product.

Now, Drainage Inside the Dike meets many criterias of the Community Places program. One of them is that it's environmentally sound. Secondly, that it's community led, that it includes partnerships, and there's 18 organizations that have come together that have this vision of turning land that hasn't been used very well in—and changing it into opportunity and a meeting place. I understand, as they proceed forward with reclaiming the land, that there's going to be some cultural events that may happen there with the Behavioural Health Foundation, but also the development of community gardens, of greenhouses, of workshops. The opportunities are endless.

We have to congratulate the volunteers for their work, and we have to be very proud of their vision of making sure that this land is being used appropriately and reclaiming it. And we know that there will be many benefits as they partner with the—St. Norbert's Farmers' Market to make a difference.

We know that the St. Norbert's Farmers' Market is a meeting place as well, where people come together, but not only with a meeting, but it's also economics for our province, provides healthy foods as well. So it's about—it's a holistic approach, and I believe that this project adds on to that and what needs to be celebrated.

Over the last 25-plus years, Community Places program has seen differences. When we first started it was specifically around capital development, and as we have grown we have started to include the importance of the environment and looking at projects that do just that. And that's why when this project came across the table of the project managers, they were quick to endorse it.

Approximately, this project is going to cost around \$190,000. We're very proud at the Community Places program that we were able to award \$48,000 towards their vision. We know that that money will go into good hands. We know that it won't only build on what's happening around those 11 hectares, and in St. Norbert we know that there's benefits, environmental benefits that have been happening throughout Fort Richmond and St. Norbert.

Another good example which Janice Lukes was involved in, as well as many other community partners, is St. Avila School, where they looked at providing a natural playground, looked at water retention and now are becoming a meeting place within Fort Richmond. Just down the street another school observed what was happening, and that was Ryerson School, and that's where we made the announcement on Friday, where they see that same vision happening of developing land for children to play, for parents to meet and create that sense of community and opportunity.

* (11:20)

So I am very proud of the work that the 18 organization and, I'm certain, hundreds of volunteers will do to contribute to this exciting project. I look forward to see the progress of it and want to take this opportunity to congratulate all individuals involved. Thank you.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): And I'm pleased to rise to put a few words on the record regarding Drainage Inside the Dike, a private member's resolution.

This is the type of project that we, and our party, have supported for a number of years through a program that we call Ecological Goods and Services.

Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) actually made a very strong case earlier about the ALUS project, which I was personally very involved with, and actually brought together a number of different groups all—from all across, not only Manitoba, but we actually had some co-funding in that one, all the way from the state of Tennessee, in terms of extreme reach of programs.

And certainly we recognize the need for better water management in this province. After a year like last year, we, in western Manitoba, are more than hyper-aware of water management all the way across the province and, of course, along the Red with its frequent history of flooding, certainly understand

why we have to have dikes, why we have to protect the community. But any time you put a barrier in place, it creates a problem on the other side of the barrier. And that, I think, is what this proposal is all about, in terms of how to deal with it.

What you're trying to do is find a solution to the water that is collected inside the dike without actually asking for an additional drain and—which is very, very good project and it's very—should be well recognized, but there are a few things that need to be put in place to protect people in the community as well.

Like any other project, it should be subject to the licence and rule—licensing rules and regulations that exist in this province, so it would be subject to, not only minor works, but major works, proposals through the Department of Water Stewardship. And, certainly, I hope that you're putting those types of licensing in place because there is no exemption, no matter how good on the quality of the project. Every project needs to do this and it will be a great benefit. I've certainly attended the farmers market there a number of times and know that you don't want to go on a wet day.

And we certainly recognize that there's some problems related to that and I heartily applaud the need for creative solutions and I see some of that in here, though I do think perhaps a little more work could be done.

In terms of bioretention, of water—that is something that, actually, we have been doing in Manitoba on a fairly significant scale for a number of years.

A lot of irrigators in the province, which there are several hundred in place, actually use this type of approach, catching spring runoff and storing it in one form or the other. And some of them have been doing this for as long as 20 years, Mr. Speaker, very successfully, and it's become a very valuable resource.

We—as irrigators, we know how to commercialize the value of that water by growing something that the rest of society wants. Usually it's a very high value vegetable crop of some description, and as a former irrigator myself, I certainly recognize that there's great use for water; it has tremendous value. It's all about where and when you have that water, so it's certainly a problem that needs to be done.

