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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Point Douglas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 2, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, pursuant to rule 33(8), I'm announcing the private member's resolution to be considered next Thursday will be one put forward by the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine). The title of the resolution is Support for Refugees and Newcomers.

And on further House business I'd like to ask the House if there is agreement to proceed to Bill 207.

Madam Speaker: Pursuant to rule 33(8), it has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Thursday will be one put forward by the honourable member for St. Johns. The title of the resolution is Support for Refugees and Newcomers.

Is there leave to consider Bill 207 this morning, The Public Health Amendment Act? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 207—The Public Health Amendment Act

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), that Bill 207, The Public Health Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to rise this morning to discuss an issue that's very pressing, very important right now in a lot of

communities and, quite frankly, to discuss a bill that was introduced, or was put on the Order Paper, I should say, before the end of last session, before we rose for the Christmas break, and so I am very pleased to be here this morning to discuss this important bill, to open the floor for debate. But I guess I have to start by saying that I'm quite disappointed that we missed a real opportunity, quite frankly, in this House, to take leadership to move boldly as a province to address a real issue that's affecting people every single day in our communities and that touches all of us.

When we introduced this bill, I took special care to speak with the minister, speak with members opposite, to work with them, to help them to understand that this bill was being brought forward as a—in a non-partisan fashion in a way that I thought was—could be supported by all members. It was something that we, on all sides of the House, could work on. I know it's an issue that's close to home for members on the government side as well and on members of all sides of this House, and this has touched families, not only in the communities that we represent but, in some cases, within their own families as well.

And so it was introduced in that spirit and it was introduced also in the spirit as it was introduced in Alberta where, in that case, it was an opposition member of the Conservative caucus who introduced a very similar bill which was debated, I believe which was amended with consent of the person that introduced it, the member that introduced it, was worked with and then was voted on unanimously in support of.

So Alberta has now taken the lead in supporting this legislation and here in Manitoba we are still without any substantive legislation with regards to this crisis that we're facing on fentanyl in our communities.

At the time that it was introduced, I know the minister and others, when questioned, said, well, the federal government is looking into this issue. This is something that we will off-load to them. We'll let the federal government take the lead on.

That's just not acceptable, Madam Speaker. We said so at the time. Here we are now again, three

months later. The federal government has legislation on the table with regards to pill presses, but nothing passed—no legislation, no substantive legislation that's been implemented, whereas Alberta has taken a step. We could have been among the leaders in Canada on taking concrete steps to address this crisis. We are now lagging behind other provinces.

And it's also worth noting, Madam Speaker, that the legislation that has been brought forward at the federal government—the federal level, is specifically about the importation of pill presses, not about their use. And, in this case, we've been asked by law enforcement, we've been asked by first responders, those who are actually addressing the crisis first-hand, to pass this kind of legislation that gives law enforcement the tool once they find these to use that as part of the case that they can make to shut these clandestine drug labs down and take some of these pills off the street.

So, I come this morning, really, Madam Speaker, to this Chamber just—frankly, just disappointed—disappointed that we didn't take the steps necessary, that we didn't lead the nation; we didn't join with others in addressing this issue head-on, and I come to this House saddened because I've seen first-hand the results of not taking action in this province. I've seen the results first-hand in the community forums that I attended that were put on by the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. Again, I know members of the government were there as well. I know others heard first-hand from those who are dealing with this crisis on the streets.

* (10:10)

But I also come to this issue, now having a personal experience with a family member who overdosed, who—we don't know exactly what the substance was. They believe it was fentanyl, but we won't know until further tests are done.

But I was at the funeral yesterday, Madam Speaker, of my cousin who overdosed, and she struggled with addictions her entire life. But it was the deadly drugs like fentanyl and the acutely deadly drugs like fentanyl that are on the streets now that, ultimately, caused her to overdose.

Now, I am not here to say that this is the be-all and end-all of this issue. This is a multi-faceted issue. Addictions are something that we really need to look at holistically. There—we need to understand the causes. We need to look at harm reduction in any

form that we can find it. We need to look at the over-prescription of opioids and other drugs.

There are a myriad of ways of tackling this issue, but here we are as legislators with the power to do something, something rather than nothing, and three months we have—we've—the deaths have been piling up in this province. The overdoses that have been treated by first responders have been piling up in this province, and we have done nothing.

This is one small step that we can take. Again, I come to this issue in a non-partisan way, begging the government to move forward on this, to vote on this important bill, to support it, to make some small difference, and then begin to look at the larger issue and then begin to look at harm reduction strategies, to look at addictions and mental health issues and to start coming up with a real plan.

But what we need to do today is to simply take the first step or one step that we can take that's right in front of us to pass this piece of legislation and move this province into the forefront in tackling this issue, to stopping it from becoming more of a crisis, from really acknowledging the damage that it's causing in our communities.

So I urge the government to take this seriously, to move forward swiftly and to take the steps that we can take to make a difference in our communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Madam Speaker, can the minister explain to their—can the member explain to this House—*[interjection]*—he wishes—why he believes his bill's provincial, or as his colleague the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview describes it, a vulcanized approach would be more beneficial than the federal government's paying Canadian legislation currently before the Senate?

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I did address this in my opening comments. The bill that's in front of the Chamber today is quite different than the one that's being proposed by the federal government. The

federal government is talking about the importation of pill presses.

What we're talking about here is when those pill presses are found in possession of an individual for use in an illicit way, it gives law enforcement another tool to shut those drug labs down and get these pills off our streets.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Could I ask the member, how are pill or tablet presses used by clandestine drug labs to manufacture and sell harmful drugs?

Mr. Wiebe: These pill presses are quite easy to obtain, from my understanding, and once in the possession of these drug labs, they're used to manufacture pills that look very much, in some cases, like the real-like real drugs, real pharmaceutical products. However, they're not usually mixed correctly, they don't have obviously the same standards and for that reason they can be especially deadly and dangerous to communities.

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Is the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) aware that a distribution program by our PC government will make the access to live-saving naloxone kits more easily available to the general public, including Manitoba's North and remote communities?

Mr. Wiebe: I'm glad the member for Thompson raises this perspective, because I know this is a crisis that's hitting his community very acutely.

Absolutely—something that we called for in the House. I was very pleased to hear the minister take some steps to increase the distribution of naloxone. We feel there's still some steps that can be taken to broaden that but it is one important step. This is another.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): To explain dire need, how readily accessible are these pill presses?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, I appreciate the perspective our northern members, and because this is such an acute problem in the North and elsewhere.

As I said, I think, from my understanding, the pill presses are fairly widely available through the Internet, and this is where the federal bill will take some steps, we believe, to stop the importation. What we're talking about is those pill presses that are already present here in Manitoba or are being bought and sold within Canada. We feel that there's some opportunity to give law enforcement some additional tools.

Mr. Allum: Could I ask the member: What are the other provincial governments doing to mitigate the opioid crisis in Canada?

Mr. Wiebe: The—as I mentioned in my opening comments, Alberta has certainly taken the lead with regards to pill presses. We feel that they—their legislation, again, was introduced in a non-partisan way, was with—was introduced with, in conjunction with, law enforcement and getting their ideas.

