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Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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(Hansard)

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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	Ind.
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	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
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
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, Hon.	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>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

Are we proceeding with second reading of private Bill 300 this morning?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Madam Speaker: We will proceed, then, to second reading, private Bill 300, The University of Manitoba Students' Union Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Fort Richmond.

Bill 300—The University of Manitoba Students' Union Amendment Act

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), that Bill 300, The University of Manitoba Students' Union Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Association des étudiants de l'Université du Manitoba, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Guillemard: I just want to take a brief moment to welcome everyone back after the constituency week. And I hope everyone's come back well rested.

I'm looking forward to highlighting the hard work and the effort that was put into these amendments by the University of Manitoba Students' Union over the past several months.

I will begin by saying that I have learned quite a bit through this process, and for that I am thankful to the UMSU members for approaching me to assist them. You will often hear politicians speaking about the future generation of leaders when referring to students, Madam Speaker, but I assure you these are current leaders—not future leaders—making impacts that will benefit others for years to come.

The University of Manitoba Students' Union Act was established on June 19th, 1975, after receiving its royal assent. The purpose of the act was to ensure that a specific set of rules would be followed by the executives of the students' union and to provide structure through the transitions of newly elected representatives.

Although the UMSU organization is able to set bylaws to assist with governance, the laws within the act supersede all these decisions. There has only been one amendment to the original act in 1990 and that was to translate the act into both official languages. The current proposed amendments were initiated in order to update the act to reflect modern technologies as well as to provide the students whom the UMSU is elected to represent with more say in certain decisions.

Throughout multiple meetings with the student union representatives, I learned that there was a desire to provide direct democracy, a concept that allows for more input, more often, from the students who will be impacted by the UMSU's decisions. At the time that the act was originally written, this concept was simply too complicated to support, with limitations of communication tools available then.

With current online balloting systems in place, there are no barriers to include the students in providing their feedback on important decisions. Although these practices are currently enshrined in the original bylaws, they remain flexible and open to alteration if the UMSU executive chooses to circumvent them by applying the rules of order. It is for this reason that the students' union approached me to see if they could somehow add this rule to the act, which would prevent any confusion for future elected representatives.

One aspect of concern for this group dealt with student union fee increases. In 2015, students at the

U of M faced a student union fee hike of \$60 each term. The decision was viewed as one that was hastily passed through the UMSU council and poorly presented to the students, who did not have a say in the matter.

In order to provide transparency, as well as accountability, the UMSU representatives felt the need to add into the act wording to guarantee that students would always feel included in decisions that impact their fees and services provided through students' union. Madam Speaker, having heard the background and arguments for these amendments, I had no problem giving my full support to help in any way that I could.

Written within the act itself, the MLA representing the constituency where the university is situated is the only one who can bring forth these changes to the act. That would be me, Madam Speaker. Also stated within this act, the students' union was required to fulfill many steps before even meeting with their MLA. I have been impressed with the determination and organization demonstrated over the last year by this group of leaders. Making sure to communicate in a timely fashion and seek the approval from the university's board of governors, each one of these students were able to properly achieve their goals.

Madam Speaker, I will table now the memorandum set with the approval from the board of governors. Our government respects the consultation process. And this UMSU group has done their due diligence, by consulting with a wide group of stakeholders and pursuing a more inclusive approach to governing and representing their members.

Another area of importance that was discussed in these amendments was the need to let students review any organization that the UMSU provides funds to. The student body changes over the years, as do the representatives on the executive. The ability to allow future students and their representatives to have a say in external activities that they will pay into promotes transparency and accountability. Both of these attributes are important elements of a democratic society.

Although the purpose to these amendments was to restore the voice and autonomy back to the student members on major issues, it became apparent that the wording of the act was also a little bit outdated. It seemed a good time to make changes to reflect more gender inclusiveness, which would be more in line with the atmosphere at the university itself.

Madam Speaker, it is no secret that changes have been happening throughout society, as more women and other marginalized people are beginning to take on traditionally male-dominated roles. At the time that most laws and acts were passed, it was men who debated and set them. It makes sense, then, that most gender references were to he or him or his. The proposed changes to this act will reflect the true nature of society and the world that we all live in, which is inclusive.