The innovative approach of using bioswales has actually, to some degree, reproducing what Mother Nature does. Mother Nature has this type of situation all across the countryside. We, unfortunately, have been losing these over the years because they have no commercial value to most people. But they have a lot of other values to people; whether it's environmental values or just the aesthetics of having them in place, but they do provide us with opportunities to deal with water problems all across the province. And this is, actually, probably, a very innovative way to deal with this.

The example that was used earlier was the Deerwood Soil and Water Management Association and their South Tobacco treat project, and this project's actually been going for something close to 30 years, in various forms.

Certainly, there's been a lot of learning process. It is not only just a hands-on project, but they've actually managed to incorporate a lot of the research that's related to this. And the research that was done at Deerwood and on the Tobacco Creek actually has national implications and has been referenced a number of projects all the way across Canada.

And the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) actually mentioned that he had seen similar projects in Prince Edward Island, and I know that they did reference a good deal of the information that came out of that and, in fact, they referenced a lot of the information that came out of our provincial ALUS pilot.

And in Prince Edward Island, the projects on the island are actually called ALUS projects, which stands for alternate land use services, and rewards producers—landowners in that case—for their ecological goods and services that they are producing in that community. And they're particularly focused on this, because 100 per cent of the drinking water on the island comes from groundwater sources. So *[interjection]* yes, PEI. So they certainly need to be focused on water quality. And, of course, early on they found some issues with nitrates; whether they came from an agricultural source, a community source was difficult to separate. But to find solutions they had to look both at land use practices for agriculture and land use practices when it created—when it came to city waste water. And the integration of both of those has led them to some fairly good successes early on in this program.

It is not an expensive program, and it's certainly a good solution to deal with water quality. And I

think we, actually, can learn quite a bit from that in terms of how we might deal with our water quality issues on Lake Winnipeg. And so, some of what we see here—and I know you made reference in the private member's statement to—or resolution, sorry, to what might be benefit in terms of water quality. But the hands-on nature of this will actually benefit far more than you realize. It'll teach a lot of people what they have to do in terms of water quality.

And I don't always agree with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton), but when he was the first minister of Water Stewardship, he made a statement that I still refer to, that here in Manitoba, if we're going to deal with our water quality issues, we have to deal with it as 1.2 million point source origins; everybody is responsible for their own solution. *[interjection]* Yes, and you'll agree with that. And, yes, he remembers saying it, because he knows I've quoted him a few times on this—not always when he wanted me to. But that—it was a very true statement, and we have not yet begun to do that.

And I do see some signs of this in this community—in this proposal, so I would certainly like to thank people from St. Norbert for this proposal. I think it's very important that these things come as a community base; they cannot be something that is imposed from above. You need to find the right solution for the problem in each individual community, and you need to empower the people to work together on that. And we have endeavoured to do that in our environmental goods and services proposal that we have put forward, and that this government, to some degree, supported with their pallet work on the ALUS project. Unfortunately, we don't see the follow-up commitment, but if you really do want to deal with water quality issues when it comes to Lake Winnipeg you do need to move in this direction. There is no other potential solution.

Mr. Speaker, the farm scale demonstrations that they talk about doing are also very valuable in terms of demonstration. We do talk about the problem with urban-rural linkages in Manitoba, where people do not understand—those in the city do not necessarily understand what is going on in the countryside any more. They see it as a place to travel through to get to their destination; they don't recognize the value of what's going on in the countryside either commercially or in terms of its impact on their environment. So this will provide a bit of a linkage to—back to that. And I do encourage you to bring in

as many farm people, as well, to make their case, because it is certainly important that we get our chance to tell the story to non-farm community. We are down to about 2 per cent of the population based on the latest census—agricultural census information that came out the other day. And at 2 per cent it's—you have to speak very loudly to be heard by the other 98 per cent, and that'll be a challenge in the future.

So, I think this is moving in the right direction. I, certainly, would encourage them to look at this. Just wanted to make a further comment on the ALUS project. I did say that Prince Edward Island is actually running with this project. They're in about their sixth year in terms of a provincial program. It's been very successful and been recognized by other provinces in eastern Canada as a model that they may wish to emulate. And, recently, both Saskatchewan and Alberta have initiated ALUS pilot projects, because they see the value in their communities or their provinces in terms of finding these solutions. So it is still very much alive and well moving across Canada—I think something that we should be paying more attention to here in Manitoba. It's always a shame when you have to export a program before its value is recognized elsewhere.