But we know other provinces have taken other steps. British Columbia, for instance, has taken the step to call this a public health emergency. We believe that that's one option that's on the table for the government, to really focus attention and to direct funds to deal with this crisis head-on.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I'm just wondering if the member can, opposite, can explain to this House why he personally believes his bill's provincial approach would be more beneficial than the federal government's current legislation before the Senate.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, as I've said now a few times, I believe that they—these two pieces of legislation actually complement each other. But when the member talks about a personal—this is very personal to me. And it's personal to me, again, not because this is now something that's affected my family, but because I've sat with those families who it's affected directly, as well, and I've heard their stories. And I've heard them beg for this and other things, for us to just take this one step. And so I'm committed to seeing that through and to helping address this crisis in whatever way I can.

Mr. Allum: I ask the member why are pill presses especially concerning with undetectable opioids like fentanyl and carfentanil?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, as I mentioned earlier, Madam Speaker, the real danger comes when, you know, pills are created by, you know, for lack of a better word, amateurs, those without any kind of experience in mixing drugs. And what you get is you get some pills that are, you know, have dead spots; they have less of a particular drug and more.

When you're talking about carfentanil, we're talking about two grains of sugar, you know, in terms of size, in terms of quantity; that can be fatal. So it's so important to have proper mixtures. Obviously, that's not available to clandestine drug labs.

* (10:20)

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Like the honourable member, I have had a similar experience with a young nephew that had difficulties.

But I'm interested to know that when the federal government is working on this, and they seem to be the ones that will regulate it across the country, why he can't wait for the federal government's current regulation that is, I understand, before the Senate, as opposed to this one-off, just one-province ban here.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, Madam Speaker, it's apples and oranges. I don't think I need to go over that point again.

What I will say to the member that I hear his personal experience; I appreciate him sharing that. I know for people with family members who are addicts, this is the one thing that they fear the most because those are the most vulnerable people, those with addictions issues. They may have had addictions issues their entire lives, and it's not until they're introduced to this particular drug and this particular danger, especially carfentanyl, where even a lifelong user can all of a sudden overdose and be a casualty.

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): Can the member indicate why you're not recognizing the very important steps the PC government is taking to collaboratively work with others to both educate and promote awareness to the public on the dangers of opioids such as fentanyl?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Madam Speaker, I feel like I am honestly coming to this in a non-partisan way, so I'm going to try to restrain myself. But just to reiterate that I do appreciate that some of the things that were raised in question period that I met with the minister on, that families met with the minister on, have been implemented.

Certainly, an education campaign is part of the solution, just in the same way that this is part of the solution. So, you know, these are not mutually exclusive issues. I think we can do both.

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Why is the member opposite not recognizing the important investments by our PC government and the life-saving naloxone kits available?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, and I'm a bit disappointed in a sense that, you know, we did actually have members of the government, to their credit; we had members from our side, we had members from all parties in this House attend community forums on this issue to

hear first-hand from first responders, from police, from addictions workers to say that that is, in fact, part of the solution.

But by no means should this government rest on those steps that it's taken and say problem solved. This is an ongoing crisis. It needs to be addressed. This is one small part of it. Let's get on with it.

Mr. Martin: I agree with the member that this does require a multi-faceted approach and there are some components in dealing with this health crisis that is affecting families in Manitoba and across Canada.

Does the member feel that a pill press is a more prominent part or component of a strategy as opposed to our government's view of introducing or making access to life-saving naloxone kits more available through paramedics and RCMP throughout Manitoba and northern Manitoba and rural Manitoba for that life-saving drug?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, if the member opposite really wants to know what I think, I think this should be considered a public health emergency, that emergency dollars from this government should be put into not only front line, you know, dealing with this issue but also in harm reduction. And, so far, this government has done nothing to give us a real sense of what their strategy is and steps that they're willing to take.

We need action now. I am simply asking for one small step of it. But if the member wants to know, yes, I think we should do a lot more.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired. Debate is open.

Debate

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It puzzles me that the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) continues to insist that legislation is required in Manitoba to deal with a terrible situation that is already being addressed by the federal government.

I know my friend across the way is aware that in December 2016, the federal government introduced Bill C-37, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Among other things, the federal legislation proposes to prohibit the unregistered import of pill presses and encapsulators without Health Canada's pre-approval. The bill also gives Canada Border Services Agency more power to inspect smaller packages arriving from overseas.

Currently, border officers are only able to open mail weighing more than 30 grams.

For the information of all members in the House, Bill C-37 has now finished second reading in the Senate of Canada. Also, I am pleased to report that as of March 1st, China has banned carfentanyl and three other variants of fentanyl. These changes will also help to combat the import of illicit opiates into Canada.

Madam Speaker, like in many other issues since being elected, Manitoba has shown national leadership by calling on the federal government to implement a national strategy to combat opiates. However, Manitoba just didn't sit back and wait for things to happen; we took immediate action and have met several commitments. Last fall, our Health Minister announced that naloxone would be made readily available throughout Manitoba. The Provincial Naloxone Distribution Program was officially launched on January 3rd and to date more than 300 kits have been ordered. Currently, there are 25 sites distributing the drug used to block the effects of opioids, especially in overdose.

Public education on the dangers of fentanyl has been a key part of our government's strategy. We recognize the prevention by education and awareness is key to fighting the 'curriant'—current opioid crisis here and across Canada. We all know that fentanyl doesn't give second chances. A social media awareness campaign was launched in November, and at the same time information packages on the dangers of fentanyl were sent to all schools. As well, a page on the government of Manitoba website was created to provide information to the public and service providers on the dangers of fentanyl and how to get help.

The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba has offered and continues to offer community forums across the province. We all know that the best way to help Manitobans struggling with drug and alcohol addiction is to prevent them from being addicted in the first place. Prevention and early intervention activities are critical to minimizing harm and reducing costs associated with substance abuse. Our government continues to encourage anyone struggling with addiction to reach out for help at AFM.

Madam Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to reinforce again what our government has done to address this serious situation. Specifically, Manitoba has led the way by encouraging Ottawa to implement

a ban on the sale of pill presses across Canada. Illicit drug manufacturers do not respect provincial borders, and a co-ordinated national response is required to ensure these tools cannot flow freely within Canada. We asked the federal government to provide enhanced detection authority to the Canada Border Services Agency to ensure that fentanyl and other opioids are prevented from entering Canada.

On November 19th, our Minister of Health committed to improving data collection to better target interventions, expand access to Manitoba's provincial 'naloxolone' distribution program, improve prescription drug monitoring to prevent prescription drug abuse—misuse and provide specialized education for service providers and parents. On November 25th, a new social media awareness campaign was unveiled in response to growing concerns over the number of reported overdoses due to fentanyl. The goal is to educate the people about the dangers posed by these drugs to both users and non-users and their presence in common recreational illicit drugs.

On December 19th our PC government committed to purchase naloxone kits for police officers in Winnipeg and other municipal and First Nation police services across the province. On January 3rd, our PC government implemented a new distribution program aimed at providing improved access across Manitoba to 'nanoxolone' kits and educational materials.

Madam Speaker, the opioid problem didn't just begin last fall, like members opposite would lead us to believe. Provincial statistics show that under the previous NDP administration, fentanyl was either a contributing or a primary factor in 20 overdose deaths in 2015. That number rose from 13 deaths linked to the drug in 2014 and 11 in 2013. The difference is our government took immediate and positive steps to deal with a crisis facing Manitobans.

Our PC government will continue to work collaboratively with our partners across the country and here in Manitoba as we focus on immediate and long-term solutions to address this very real public health concern.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (10:30)

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I want to thank the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) for bringing forward this very important bill, and I am hoping that this will become law in Manitoba very soon.