* (10:10)

It has been my pleasure to get to know some of the students who serve on the UMSU executive. We were able to reflect on the similarities of our experiences as elective representatives, both the challenges of serving a large group of people, but also the rewards of hard work to benefit others.

I am fortunate to be the MLA for the constituency of Fort Richmond, which includes the University of Manitoba and the great people who study and work there. Having stated some of the background and rationale for these amendments, Madam Speaker, I see no reason to delay the decision to support this hard-working group of students with the changes that they have proposed. Thank you.

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. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I believe the member did mention it in her opening comments, but I—just a little bit of noise in here, I couldn't quite hear. Maybe could you—could the member spend a little bit more time detailing the consultation process and which members specifically or which groups she met with in developing this legislation?

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Just to clarify, the proposed changes were not initiated by myself. They were proposed by the student union themselves and they were the ones responsible to meet the fulfillment of the act itself, which required them to meet and seek advice from

the board of governors, as well as other steps that I can clarify about. Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate the clarification. Another element I believe she mentioned, the member mentioned in her opening statement, was with regards to fees. My question is about fees across the board. I'm wondering, did she look at what—how much have increased this upcoming year for students across the board in all—for all the fees that they have to pay? Does she have the number and can she give the House a bit of an idea of what that amount would be?

Mrs. Guillemard: Madam Speaker, and appreciate the question and, again, I'm going to give a bit more clarification. The fees specified within this act and the proposed changes are only pertinent to the student union fees. So those who pay into the student union to become members, those fees are the ones that are discussed within this act itself. And those are set by the student union. Thank you.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): As I rise here, I look at this bill before me and I'm—you know, I'm happy to see it, I'll be honest, but I can tell you that suggestions, I get suggestions from constituents all the time for bills that we should be bringing forward. And so what I want to ask the member is why does she believe that it's important that she be the one to bring this particular legislation forward.

Mrs. Guillemard: Within the act itself it specifies that it must be the MLA that represents the area where the university is situated, that brings forth the amendments or changes to this private act. And so I felt that it was important to demonstrate that there is the possibility to work collaboratively with our constituents and those who live within our constituencies and to show that there is that support out there, when you have worked hard and you have brought forth your arguments and rationale for the changes and they are to benefit others within that constituency. There is no reason not to support these changes and amendments. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just, I think, some clarification: If the UMSU has an existing relationship as of the date when we pass this legislation, is there still a requirement for a referendum to determine whether there will be a continuing relationship, or does the provision for a continuing relationship only apply after each of the existing relationships have been reviewed by referendum?

Mrs. Guillemard: I appreciate the question.

What the changes in this act will provide for current UMSU executives and future UMSU executives is the ability to review the external parties which they pay into. So there are fees that are—pay into other external unions and other groups, and this allows each transition—new members—to be able to review that and to determine what benefits are received by the students they represent and which ones maybe need to be tweaked or debated whether or not that they continue with that relationship. Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: I believe the member had brought forward a petition to the House with regards to this issue, and I guess I just wanted to know—could she tell the House how many signatures were on that petition?

Mrs. Guillemard: I appreciate the question.

Yes, indeed, there was a petition brought forth, initiated by the University of Manitoba Students' Union. The required signatures on that petition were fulfilled according to what the act dictates has to be done before any amendments or changes to the act does happen. So—I was only required to read out the first names, which happened at the time that I presented those petitions.

Thank you.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to commend the member for introducing this bill.

I—my question follows along the question from the member for River Heights but perhaps more direct. UMSU and the Canadian Federation of Students have—are intertwined in a legal battle. Will this legislation allow UMSU to withdraw itself from organizations like CFS, and would it put a limit on the time UMSU could be associated with any organization—external organization?

Mrs. Guillemard: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

There exists right now a mechanism, if UMSU would like to withdraw from any external organizations, that they could follow a process and remove themselves. What this act is doing is providing a mechanism where they could review the benefits of all external organizations that they belong to or that they pay into.

So what it's doing is it's giving back the voice to the students because—though they change year over year as some graduate and some enter into the student body. And it gives them an ability to learn

about the organization itself and have a say in the activities and the benefits that they receive.