* (11:30)

I also wanted to mention that the conservation districts in Manitoba have done a great deal of work in this area as well. Most of theirs is individual demonstration projects, some of which has been extremely successful. Sometimes we have learned from the project, which doesn't mean it's always 100 per cent successful, and I certainly think there's many challenges yet to work towards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for a chance to speak on it.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It's my pleasure to rise today in support of the resolution put forward by my colleague from St. Norbert. I commend him on his good work in this regard. As a rural member of the government caucus, it's always of great interest to me to speak on issues of water management, drainage, in particular. It's a huge challenge for us in rural areas, in the agricultural community, in particular. And for the most part, I tend to think of it as a rural issue, and one thing that this resolution does for me personally is it just reminds me that water management is an issue to all of us as Manitobans, whether we're urban, whether we're rural, whether we're northern. All of

these—water is always an issue to all of us, so my compliments to him in that regard.

I was listening with great interest to members opposite, the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) and the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart). I know that prior to him coming to the Legislature here, he was actively involved with keystone agriculture producers, and a firm advocate of ALUS and Ecological Goods and Services, and I compliment him for that and recognize his efforts. And I just hope, should they ever return to office sometime in the distant future, that they continue to think in this vein, once they're in office, because they should be reminded of their actions of past Conservative governments.

The Filmon government, in particular, you know, made massive cuts to the drainage budget, laid off more than half of their drainage staff so that, when we returned to office in 1999, they were actually much further behind than when they came to office in—so, you know, it's important that they remember that.

I recall in 1999 when we were elected, the first three acts that went through the Legislature: one being the amendment to the election finances act to impose a ban on union and corporate donations; the other a ban on panned hunting; and then the third act was the reconstitution of The Water Rights Act, which had been thrown out the window by a judge in our province here, related to the Hildebrandt case. And the judge, at the time, had basically said that the Province had been so negligent in managing water that they didn't deserve to be in the business of it, hence the throwing out of The Water Rights Act. So, I would just encourage members opposite to bear this in mind as they go forward, that, you know, they should practise what they preach.

So, I would like to also make the point that we have to start thinking of things in terms of water management, not just drainage. I think one of the lessons that we learned from the flood of 2011, 2012 is that uncontrolled drainage can contribute to flooding, so we should always be looking to issues of storage, of creating retention areas, of staging release. All of these things, which are incorporated in this resolution, are inherent to it, so this is an excellent model, moving forward.

I'm not entirely familiar with the project. I don't know if there's any release valves inherent in the plan, because one thing that I have learned over the

last 12 years is that Mother Nature, when she gets angry with us, can overwhelm us. When you're facing intense rainfalls, heavy snowfalls, the flood of last year, again, a good case in point where in the midst of the flood—the worst flood in recorded history—we experienced no less than seven major rainfall events, one of them being a major snowfall event. And those rainfall events were four or five inches over the course of one event; it's an astronomical amount of water. In fact, those rainfall events added 50 per cent more water into the system over and above what was already there from snowfall, spring runoff, and so forth. So always bear that in mind, that that should be incorporated into the plan.

I look to, again, the flood of last year as the greatest natural disaster that we have experienced in our province, and shortfalls that became evident to us in the system controlling water across our province—the Portage Diversion, the Fairford control—river water control structure both changed the face of Lake Manitoba and, in fact, improved the regulation of Lake Manitoba for the most part over the years. I think records will show, with a few exceptions, last year's event being the most glaring exception of that, obviously. But it did show us that the system had not been completed.

And I look back to—the Schreyer government had actually instituted a study of the system, and it focused on Lake St. Martin more so than on Lake Manitoba because, frankly speaking, Lake St. Martin is the bottleneck to the entire system. Everything else was flowing well, obviously. The Portage Diversion and the Fairford control were putting water out at a maximum rate, over and above maximum. Fairford, which was rated at 11,000 cfs at its—the top of the range of regulation, was actually flowing double that for some period of time.

And the bottleneck, Lake St. Martin, became glaringly obvious. The top of the range of regulation of Lake St. Martin is at 800 feet above sea level. It went above 807, seven feet of water over and above the maximum range of regulation on Lake St. Martin was catastrophic to the people who lived around that lake. Those were the people hardest hit by the flood. In fact, three of the four First Nation communities around Lake St. Martin are still evacuated: the Dauphin River First Nation because of lack of access via 513; and the Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin First Nations are still evacuated—were completely destroyed by this flood.