I know both he and the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) have been very outspoken and very passionate about this. And we come to this House and we learn a lot of things. Sometimes we learn things we never really wanted to know in the first place. And I know that from what we've heard today, and not just members on our side of the House but members on the other side as well, have shared some of their experiences about the impact of this opioid crisis which is now, unfortunately, in Manitoba and is impacting lives and impacting families.

And this bill is intended to be one more step to try to stop opioids, in this case, illegal opioids, from falling into the hands of people who may very well be hurt by them. And I think the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) has been quite clear. The passage of this bill and the passing of regulations which the government will then be able to create, will not wipe out the issue of opioids. There will still be the improper use of properly prescribed opioids. There's still the fear of over-prescription of opioids and, yes, there will be the importation. It will happen. There will be the smuggling in of pills from other places.

But at the very least, this will be another step to restrict the manufacture of these very dangerous drugs, and other drugs as well, which will have a positive impact on people in Manitoba.

And I've heard the members opposite talk about the federal law. I'll speak about that a little bit. That is a good measure. This is a complementary measure which will make things even safer for Manitobans.

There's no legislative reason, Madam Speaker, that anybody other than a pharmacist or a drug manufacturer or vitamin manufacturer should have a pill press. Pill presses aren't that big. They're only about two feet by two feet, and one pill press can crank out thousands of pills an hour. And why is it so dangerous? Well, with opioids like fentanyl and its even stronger cousin carfentanil, I think everybody knows that even a small dose of that drug can result in serious consequences, including death.

And the concern, which isn't just the concern of the member from Concordia or any member of this House, the concern which has been expressed by health-care professionals and police across the country is that when these drugs are mixed into tablets, it is quite clear that they are not being mixed evenly.

Fentanyl's dangerous in the best of situations, but as one police officer, one deputy police chief put it, it's really like playing Russian roulette. The pills may all look the same, and with a pill press, even a cheap pill press can produce pills that look to someone on the street like they might be quote, safe. End quote. But it's like Russian roulette. One pill out of 100 or one pill out of 1,000 might actually contain a fatal dose of fentanyl or, more likely, carfentanil.

We know that organized crime and those manufacturing drugs have been replacing cocaine with fentanyl and carfentanil because it's more available and because it's cheaper. And I know there is some skeptics who say, well, why would drug dealers and organized crime, why would they be killing their clients? Well, because they're reckless. I think everybody could agree if you are manufacturing illegal drugs for sale to people, you're being reckless and you don't know and you can't—no one buying a drug like that and consuming a drug like that knows exactly what's in any particular pill.

And, as I've said, it's not just opioids. Pill presses are being used to create and put into pill form drugs like methamphetamine, cocaine, and GHB which is the date rape drug. And, as a matter of fact, just a couple of weeks ago in the city of Victoria, Madam Speaker, police there seized two pill presses. They also seized \$1.1 million, which were hidden in the house. They also found enough date rape drugs to drug every single student at the University of Victoria. That's how pervasive this problem is. That's how many drugs, that's how many lives can be affected by just one pill press.

And, yes, I agree with the Progressive Conservative members that Bill C-37 being brought by the federal government is important. It will, hopefully, slow and stop the importation of pill presses into Canada.

But what about the pill presses that you can buy right now online? I'm afraid to say you can go on the Internet or you can look around and you can buy one of these pill presses right now. And if you have the ingredients, you can start manufacturing not hundreds, not thousands, tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of pills.

As the member for Concordia has said, Alberta led the way. And it was a Progressive Conservative member who brought a private member's bill—an individual in Alberta who is a former police officer, who was elected to Legislature, who brought his knowledge as we all bring our own experiences and

our own knowledge into this building—who brought forward that piece of legislation, and the NDP government in Alberta agreed.

Is it the be-all and end-all? No. No one in Alberta would say that that is the one solution to solving the opioid crisis. But the Alberta government moved ahead because they knew they had to for the protection of their citizens.

And even with the federal law, even if it was to pass tomorrow—and I've waxed poetic before about how quickly things move through the Senate—even if it passed tomorrow it wouldn't actually impact the hundreds, if not thousands of pill presses, that are now operating in Canada. And we need to take every step we can as the Government of Manitoba to do this.

In British Columbia there's been calls for similar legislation and there the Liberal government has taken the same approach as the Progressive Conservative government here, saying, well, maybe it's not necessary; maybe the federal government's going to move on something.

Well, people can't wait. Families can't wait. We have to stop the ability of individuals here in Canada, in Manitoba, from being able to manufacture tens of thousands of pills that frankly can kill people.

And I know that we've heard from the Progressive Conservative members about the availability of naloxone and every step that can be taken to put that into the hands of first responders, of people across this province, is positive.

But in some cases, Madam Speaker, we're closing the barn door after the horse has left. Once somebody has taken a dose of carfentanil, there is no guarantee that a dose of naloxone—even if it happens quickly, even if it's administered properly in a timely way across this huge province, there is no guarantee that that person's life is going to be saved.

So in no way do I denigrate the fact—and I agree that it's necessary to keep expanding measures after the fact, we need to get out in front of this. And this bill is one further step in doing this.

I hope the Minister of Health is listening. I hope the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson) is listening. As I said to my friend, the member from Concordia, this really is where Health meets Justice, meets families, meets every other portfolio and everything that we do in this Legislature.

So I am hoping that my friends opposite will accept the spirit in which this bill has been brought, will understand something that the Minister of Health used to say in opposition: that good ideas can come from all parts of this House and from all different political parties. This is an issue which is important enough to people in Manitoba for us to move ahead to pass this law.

I trust the Minister of Health and Cabinet will move quickly to pass regulations—which can be in place, I would think, within the next couple of months—to take one more step for making sure that the member from Concordia, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), or who knows, any other member of this Legislature and any other Manitoban doesn't have to have a family member deal with that issue.

So I am hoping that we will work together, and this morning we can do something positive in this House, and take one more step at combatting the opioid crisis and making Manitobans just a little safer.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise to say to this House that the Manitoba Liberal caucus will be supporting this piece of legislation. We have a crisis in the province with fentanyl and carfentanil, with addictions and with overdoses, and with deaths. And although some measures are being done, and that needs to be acknowledged, additional measures like this are reasonable and, in fact, are complimentary with what is being done in Ottawa.

*(10:40)

So we will support this legislation which will reduce the availability of pill presses, and reduce access to pill presses beyond those who need those and so that we will, hopefully, reduce the availability of pills which are poorly produced and which may contain levels of ingredients which are problematic and potentially dangerous and potentially lethal. But we'll support this bill, Madam Speaker.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, I only want to get up for just a short period of time to thank my colleague from Concordia for bringing this motion forward today so that we as a House can work to show the people of Manitoba that we actually care about things that are happening in our communities, in our neighbourhoods, in our neighbours' homes and, as my friend from Minto just

pointed out, it could happen to any of us, that families in my neighbourhood in Riverview and Lord Roberts and in Fort Garry that have been affected by this are families just like mine, just like yours, just like everybody else here in this House. And this is an opportunity to take one step, one further step to show that this Legislature cares about the very people that we represent.

We have an opportunity here, my friends, to do one thing, one simple thing to save lives. That's what this has been about, about saving lives. I would urge all members to support this important motion.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased to put a few words on the record on the member for Concordia's (Mr. Wiebe) excellent bill today before the vote.