Thank you.

Mr. Teitsma: I think every day we're reminded about what kind of laws we are to pass in this Chamber, and I—and, you know, one of the phrases that we use is that it's for the welfare of all our people—all the people in Manitoba.

Now I think specifically, though, this bill is intended clearly to directly impact students, specifically, the students of the University of Manitoba. And what I want to ask the member is: How does she feel that this bill will impact—and, I hope, positively—all the students at the University of Manitoba?

Mrs. Guillemard: I appreciate the question.

I think any time that you can expand the involvement of the people who vote for their representatives in a democratic process of voting—I think it's a good thing. I think it benefits all of us to be more engaged in the political process and the decision-making process. It helps us to be more accountable individually that, if we do vote and have people representing us, that we've had a say in who's standing there and speaking on our behalf but also that they value our voices.

So I believe these changes to this particular act, based on the information that's been shared with me by the UMSU group, that that's their intention. And I wholly support giving more voice and more autonomy, more accountability to both the students as well as their representatives. Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: Again, something that might have been addressed in the opening comments—I apologize if I did miss it—with regards to the two-year time frame: How is that time frame chosen, as opposed to three or four or any other number?

* (10:20)

Mrs. Guillemard: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

And, again, these are time frames that were set by the UMSU group themselves. This was not a suggestion from myself or any of the other groups that we were speaking with. So I think that the clarification of why that time frame versus other time frames is better discussed with the UMSU group themselves.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate that comment, but I do take exception with that, because I can't, unfortunately, invite the members of UMSU to come to this floor to talk about this bill. So I've been asking some questions that are just with regards to process. I appreciate that members of UMSU have had a strong hand in developing this, but it is this member that's bringing it forward here before the House, and in order for us to debate it, I believe that we need to have all the information in front of us.

So I'm simply asking for how that number was arrived at and any other details that we can get from the member.

Mrs. Guillemard: I certainly did not mean to raise the ire of anyone within the House, but I would suggest that if there are, you know, questions pertaining to the UMSU and they can directly provide—we can invite them to the committee stage and any questions and clarification and details can absolutely be provided at that point.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the opportunity to address this piece of legislation this morning.

And just to pick up where I left off in my line of questioning, and it does frustrate me, maybe I could say—I wouldn't say that my ire has been raised by this morning's debate, but I am frustrated, Madam Speaker—because when a bill is brought before us here in the Legislature, when we're given the opportunity to debate it, we are asked as legislators to take the information that we have, make—use our best judgment and then make a decision here before this House.

And what we're seeing here this morning is, is that maybe all the information isn't before the House, and so it is frustrating for us to not understand the full context. And I do appreciate the hand that the University of Manitoba Students' Union has had in shaping this legislation, but I think it's important that the member who's sponsoring it before the House would have that information in front of her at least to give some context. And I don't believe I was asking very technical questions, it was more general questions, and I'm quite surprised that the member didn't have that information in front of her.

But, to back up just a bit, Madam Speaker, I did want to start by just saying that how appreciative I am of having our student leadership here with us this morning. I believe it was the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) who said—and I think she might've been quoting me, I'm not sure, because I did talk about this a couple of weeks ago when I said that the leadership, the student leadership, is not the leadership of tomorrow—as she said, it is the leadership of today.

And we have seen this now over and over again here in this House where students have taken it upon themselves to come here to participate in the democratic process, to be a part of what we do on a day-to-day basis, and once again they're here, they're taking their time, their very valuable time. I can remember my days. I think we're getting closer to exam time, certainly the end of the year, and students are thinking about all those papers that are piling up that need to be completed. But they've taken their time. They've come to this Chamber. They've decided to participate in this process. And to me that speaks so highly of the calibre and quality of leadership that we have in our student movement, and I certainly applaud them, and I applaud them for all of work that they've been doing over the last number of years in this House.