So the obvious solution, which was implemented by this government, was to extend infrastructure further to create that emergency outlet which would allow the outflow of all that water from Lake St. Martin and create that last stage of infrastructure that was so important then. And I am so proud of our government for have—having taken that critical step. This is something that past governments have failed to do. And I know that in 1978 the Manitoba Water Commission had reported on this, on the potential to implement further infrastructure and the—well, it was the Conservative government of the day, the Sterling Lyon government that said the cost benefit wasn't there.

Well, in hindsight, that was probably one of the biggest mistakes this province has ever made, not putting that infrastructure into place. It's cost—it would have cost maybe in the neighbourhood of, oh, \$10 million maximum to have done it back at that time. And, you know, to have neglected that, obviously, the cost of the flood, close to a billion dollars today, in hindsight, that action should have been taken. And this government took that action so they should be commended for that to the highest degree.

Projects, water management projects that straddle provincial lines sometimes, even international borders, as the flood of last year and this year did, do require all levels of government to participate, and the federal government has a role in this. I know the Member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake has been referring to it as a man-made flood, intentional. How irresponsible of him to take that tone. Instead, the federal government should step up and acknowledge that they have some responsibility here. To date, they've only got \$50 billion on the table for the—a billion dollar flood. They have left ranchers in the lurch completely and cottagers ineligible for disaster financial assistance and First Nations most of all. All governments have to play a role here, including Ottawa. It's time for them to step up to the—

* (11:40)

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise to support this excellent project in St. Norbert, the Drainage Inside the Dike project. Before I speak to it, I must answer a couple of the points that were raised by the member for the Interlake. First of all, the drainage channel, or the channel from Lake

Manitoba to Lake Winnipeg, to have adequate capacity to match the water flowing in from the Portage Diversion, this government, the NDP, had 11 years to do it, but they sat on their seats and did nothing, and that contributed directly to the extent of the flood last year. And the Lake St. Martin to Lake Winnipeg channel which has been put in place is still nowhere near enough. There needs to be more yet to get the water sufficient capacity to balance what comes in through the Portage Diversion and goes to Lake Winnipeg.

Second, the member for the Interlake is trying to suggest that the people on Lake Manitoba were not artificially flooded. The people certainly were artificially flooded as a result of the diversion of huge amounts of water through the Portage Diversion and into Lake Manitoba, and, of course, into Lake St. Martin as well. And the people who are around Lake Manitoba, some of them are feeling so desperate, so deserted by this government that they're wondering if, years from now, because of the terrible performance of this government, they may be in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights because their rights were so little respected by this government.

Now, let me come back now and talk about the focus of what we have today. The focus here is around the farmers' market in St. Norbert, and the farmers' market is a wonderful farmers' market. I have been there many times. There are great people and great products and great vegetables and other food items, and I think it is high time that it got more attention, and that this project, I believe, by looking at water management and landscape enhancement in the area, will be a significant benefit to the farmers' market, and it will also be a significant benefit to people in St. Norbert, and I think it's a good demonstration of how one can use, not only drainage, but various aspects of water management.

And, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I would recommend that the—those who are involved, because the word drainage has got a bad connotation in terms of flood, and what we want to move to is a water management and landscape enhancement, but you might even consider changing the name of the project so it doesn't just sit out there as drainage only, because the drainage approach that we have had under several decades to water management in Manitoba has to change. And we see that—well, exemplified, perhaps more than any other time than the flood last year. There, clearly, in southwestern Manitoba now, is 30 per cent more water coming off the land than there was 40 years ago because of the

primarily drainage policies of consecutive governments, and including the recent years of the NDP, and that extra 30 per cent of water coming off the land made a huge difference in the extent of the flooding to Lake Manitoba. And, as a way of indicating to people that we need to move beyond the drainage-only approach and to a water-management and landscape-enhancement type of approach, renaming it, if you would consider that, I think, would be an important step in sending a signal of a start in a change in direction which really has been too long in coming.

I know that some of the people who are involved in this project—Janice Lukes, for example, has been very involved in the St. Avila project which is—uses some of the same elements, the bioretention, the bioswales. The approach in the St. Avila project used berms and hills and a rain garden, where the water could come to and enhance the capabilities of the landscape, and the ability to beautify the area by having a garden and enriching the experience of young people in the school by giving them a more natural landscape. And there is increasing evidence that exposure of children early on to more natural landscapes like this may actually help, in particular, children with ADHD hyperactivity and have a beneficial effect not only on behaviour but on learning.