I just want to say that I really think we're playing catch-up here. Back in 2008, 2009, when I was a Member of Parliament I had a—was at an event where a senior United States embassy official was there, and he told me that this was a huge issue as far as pill presses were concerned and, in fact, that in the United States pill presses are heavily regulated. In fact, you can't buy them without, you know, going through a lot of hoops and registering the owner, and then when you repair these things when they break down there is a—you're not allowed to repair them either without a lot of paperwork.

So what in fact happens is these drug organizations, believe it or not, smuggle a huge amount of drugs—I guess methamphetamines and a variety of drugs, across the border into Canada—into Toronto specifically is where he said it's going. They take the risk. They take the chance of smuggling all this stuff into Toronto where they can produce the pills because in Canada you can buy these things without any type of registration. You can fix them without any sort of paper trail, and then they take the further risk of smuggling all this stuff back to the United States. This is not a mom-and-pop type of operation here. We're talking about professional drug lords.

So, you know, where was the government of Stephen Harper at this time? When you've got senior US officials telling members of the Conservative government, a Stephen Harper government, that something had to be done about pill presses, that we had to regulate these pill presses and stop this flow across the US border and then back again, and absolutely nothing was done by that government.

So I find it kind of passing strange that here we are, eight years later, and we're just discovering this is an issue, and, in fact, this was well-known as an issue by people in the know way back eight years ago. So I think that—I guess it's better late than never, but the member has certainly stepped up and brought in a bill that is excellent, that is going to help. And we know that there's no one fix here, that there's—drugs have to be combatted on many, many fronts. This is just one aspect to the total war on these drug producers, and so let's pass this bill and this is the time to do it.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 207, The Public Health Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Agreed?

Agreed and so ordered. I declare the motion carried.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Sorry—oh, I apologize. I did not hear the no that was coming forward. All I heard was—okay, the—it has been recommended that I probably redo the ask, then.

So is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

I declare the motion—[interjection]

The—a recorded vote is—the Official Opposition House Leader.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): I request a recorded vote.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

* (10:50)

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 207, The Public Health Amendment Act.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Klassen, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Saran, Selinger, Swan, Wiebe.

Nays

Bindle, Clarke, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Smith, Smook, Squires, Teitsma, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 15, Nays 32.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 1—Port of Churchill

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on the Port of Churchill, brought forward by the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I rise this morning to introduce this private member's resolution, seconded by the member from The Pas,

WHEREAS the Port of Churchill for 85 years has served prairie grain producers and northern Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Port of Churchill is Canada's only arctic deep sea port, and the town's largest employer, providing work for roughly 10 percent of the population; and

WHEREAS the port and rail line are vital to ensure the long term operation and viability of the community of Churchill as well as northern communities along the Hudson Bay Rail Line, and is an important strategic asset for Canada; and

WHEREAS the Port of Churchill and rail line was bought by the American company Omnitrax when it was privatized in 1997; and

WHEREAS in 2012, the Federal Government led by then Prime Minister Harper dismantled the Canadian Wheat Board, cutting off critical grain supply to the port; and

WHEREAS the owners of the port, Omnitrax, have unilaterally, without notice, shut down the grain handling facility, laid off over a hundred workers and cut back rail freight service putting the future of the port and communities along the rail line in jeopardy; and

WHEREAS service to the various communities, including First Nations communities, along the Bay Line has been cut in half, reducing shipments of essential items like fresh food which has significantly decreased their accessibility and increased their costs as a result; and

WHEREAS all the communities along the Bay Line from OCN to Churchill and the Arctic Circle have formed a coalition called the Northern Delegation dedicated to save the Port of Churchill and Hudson Bay Rail Line; and

WHEREAS at its 2016 annual convention, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities passed an emergency resolution calling upon the Provincial and Federal Governments to work together with the Northern Delegation and the current owner OmniTRAX to ensure that the port reopens in time for the grain shipping season, in summer 2017.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to take action to make revitalizing the Port of Churchill and Hudson Bay rail line the No. 1 priority for its Northern Economic Development Strategy task force and to set up meetings with the federal government, the current owner of both the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay rail line, the Town of Churchill and First Nations communities to ensure an orderly ownership transfer at the earliest possibility.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey).

Mr. Lindsey: I move, seconded by the member from The Pas, the—

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to take action to make revitalizing the Port of Churchill and Hudson Bay rail line the No. 1 priority of its Northern Economic Development Strategy task force and to set up meetings with the federal government, the current owner of both the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay rail line, the Town of Churchill and First Nations communities to ensure an orderly ownership transfer at the earliest opportunity.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Flin Flon, seconded by the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin),

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to take action to make revitalizing the Port of Churchill—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Lindsey: Madam Speaker, this resolution is vitally important for the province of Manitoba and for all the communities that depend on the rail line in the North. This government has dithered and waited. They've appointed a task force. They've changed their plan for the North any number of times. They've set up a website for people to give them ideas. Meanwhile, this government has done nothing to get the port up and running, to support the people of Churchill or to support any of the people that live along the rail line from The Pas to Churchill.

How long should we wait, Madam Speaker, for this government to actually recognize the importance of the people that live in the North? The

2016 grain shipping season was lost and if action is not undertaken quickly it will be too late for the 2017 grain shipping season, as well.

The consortium of parties that have banded together to try and do something to get the rail line and the port back in operation so that it can continue to supply the vital link for all those communities, the Town of Churchill, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, the Kivalliq Inuit Association, Fox Lake Cree Nation, the Town of Gillam, York Factory, War Lake, Ilford, Pikwitonei Community Council, City of Thompson, Thicket Portage, Wabowden, Cormorant, Town of The Pas, City of Flin Flon and Mathias Colomb Cree Nation, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, the Rural Municipality of Kelsey, the Hudson Bay road–route association, have all banded together to try and get that rail line operating for the people—for the people that depend on it to supply much-needed fresh produce, groceries, affordable food, which by the OmniTRAX holding the entire North hostage while they play whatever game it is they want to play, this government sits back and does nothing—does nothing to support the people that live in those communities, Madam Speaker.

People of the North, people of those communities, depend on that rail line. It's their link to civilization; it's their link to healthy food; it's their link to their future. The Port of Churchill itself is of vital importance to this country, to this province, and yet both the federal and provincial governments do nothing.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

There's been no action from this province, no concrete action to ensure that that rail line will remain in operation and in fact go back to operating more than once a week. It's affecting industry. The rail line that runs to Flin Flon formerly ran three days a week; it's now down to two, forcing some companies to start shipping product by truck, which increases their cost, actually increases the cost to the province.

As one can clearly see on Highway 10 that leads out of Flin Flon, the road is beat up because of the increased truck flow on it. Meanwhile, the rail line is underutilized, and yet this government continues to do nothing.

We wait to hear constantly that they've appointed their group that's looking at ideas for the North, supposedly. The only thing we hear is

tourism. They do nothing to support mining communities. They do nothing to support finding the next ore body. They continue to ignore the North, to ignore all the citizens of the North, and that's a terrible waste for this province and for the people that live in the North.