I also think that it's valuable to remember the issues that they've come to this House to talk about. You know, I've had an opportunity to spend some time with student leaders across the province, to talk to them about issues that are concerning to them, and they brought a number of issues. And, you know, I have to be honest, Madam Speaker, sometimes they're perspectives that I personally hadn't thought of or hadn't considered, and it was only once I talked to the leadership and understood their perspective that I was able to gather some of that perspective and appreciate the issues that they're—that students nowadays are dealing with. They're worried about campus security; they're worried about gender issues; they're worried about discrimination on campus. These are issues that they have a unique perspective of, and they haven't been shy about bringing those forward.

But those aren't the issues that have gotten students the most worked up and the most riled up here in this Chamber. It isn't the issues that have brought them down week after week—and, certainly, last fall. It was the issue around tuition. It was the issue around accessibility to university and to colleges. And it was their voices that I think helped

shape the understanding of what was—what students were dealing with at the time. And, of course, I'm speaking about Bill 31.

So we debated Bill 31 here in this Chamber, and we spent a lot of time talking about it here in this Chamber. But I think the real meat of that discussion was had at committee. And this is a wonderful process that we have in this province and a wonderful opportunity that we could sit—as legislators, we could sit and actually hear directly from the public, and, in this case, it was students. It was student after student after student who came forward and gave their perspective.

Now I'm not here to say that every voice was absolutely, you know, giving the exact same perspective. What I can say is that every single student that we heard from talked about affordability, talked about accessibility and talked about how difficult it is for students to have to see their tuition rise, see their fees rise over and over again every year, as this government had proposed at the time.

And so it was that committee—it was rallies on the front steps of the Legislature—and we certainly heard from students there, you know, when their other options had been exhausted. And, I will say, Madam Speaker, here in this Chamber, coming before us and making their voices heard in any way they could possibly find.

And what we heard very clearly from every single one of those students was that tuition fees—as this government had proposed at the time raising those tuition fees by 5 per cent—what we understand now is even higher than that—was not a tenable situation for them.

So I appreciated hearing from them. I appreciated getting some perspective from them. And for them to come down once again to participate in the legislative process is exactly what we want from students. We want them to be part of this process; we want them to have a voice in this Legislature.

So I appreciate that we've had—now have the opportunity here to debate this. We have the opportunity to discuss these changes. And I hope that there is a better dialogue going forward in understanding how these changes were developed.

You know, I was reminiscing just—actually, just before coming into the Chamber about my own student days, as I imagine others will probably do this morning. But when I entered university at the

University of Manitoba, the student movement was at a real lull. It was at a pretty low point. You know, the sense that I got—when I first started, especially in—at the University of Manitoba and getting involved in student politics was to—was that there was a real disconnect between what I was hearing from students, what I was hearing from general—you know, what I would call the general citizenry of the university—and what the leadership was doing. And it really felt that there was a disconnect between those two things.

I believe that it improved over the years that I was there, and I think that it was important that there were strong organizations that helped organize students to bring their voices forward. And that certainly happened in those—in the early 2000s. And—but it really helped to give students that confidence that their leadership—their student leadership was there fighting for them, not fighting for, you know, one small segment of the student population, not one faculty, not one special-interest group, but in fact were there advocating for all students.

* (10:30)

And I think that is the main criteria that we need to consider when it comes to considering these kinds of changes; that these changes reflect the—what the students as a whole, you know, are interested in, what they see as a priority. But, more importantly, that they reflect the kind of changes that will enable students to have a bigger voice and a better voice, you know, across—for student issues and across the province and especially here in this Legislature.

So, I, as the critic for Education, post-secondary education training, what I feel my duty is is to continue to listen to those students to help them, to enable their organization, to listen to all students, to bring that voice forward here and bring their voices forward across the province.

There are—there have been a lot of changes in tuition, as I said, in the funding that universities are receiving. There have been cuts across the board. Students are feeling this most acutely and I think it's on us, it's incumbent on us to listen to those students, to continue to enable those voices so that we in this Legislature can continue to make decisions—as I think the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard) also said—to make decisions that reflect all students—not one segment, not one faculty, not one special interest group—all students. Give them the voice that they need, they deserve, and make them equal partners here in this Legislature in

the discussion and the debate that we have and the democracy that we uphold.

So I welcome them here, and I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I myself am a graduate of the University of Manitoba, and I'm sure many of the other members here share that experience.