So I want to congratulate the—those who were involved in that project and are moving in a similar concept toward having this project for the area around the dike, the area around the farmers' market that would be a real good example of water management and landscape enhancement.

I think that the—I have talked and had some discussions with Marcel Laurendeau, who was a former Member of Parliament from St. Norbert and who was our Liberal candidate in the last election. And he's very supportive of this project and, like I, believes that this is a good step forward for St. Norbert, for the community and is a good direction to be going in showing ways in which water can be managed and the landscape can be enhanced at the same time.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I am a strong supporter of this project and I look forward to seeing the area as it develops and following the completion of this project. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to speak to the member's motion today, and I want to congratulate him for an excellent

motion. I had the occasion to spend part of Mother's Day out in St. Norbert on Lemay Street, and I can tell you he's very highly regarded in his constituency. And I'm convinced he's going to be there for many, many more years.

I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to look at the whole history of flood mitigation in this province because, you know, we had, you know, a very devastating flood in the 1950s, in 1950, and since that period of time, there have been huge, literally huge, improvements in how floods are handled.

We had the experience of Duff Roblin taking on the construction project of building the ditch and he took a lot of heat at the time for that effort, and he was certainly a visionary and put a lot of political capital up at the time to build this floodway around Winnipeg which many people scoffed at, at the time. But it's been proven that, over the years, this floodway has saved us billions of dollars in flooding.

Now, if you roll ahead a little bit, to 1997, we had a huge flood in 1997 and at that time, I remember when Gary Filmon was the premier and Gary Doer was the opposition leader, Gary Doer approached Gary Filmon and was able to make some major, major changes in how flood compensation levels were at that time, because at the time, if you want to think about this for a moment, compensation levels were very, very low. They were almost like 1950s' levels. I think it was like \$30,000 and more important, and most important, it was actual cash value were the settlements. It was not replacement cost.

I mean, people today are very used to getting replacement cost settlements on their home insurance and, you know, ACV settlements on their Autopac claims. Well, what you would get in a flood situation up to 1997, is basically ACV—you'd get a depreciated settlement and get very little for your—\$100,000-house today might only be worth \$20,000. Well, that is what you would have got for flood compensation. And Gary Doer was able to get Gary Filmon to make those changes and there were just overnight dramatic changes in that—in the flood compensation so that people started to get much more realistic levels of compensation, and it was done on a replacement cost basis.

* (11:50)

And out of that 1997 flood we saw some very important projects that were undertaken. The ministers talked about them many times here—in

southern Manitoba—which have proven their worth. Because in the last couple of years when we've had repeat floods there's been no damage, very little damage in any to these areas.

So, you know, the opposition want to criticize. You know, and, I guess, once again, that's their role. But they want to criticize—they have to recognize that those efforts that we've made, I mean, we don't—we're not, you know, we're not fortune tellers here. We can't tell where the next flood is going to be. They seem to think that somehow we should be able to anticipate where the next flood is going to be. But out of what happened last year, a very devastating flood, 30,000 claimants, way more than in 2007, record levels, and we are now putting in place different systems that are going to help in the future. So there's another flood, you know, maybe it—eventually there'll be a flood that overcomes these systems. But the idea is that we are dealing with realities as they are today, and that's important.

So I want to congratulate the member for his efforts in this—in—with this resolution, and I wish him well in the future in his future elections.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I know there's a number of colleagues on both sides of the House that have a passion for drainage and water retention within the province of Manitoba. And I can actually tell you that I welcome the committee from St. Norbert watered stewardship correlation to the House, certainly good to have you here.

And water is a passion for all of us in the House. And we know as part of our survival, and we know that there's a debate around water and how water should be maintained, and how water should be handled for those around you and for those that are the—within the province of Manitoba. In fact, I know from our conferences we've had with the members to the south in Minnesota and North Dakota in regards to the Red River—in fact, well, it's another one of our peeves that we have in regards to that agreement with the States in regards to the Red River and who really controls the water and whether or not there's going to be enough in the future. As we know, time goes on and on, and we go through these cycles of wet cycles, dry cycles, and we need to make sure that we have a water management plan in place. We need a long-term management plan that's going to work and be sustainable, because we know that whenever we talk about water it's going to have an impact on those around us.