We want to hear that there's been some progress made on something, rather than, well, let's make a web page. Let's depend on somebody else to come up with ideas, which is a good part. We should be listening for other people's ideas on how to proceed. But we can't, as a government, sit and continue to do nothing—nothing to support that port, nothing to support that rail line, nothing to support the people that depend on those services, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We cannot let an American corporation hold northern Manitoba hostage as they've been doing for over a year now. And this government says, well, we're not going to do anything to support businesses, but they do. There's money gone to support other businesses, and I'm not suggesting for one second that we should just continue to bail out OmniTRAX. But between the provincial government and the federal government, there needs to be movement to make sure that those facilities remain open and viable.

* (11:10)

They talked yesterday about trade, and yet they allow a vital link for future trade to remain idle and dormant, and the longer it sits, the less likelihood there is of it ever being in operation again. Manitoba will lose a great asset to people of Churchill—many of whom have already lost their jobs—will not survive just on people coming to look at polar bears.

The other communities along the rail line will not survive based on some kind of tourism plan that remains vague, undeveloped. They don't have polar bears. What they have is communities that need food, that need supplies. That port should be not just shipping grain; it should be shipping other products and it should be receiving products from elsewhere, because really that's what trade is all about, but so far this government is only interested in east-west trade, not trade going north.

We need to ensure that people in the North have a future. We need to ensure that workers in Churchill have jobs. That is the problem with this government's concept of trade, is it—only is about trading wealth for a few, not about providing a meaningful future

for so many people in this province, particularly people in the North that continually are ignored.

When Flin Flon looks towards its future and mines shutting down and no action by this government to try and do anything to stimulate economic growth in Flin Flon—the town of The Pas was left up to the workers in the town, the government did nothing. And that seems to be their method of operation for all communities in the North, is to do nothing, to ignore the North, to ignore the people of the North, and—and what? That's the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We never hear what their actual plan is. They change the name of the plan constantly. The lack of any kind of meaningful plan is a shame for the people of the North, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's too bad for all of us.

Thank you.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 10 minutes will be held and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: A first question may be asked by the member from another party. Any sequence of questions must be followed by a rotation between parties. Each independent member may ask one question, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Any questions?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I am astounded at the nerve of this member for what he has just said. The NDP, federally and provincially, has nothing but disdain for the northern way of life. They are against the long-gun registry; they kick members out of caucus if they don't toe the party line; they're against mining; they're against smart environmental regulation and bring in regulations that cause unemployment, red tape.

Mr. Speaker, the concern of government—save those jobs in The Pas—Tolko—through private initiative. The NDP—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfortunately, the member opposite forgot about Churchill, just like his government forgets about Churchill.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Deputy Speaker, with such positive comments on our PC government's Look North strategy from stakeholders such as OCN Chief Sinclair, why does the NDP stand against development in northern Manitoba?

Mr. Lindsey: Well, nothing could be further from the truth. We are in favour of development. If the member had been listening, that's what I talked about was this government's ignoring the North and not doing anything to foster development in Churchill or anywhere else in the North other than talking about tourism—which we don't all have polar bears to look at, Mr. Deputy Speaker—so we need a better plan from this government than just tourism.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I wonder if the opposition members believe in trade.

Mr. Lindsey: The short answer is, yes, we believe in trade.

Mr. Cullen: Seems like a different tone today than from yesterday's debate. I wonder if the previous government actually had a business plan in place for the Port of Churchill.

Mr. Lindsey: The last I looked at that point in time, the Port of Churchill was under private ownership, that now the Port of Churchill is no longer in operation. So we're left to wonder what this government's plan is, not look at what a previous government's plan was that actually kept the Port of Churchill operational.

Mr. Cullen: Clearly, the previous government did not have a business plan in place. I wonder if the members now have a suggestion for the government in terms of a business plan, going forward.

Mr. Lindsey: I guess, let me go back to the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade and ask him what's his plan, because we haven't seen one from this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade—the honourable member for The Pas.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Does this government realize the integral role of the Bay Line in ensuring Manitobans living in northern communities have access to essential goods like fresh food?

Mr. Lindsey: Clearly, this government doesn't recognize the important role of that Bay Line.

Clearly, this government doesn't recognize the importance of the people in Churchill, the importance of the people along the rail line. Clearly, this government fails to recognize the importance of the port for anything.

Mr. Cullen: I wonder if the opposition members could answer the question as to how many lawsuits are in place that this government is now dealing with because of their actions or lack of actions.

Mr. Lindsey: I won't comment on the member opposite's question because it doesn't warrant an answer.

What we want to know is what this government's plan for the Port of Churchill is. As for the rest of their plan for the North, there is an absence of a plan and that's what's troubling us; that's why we're bringing this resolution forward is we want the government to actually have a plan for the Port of Churchill, for the rail line and for the North.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Here's a tough question for my colleague from Flin Flon. I'm not aware of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) visiting Churchill or northern communities to, you know, consult with them or to develop a plan in conjunction with people in the North. But I'm wondering if perhaps I missed something and whether the member from Flin Flon can tell us if the Premier is actually engaging in a real way with northern communities.

* (11:20)

Mr. Lindsey: The answer to that, to the best of my knowledge, is the Premier has never been to Churchill, certainly, not since the crisis of shutting down the port has come to being. I don't believe that he's actively, nor do I believe that this government is actively engaged in trying to resolve the issue.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): A Mr. John Gunther [*phonetic*], a well-known northern entrepreneur, is quoted as saying through their Look North strategy we hope that others will discover what we've known for more than 30 years: that the northern part of this province is full of opportunity.

Why does the NDP not show the same excitement as Mr. Gunther [*phonetic*] when it comes to Manitoba's northern development?

Mr. Lindsey: I guess I would like the government to show the same level of optimism that Mr. Gunther [*phonetic*] does because this government, again, does not have a plan for the North. They're waiting for somebody else to come up with a plan. Always

sitting on their hands waiting for somebody else to do something is the absence of a plan.

Mr. Kinew: I understand from some of my colleague from Flin Flon's comments earlier on that he believes that perhaps developing other industries may provide more sustainable, longer lasting jobs in the North with, you know, longer term, higher wage futures for people in the North.

So I'm wondering if he could just share what some of those other industries would be. What have been the sources of good-paying high-wage jobs in a community like Flin Flon?

Mr. Lindsey: Of course, resource jobs traditionally have been good-paying jobs. Those jobs can continue and should continue. We need to have economic development in the North. We need to have this government committed to helping mining companies explore. We need to have this government committed to freeing up claims that are locked that nobody's doing anything with so that the next mine can be found in the North.

Certainly, the consortium of communities have any number of ideas for economic development, and there may not be one specific—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): The NDP failed to achieve any sustainable security for northerners. Why doesn't the MLA for Flin Flon want to promote opportunities and help bring jobs to northern Manitoba?

Mr. Lindsey: The member from Flin Flon really wants to see economic development in the North and wants to see this government actually do something to support economic development in the North rather than just talk, and talk, and talk, and do nothing, which is what they've done.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I'm trying to speak of the resiliency of the people in the North. How many people still tried to make the port happen? What amount of tonnage was shipped out from the Port of Churchill?

Mr. Lindsey: As far as shipping grain last year the number is zero, because the federal government and the provincial government allow the port to not ship grain. They allow the rail line to be reduced to one day a week. They allow the American corporation to continue to hold the people of the North hostage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is now open. Any speakers?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): It's so great to have such support on our caucus, and this is just a sign and a symbol of a great team and a great bunch of people working together on behalf of Manitobans to make Manitoba great and to make northern Manitoba great again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've known what's happened in northern Manitoba over the last 17 years. We had a previous government that chose to ignore northern Manitoba, and that's the sign of it today: a government that chose to ignore Manitoba and northern Manitoba, and take northern Manitobans for granted. They took northern Manitoban voters for granted as well.

If we look and reflect on the last election and the changes that occurred in the northern vote, they will recognize the fault that they had over the last 17 years by choosing to ignore northern Manitobans.

Mr. Acting—Mr. Deputy Speaker, we as a new government are consulting with northern Manitobans, something that did not happen for the last 17 years. We are having positive partnerships with northern Manitobans as we go forward. We're excited about the opportunities that are present in northern Manitoba. There's obviously optimism in northern Manitoba about the future of northern Manitoba in so many areas in terms of economic development, tourism as well. And we're excited about working in partnership with so many stakeholders in northern Manitoba.

Obviously, we've implemented Look North. We think this is a tremendous initiative engaging northern Manitobans in how they want to see northern Manitoba develop into the future. This is a tremendous project; it's going to be a tremendous process as we move forward. And it is about consultation and engaging Manitobans, not just northern Manitobans, but all Manitobans, because what happens in northern Manitoba has implications for everyone in Manitoba. When northern Manitoba prospers, so does the rest of Manitoba, and that's why we're having this dialogue.

Clearly, there's—situations are different in northern Manitoba, and we talk about economic

development and we recognize that. That's why we've embarked on a different approach in terms of engaging northern Manitobans and how we deal with economic development in northern Manitoba. And we're really encouraged by the conversations we've had to date.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I reflect back when we first came into government, we were confronted with a situation in The Pas with the Tolko situation I think everyone is well aware of. And, to me, that was certainly a sign of how business was being done in the past. Government was there for short-term bailouts which certainly weren't in the interests of Manitobans and certainly of those companies. We recognize that short-term bailouts for political reasons are not the solution, not the long-term solution. We have the long-term view where we're committed to partnerships and working in partnership with the stakeholders that are involved.

And through those partnerships and those consultations with the community, with proponents that were looking at purchasing that particular asset, with the First Nations community, with the labour in the community as well—with all of those stakeholders we were able to bring everyone to the table and find a solution for that difficult situation that the community faced.

And we're certainly happy to report that, you know, Kraft Paper is the new owner there and certainly operating that asset, and it's working out quite well. And obviously there's been great engagement from the labour side and great engagement from the First Nations with some new models there going forward, and it's been a real win-win situation.

And, when we go back and visit with the community as we did just a couple weeks ago, they recognize the role that the government played in terms of bringing that—bearing fruit in terms of our discussions, and that's obviously important. And those sort of principles, I think, we can take to the rest of northern Manitoba.

We've certainly had the opportunity to visit northern Manitoba over the last number of years and, clearly, each community was, in my view, working on their own in terms of their own economic development.

But I think in—what's happened in the face of adversity, whether it be The Pas, whether it be the line going to Churchill or the Port of Churchill, in the

face of adversity the communities are now pulling together. And they recognize, as a region, that we have to have a conversation about economic development, about the future of northern Manitoba and about the future of the people in northern Manitoba and what the job situation is going to look like in the future. So it's certainly refreshing now to go to those communities and we can work together as a region and have that dialogue.

* (11:30)

I'm excited about the conversations we're having now through the Look North project, and I'm also excited about the summits that we are going to be hosting in the very near future. I think those summits will provide a real positive forum to have a discussion about economic development as we go forward and really encouraged about this process. Clearly, we're going to have all the stakeholders at the table, whether they be municipal governments, First Nations communities, obviously different labour organizations; clearly, the business community will be at the table as well.

And we're looking for a path forward, quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, really, it's going to be about consultation, discussion, as we go forward, and once we have that original consultation and discussion, collaboration, then we can build a framework for the future and how we move forward together. And that's really what it's about. We honestly believe that positive partnerships will lead to prosperity for Manitoba and certainly for northern Manitobans. And that's, I think, our role in this as a government is to engage Manitobans in that discussion, make sure that we create a positive framework for economic development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to highlight just for a minute, the—certainly, the mining sector: some of the good news we heard in terms of the Fraser survey just this week, Manitoba now ranking second in terms of investment opportunity. Obviously, the mineral resource is there in northern Manitoba. Obviously, we're working towards developing a framework for investment here in Manitoba. Clearly, we recognize there's challenges before us in northern Manitoba in this—in that sector, but we are working closely with communities, with companies, certainly with the labour force there, in terms of addressing those challenges into the future. We firmly believe there's certainly opportunities in the mining sector, and we look forward to having those discussions as we go forward.

You know, I've had the privilege to be in Churchill a number of times over the last few years and get to know the community quite personally, and it's a very unique community, and certainly the communities along the rail line are unique. And, certainly, the Port of Churchill itself is a unique asset. And we obviously want to see that facility develop and certainly maintain the line there as well because it is an important asset for northern Manitoba. The challenge, I think—well, the challenge is quite clear. It's about trying to develop a business case for the Port of Churchill. And I think it's clear the previous government wrestled with trying to come up with a business plan for the port. Their proposal was quite clear. It was a bailout; it was short-term bailouts to keep the port open. And, clearly, that wasn't a solution. They never provided any long-term business plan for the port.

We're obviously seeking to find a long-term business plan for the port, as well, and we're—obviously our door is open, our ears are open and we're trying to find a long-term strategy for the port, and obviously it has to be a viable business plan for the port. We think there is potential there. We're open to suggestions in terms of what that business plan may look like, and we're—welcome the opportunities to engage northern Manitobans in that discussion as well. We certainly—we recognize there's a new organization, a new group, being put together. We've had discussions with them over the last little while. We look forward to having more discussions with them to see what their proposal would be in the future of the line and the Port of Churchill.

Clearly, we're working with the federal government in this regard as well. Just even as recently as last week, I had a conversation with Minister Bains, and certainly outlined—outlined our Look North strategy and our engagement with northern Manitobans. So we're certainly keeping the federal government up to date in terms of our discussions, and we've asked them to come to the table as well to be part of the solution going forward.

So I certainly appreciate the member bringing forward this resolution this morning. Thank you.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an honour to put a few words today on record to support my colleague's private member's resolution, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey).

I'm supporting the private member's resolution moved by the member of Flin Flon to urge the provincial government to take action to make revitalizing the Port of Churchill and Hudson Bay rail line the No. 1 priority of the Northern Economic Development Strategy task force and to set up meetings with the federal government, the current owner of both the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay rail line, the Town of The Pas, the Town of Churchill, other municipalities, First Nations, and Metis communities along the Bay Line to ensure an orderly ownership transfer at the earliest opportunity.

I'm deeply concerned that this government's lack of leadership on the Churchill file. Manitoba's North has a wealth of potential, but it is clear that the current government is not interested in Manitoba's northern communities and does not have a clear strategy for the region.

With this lack of action from the current government, it does not acknowledge that the Port of Churchill is a major advantage for trade. It is the only deep-water port in our province. The Port of Churchill has played an important role in the development of Canada's North since opening in 1931. The port's exports business has been mostly grain; however, there's potential to diversify the port's business.

With increasing economic activity in the North and changing dynamics in international trade, Churchill is ideally positioned to capture new business. The Port of Churchill and Hudson Bay rail line infrastructure was constructed in the 1930s to facilitate the export of grain commodities from western Canada, import of industrial goods to the North, northern industrial and community development to resupply of goods.