So we have to be very careful. And I know that the coalition has done a great job in doing their due diligence and I know that there's others that are working tirelessly as well. And as we move forward, I know that, you know, we've been talking with those from Saskatchewan. And there's been references to the Shellmouth and water storage and water retention, and we know about all those great programs that we have to make sure we do our due diligence.

So I encourage the committee, the coalition, to continue their good work, and I know that they will make this become a reality. And I know that the—I wasn't going to take the bait. The member from Interlake was talking about Lake Manitoba and, of course, the flood was not intentional. But I am going to take the bait and correct the record. It was a man-made flood. It was deliberate and it was manageable. And, unfortunately, this is why we need programs. That's why we need to make sure that water retention is part of that program.

In fact, I remember very clearly, the member from Russell stood up in this House in November of 2010 and he was ridiculed by then—the minister of watered stewardship, and said he didn't know what he was talking about, that there was water being held and we should have let some of that water out in a timely manner. It's all about preparation for what's coming next. And I know very clearly the member from Russell took that step in order to notify the government that the Shellmouth was, in fact, full. In fact, the government—the federal government put their money on the table to expand the Shellmouth, and what have we seen as a result of that? Very little action—very little action—and they have an opportunity to meet with our neighbours to the west because we know that water is coming, and we know the snowfall was extensive in the winter of 2010-11 and we should've been more prepared. So I think the member from Interlake is quite wrong, and I want that to be corrected on the record.

And, also, in regards to those water agreements with Saskatchewan, and we knew that there was a large amount of water and snowfall in that province as well, and that's why we need to make sure that whenever we're talking about water and the time release of that—in fact, as the organization and the coalition has spoken out here, we need to use this for our future. We need to hold this water back in a way that's going to be sustainable. We can use it for farming. We can use it for market gardening. We can use it for irrigation of our pastures. In fact, in my

own particular situation, we used retention ponds for irrigating our products, our crops and our pasturelands, and then whatever was off that land went back into the pond. So we were able to reuse that water again and again. It's water management, Mr. Speaker; it's not rocket science, but it has to be done in a way that's sustainable. It has to be done in a way that whenever we get ready to move water from one location to another what that impact's going to be.

And I know the member from Portage la Prairie and—brought forward the ALUS program when he was president of the KAP organization. Great initiative—great initiative, and I also know the Red River community college has done a great job. In fact, one of my RMs, the RM of Woodlands brought in the Red River community college students and they did a detailed program of water retention just within the RM of Woodlands, and that's what our future's going to have to look at, not only in St. Norbert, but—and that's why we need to debate this issue, to make sure that whenever we talk about water retention, water storage, water management, that we have all the details there for us, because, what's going to happen? What's going to happen is the result of water being dumped in a manner that's not timely is going to have the same effect that it did in the flood of 2011. Unfortunately, what we need to do as a result of that is that whenever we do look at these retention ponds or water being stored, whether it be in a dam, whether it be controlled through gates, we have to make sure that, in fact, we do do our due diligence, Mr. Speaker.

Whenever we look at the global picture in regards to the water that's coming from the Red River and from the Assiniboia river, I can tell you that the drainage that comes into those—and it was brought up before in some of the comments—that we

could look at using some of the dry creeks. We could look at some of the land that is marginal land and store some of that water there as well. And I know that we want to make sure, in fact, that whenever we're looking at those issues, that, in fact, I know some of the land that we used to farm was very marginal land, some slough land. The good Lord put it there for a reason.

We tried to drain a lot of that land, and sometimes that comes back to bite us, and, as the member from Portage la Prairie said, most of the farmers in our area and all around the country have water that is stored on their land and we have the equipment and we have the technology to drain it, and, unfortunately, we drain it in a way that's not manageable. It makes it whenever we go to drain this land, there's no culverts. I mean, we just want to get it off as quick as we can. So, as a result of that, what we find is that we flood our neighbours and we take advantage of our own property being dry, but we put it on somebody else. So whenever we talk about water management, I'm going to encourage all members of the House to do their due diligence. In fact, whenever we're looking at this, in fact, this one is the, you know, a good example of what we're talking about; it's a smaller scale, but, provincially, on a larger scale, the benefits beyond the borders is so important.

Whatever we do—in fact, I know there's another one in Miami that I wanted to talk about, and this project involves approximately 158 landowners who farm along the Manitoba escarpment to south central part of province in Miami, and—

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 15, 2012

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