Until 1997 the port was owned by the Government of Canada through a Crown corporation called Ports Canada. In 1997 the Canadian government was divesting its interest in many Crown corporations and sold the port to OmniTRAX. During this time, the government also privatized the Canadian National Railway, who operated the rail line between The Pas and Churchill.

In the same year, Canadian National Railway sold that line to OmniTRAX, the current owner and operator of Hudson Bay rail line. Hudson Bay Railway Company owns and operates over 1,000 kilometres of former CNR track that runs from The Pas to Churchill. Approximately 10 kilometres of

track are available at the Port of Churchill for rail car uploading and equipment storage. Both Hudson Bay Railway Company and the Hudson Bay Port Company are owned by OmniTRAX, which allows for transportation and operations planning.

Hudson Bay Railway Company is a vital transportation link for northern Manitoba, hauling perishables, automobiles, construction material, heavy equipment, scrap and hazardous materials, craft paper, concentrates and other agricultural products. Hudson Bay Railway Company connects the CNR Railway at The Pas which provides access to main and secondary lines in North America, a market of over 100 million consumers.

The port is in close proximity to both origin and destination of many large economic markets, providing a competitive transportation solution. With the port's rich and important history in our province and what it provides for the whole country of Canada, it is clear that this government does not care about the Port of Churchill or sees its potential.

The shuttering down of Port of Churchill has resulted in layoffs in over 100 workers. Cutbacks on rail freight service, impacting on cost of living for many families in the region, that has meant that an entire shipping season for grain has been lost. This government is failing families in Churchill in the North by not showing leadership to find a solution to the devastating impact of OmniTRAX's abrupt decision to lay off staff and cut back on freight rail service.

Our NDP team has a vision for the North. We have made strategic investments in infrastructure, health care, and education. This was done to make good jobs and make the North an even better place to live and raise a family.

* (11:40)

Now, an excellent example of our actions as NDP, our investments to northern development is the University College of the North. They—UCN is an institution devoted to community and northern development, and reflects the Aboriginal reality, cultural diversity of northern Manitoba. UCN provides an integrated college and university approach to offer northern Manitoba greater access to post-secondary education opportunities. We provide post-secondary education and training fundamental to social and economic development of northern Manitoba and a culturally sensitive and collaborative manner. We provide the—we provide

learners in the North with community-centred education and training characterized by a culture of openness, inclusiveness and tolerance and respectful of Aboriginal and northern values.

I've had the opportunity to conduct interviews for the community-based centre, the regional centre, in Churchill, an essential place for education and training opportunities for our families in Churchill.

I also want to state out that UCN's programs and facilities that do contribute to northern development are the faculties of arts, business and science; faculty of trades and technology; centre for Aboriginal languages and culture; and faculty of education—and health.

Again, this is proof of our investments in the North provided by the NDP team, spearheaded by my late father, Oscar Lathlin. His commitment to northern Manitoba was validated when UCN named the library after him, the Oscar Lathlin Research Library. Walking in the front doors of UCN is an honour. It is an honour to see his name on the wall of our library. This is my lifelong goal, to ensure his vision and goals for the North live on through my work as the RWF co-ordinator for HR and, most importantly, as MLA for The Pas.

UCN is contributing to creating good jobs, so that is why—so that young people can stay, work and raise their families in the North. We get the best return when we ensure that the most vulnerable Manitobans get a job.

The Conservatives didn't support our investments at UCN. Quote: We don't think funding UCN is a priority; just don't think putting bricks in the North is going to enhance education. End quote. Winnipeg Free Press, May 11, 2003.

This demonstrates that the Conservatives don't believe northerners and indigenous Manitobans deserve training opportunities. I beg to differ. I invite the members opposite to attend UCN's graduations and see evidence of UCN's success—their success contributes to northern development.

In contrast, I just want to say that Pallister has been in government for seven months—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just wanted to remind that you can't use a person's name. It has to be a constituency or the title.

Ms. Lathlin: The Premier (Mr. Pallister) has been in government for seven months and has failed to visit

any Manitoba's northern communities. But it wasn't until last month he visited The Pas, but he visited during a time of celebration, not during a time of crisis. Our leadership requested many times for him to visit our leadership, demonstrate his leadership and 'weet'—and meet with my community during our crisis. His actions demonstrate that he ignores the North—insulting, in my opinion.

So, with that, I just want to put on record, too, that we have a working, a hard-working group, northern delegation who put up, worked hard to develop a memorandum of understanding. This consists of many communities such as Churchill, OCN, Fox Lake, Town of Gillam, York Factory, War Lake, Ilford, City of Thompson, Thicket Portage, Wabowden, Cormorant, The Pas, Flin Flon, Mathias Colomb, Split Lake, RM of Kelsey and Hudson Bay. So I just want to put on record that this group of people should be acknowledged and thanked for spearheading to work with the governments to help save the Port of Churchill.

So, with that, I was proud to attend that meeting at the Kikiwak and see their work being produced. And again, this is why I'm supporting the private member's resolution from the member of Flin Flon.

Thank you.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Please, everyone sit down. Not just with some Manitobans, our government stands with all Manitobans.

Having been born and raised in the North and as MLA for Thompson representing northerners, I'm happy to speak to this resolution.

In 2015, the previous Selinger government signed a short-sighted, one-year, \$1-million bailout to the US company operating in Churchill with no security or reassurance of long-term operation—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind the member that you can't use the person's name. Please use the actual—their constituency or the title of the individual.

Mr. Bindle: The NDP decade of decay dumped \$20 million in subsidies to the previous owners of Tolko in The Pas with no protection or preservation of employment for local northerners. For 17 years, the NDP's short-term bailouts did not work. They failed to achieve any sustainable security for

northerners; that's why we have this situation we have today.

You can't escape the responsibilities of tomorrow by evading it today. That's why our government is meeting the challenge head-on. I consider myself very fortunate to be part of this PC government because we are a team with strong leadership and an unwavering commitment to do what is right for Manitobans, and we are united in our goal to build a better Manitoba.

I'm proud of our team's accomplishments over the past 10 months and I'm proud of the vision we have for the future of Manitoba. We are committed to making Manitoba the most improved province in all of Canada with a stronger economy, better services in care and a brighter future for all Manitobans.

Over the past 10 months, we have followed through on the commitments we ran on in the past election, and we will continue to meet our commitments to Manitobans by following through on the rest: commitments designed to restore services, fix the finances and rebuild the economy of Manitoba.

We will continue to restore Manitoba's trust in our government through our actions. We will continue to show our integrity by being open and honest, by listening to Manitobans, by facing the storm from the previous government's misaligned, misguided and mismanaged decisions, and by focusing on what is best for all Manitobans.

Manitobans want answers that provide value for money, opportunity, long-term sustainability, security and peace of mind. And our government recognizes the need for economic diversification in the North to create long-term resource development and partnerships for increased investment and enterprise.

In their infinite arrogance, the previous NDP government unilaterally restricted access to mineral exploration to thousands of acres in the North without even consulting the First Nations that they affected in an attempt to gain votes, but they restricted economic growth.

Over the past 10 months, I've had the pleasure of hosting in my riding the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen), the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding), the Minister of Crown Services (Mr.

Schuler), the minister of indigenous and municipal affairs, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), and most recently, the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage responsible for Francophone Affairs and the Status of Women (Ms. Squires), in consultations with community members, business and union representatives, indigenous leaders and city councillors, so northerners could help our government understand issues affecting people in the North.

I also travelled with a delegation including the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade and the Minister of Families with representatives from the chamber of commerce, Travel Manitoba, the media, northern business leaders and investors to the Town of Churchill and held many consultations with local groups to discuss the effects of the layoff of workers at the Port of Churchill.

Our government responded quickly and travelled to Churchill as soon as possible, long before the federal government or even the owners of the port made any effort to contact stakeholders in Churchill.

The member from Flin Flon called these consultations a waste of time and now pretends to care about the Port of Churchill with this resolution that's asking our government to do what their government never did. They're asking us to do what we are doing, holding consultations. Although the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) called these consultations a waste of time, northerners certainly appreciate us listening to and understanding their concerns, and we continue to be committed to Churchill and to bring in key players together to provide long-term sustainable economic solutions for our northern communities.

*(11:50)

Last fall, our government unveiled our northern task force led by co-chairs Chief Christian Sinclair of Opaskwayak Cree Nation and Chuck Davidson, president of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, to develop and lead the consultation and development of that plan. It is that direct connection between northern Manitoba and the rest of the province that is at the heart of our Look North strategy.

Two weeks ago, I was pleased to attend the Thompson Chamber of Commerce luncheon where our government announced we are building a team that shares our commitment to creating a responsible future for northern Manitoba, planning community consultations throughout the North including three economic summits in The Pas, Flin Flon and

Thompson to be held in early April 2017 to connect investors to communities, and we launched the website looknorthmb.ca and social media campaign to create awareness of the tremendous opportunities that exist throughout northern Manitoba. That announcement is further proof that our government is committed to bringing new investment, new ideas and new opportunities to northern Manitoba.

There's much to love about this region and I'm proud to be part of a team that recognizes all that the North has to offer.

We're approaching in a way—if I have an hour to cut down a tree, I'll take the first 40 minutes sharpening the axe.

Looknorth.com.ca is—looknorthmb.ca is packed with information about building a business in the region and encourages Manitoba to express their vision and love for the North, and promotes the untapped potential that exists throughout northern Manitoba.

Before the NDP decade of decline, Manitoba was Canada's top destination for mining investment, but quickly fell to receiving some of the worst rankings in Canada. I'm happy to say on February 28th—this week the Fraser Institute's annual survey of mining companies announced that since the last provincial election, 2016, notes: Manitoba has become the second best jurisdiction for mining investment attractiveness in the world. And I'm happy to say that we're going to continue to work to be No. 1.

We have to fix our economy because our citizens and services depend on it. This—the issue here is the overall stability of the Manitoba economy and the overall stability of the services. Our new PC government remains committed to Manitobans and we'll continue to take the necessary steps to return our province to balance and ensure sustainability to services northerners and their families depend on.

If the previous NDP government had done a responsible job of managing the province's finances, we wouldn't have—be facing the tough challenges that we face today. The reality is that they spent beyond their means year after year, leaving Manitobans with a bill that puts security and sustainability of our services at risk.

Under the previous NDP government not only did Manitobans get saddled with massive debt, over a billion-dollar deficit and the longest hospital wait times in the country, we also experienced increased

health-care costs, unprecedented tax hikes, out-of-control spending in Manitoba Hydro and the East Side Road Authority, two credit downgrades and millions of dollars of debt servicing fees.

Incredibly, after the NDP leadership fiasco just before the blackout period before the last election, the NDP also promised hundreds of millions of dollars and more spending commitments, knowing Manitobans could not afford it.

Good governments make difficult decisions, something the NDP refused to do as they continued to desperately make politically motivated commitments to projects that they knew they couldn't afford in the dying days of their government.

Credit downgrades left Manitobans with an annual bill of \$30 million. Our government was elected to fix Manitoba's finances and direct our province toward a responsible fiscal track. Failure to do so would nearly guarantee yet another credit downgrade, resulting in even more money being spent on servicing debt instead of delivering services.

We've undertaken a thorough review our province's fiscal situation in partnership with consultants, and we have reached out and listened to tens of thousands of Manitobans about their priorities and suggestions to get the deficit under control. We have also appointed an advisory panel on fiscal performance which is reviewing the advice of civil service members, front-line workers and Manitobans which will look at the recommendations from the consultants regarding health-care innovation, sustainability and value for money.

This is necessary to ensure we can operate within our means, reduce wait times, deliver proper front-line health-care services to Manitobans when needed and ensure capital investment is made based on sound reasoning, not political direction.

The reality of—is the previous NDP government was told in 2010 that their promises had them projected to exceed the capital cap—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): This government is losing my trust in them. This government is losing my trust in them. I am a stakeholder. As the MLA of Kewatinook, five of my own reserves had Look North round tables already. As a band member of one of those reserves, I did not receive an invite to

participate in the Look North round table. The government talks about working together. I have yet to see this nearly one year in.

I believe in my people of the North. There's upcoming Look North round tables in Flin Flon and The Pas shortly, and I encourage my colleagues here to get as many residents to those round tables as possible because I did not get this chance.

The Liberals support this resolution.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Just recently Chief Sinclair commented on our Look North strategy. Thank you for the standing ovation, but our time here is short. He says Look North is a strategy that has been implemented by the Government of Manitoba to bring together the great minds and great people of Manitoba, allowing the people of northern Manitoba to bring their first-hand knowledge and information in what they feel can bring prosperity in northern Manitoba and Manitoba as a whole. That was February 21st.

He goes on to say: it is going to benefit Manitoba in ways that will allow us to plan and create direction not only for today, but for tomorrow and future generations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is on the road to recovery and sustainability. I guess, to be fair, to not just focus on what we're doing positive as new government, but let's look at a little bit of history just so we have a bit of a benchmark to establish our great accomplishments our team has moved forward on.

For 17 years the NDP short-term political bailouts did not work for northern Manitobans. The NDP failed to achieve any sustainability, security for northerners. In 2015 the Selinger's NDP—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind the member to not use someone's name, just to use the constituency or the title.

Mr. Johnson: The NDP signed a short-sighted, one-year, \$1-million bailout to a US company, a foreign company operating in Churchill—no security, no reassurance of long-term operation. The NDP failed to achieve any sustainable security for northerners.

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) says they, referring to the PCs, don't grasp the concept of having to do things in the North and what that means. Tourism isn't going to employ—*[interjection]*

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There has been a point of order called by the Government House Leader.

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my understanding that reference to the Selinger NDP is not a reference to an individual but to an era, and therefore I'd like to argue that the rule prohibiting the use of a name of a person in reference to that person is—does not apply here because it's not actually a reference to the person, but rather a reference to an era, namely that—during that time period Mr. Selinger was the Premier. Therefore to refer as the Selinger NDP is appropriate.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact of the matter is the rules are clear. You cannot reference the member. The member sits right here as an MLA in this House. We ask that he be referred to, I would suggest, as the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger).

* (12:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: First, the Government House Leader is correct; if it's an era of a individual government he can—we can refer the—the individuals can then refer to an era of a government.

And, also, I caution them—with also the Government House Leader for saying the individual's name when he was talking to the point of order.

Mr. Maloway: Deputy Speaker, I think we would like to challenge that ruling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You can't challenge that ruling. Rules, rules; these are the rules.

Mr. Maloway: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member from Interlake has a remain of eight minutes.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 2, 2017

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