For me, the University of Manitoba is an institution to which I owe very, very much, and I continue to remember that each and every year—as they do tend to phone for follow-ups—but in any case, I do want to reflect a little bit on what was said, specifically by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) about this bill, and I just want to impress upon him and upon the entire NDP caucus and, in fact, all members of this House, the importance of passing this bill. And for the benefit of the students, the student government representatives who are here, I know we—we've now acknowledged them a couple times, but I do think it's worth taking a moment to welcome them properly with a round of applause. So I please ask that all the members join me in doing that.

So I want to thank you specifically the—I want to thank the members specifically from UMSU, both past and current leadership for being here today for this debate because I think it's important to understand how private member business works. I'm sure most of the members of this House, maybe not all, but most of us are familiar, but I suspect that the members in the gallery may not be quite as familiar, so I'll just give a very quick tutorial.

The way it works is that typically non-partisan-style bills are introduced. Sometimes they are partisan; this one certainly is not, and a debate is held. Members are given the opportunity to ask questions, given the opportunity to speak, and at the end of the hour the hope is that we'll be able to call the question. And calling the question means that we allow this bill to move forward. We allow it to go to the next stage.

The next stage in this particular case would be committee, where then, as is already alluded to by the member for Concordia, we have a unique opportunity in our province to have the ability to interact directly with citizens that are affected, with the members that are in the gallery today. They can all come; they can present; they can be asked

questions by the MLAs who are on the committee, and I'm sure that the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) would be there to be able to ask questions as well. That happens if we call the question at the end of the hour or before the end of the hour.

But—but—if we don't call the question, then what? If people continue to talk and refuse to yield the floor, then what? And the answer is the bill does not go forward. The bill, typically, will die on the Order Paper, I think is the typical term. There are ways to exhaust the House and to bring it forward over and over again, but that's typically not done and the typical practice is we either deal with it this hour and we agree to move it forward this hour, or we do not.

And so, for the NDP caucus, they have a choice to make this morning, don't they? And I can see by the way they're wiggling in their seats they perhaps have already made that choice, but I hope to change their minds, and that is to—I want them to think about what you're doing if you delay this bill. What are you doing? What are you telling the students?

Here we have—we have the students here, okay, and they have brought forward this bill. They've brought forward this bill of their own decision. This is their own work. This is what they've done as members of the student union.

This is a bill that is uniquely non-partisan. This is a bill that can only be brought forward by the member—whether that be the previous member, Kerri Irvin-Ross, or the current member, the MLA for Fort Richmond. That's who is allowed to bring this bill forward, and that is indeed what's happening today.

It's not about one side of the House or the other; it's not about any of the other matters that are before this House. What it is about is about the students in the gallery, and I think the members opposite are making it very clear what they think about the students in the gallery. They're making it very clear about what they think about the work that they've done. They're making it very clear about what they believe their right to govern themselves is and this is a sad testimony. It is, indeed, because this is where you have an opportunity to take off the partisan, to be a leader, to be part of an organization that in this case does have authority over the student union by virtue of the fact that this is—these laws are on the books of Manitoba.

It's a private bill; that's what it takes to get it done is that it has to go through this House. This is

the only way that they're able to make these kinds of changes and I strongly encourage the members of—members opposite to think about what they're doing if they choose to delay this bill. What you're doing—the only reason—*[interjection]*

So the member from Minto uses the word democracy in his heckle. He thinks—I think he suspects as a lawyer that the administration of justice is simply the operation of the courts, but we all know different, don't we? And the member just two seats over has made it very clear to this House what she thinks about our justice system and the difference between the exercise of justice system and the actual administration of true justice.

And so it is with the administration of democracy and the upholding of it, that the member from Minto seems to have forgotten and that is that democracy starts with the people. It starts at the bottom. It starts with all the individual members' ability to choose.

And here we have a leadership group that has worked diligently, that has consulted with their students, that has brought forward this legislation. It's non-partisan legislation. It's about how to govern themselves.

So the only reason to delay it is that you don't support them. You don't support their ability to govern themselves; you don't support their rights. You don't—you believe that you're better equipped to determine their rights than they are. Now, their rights are about how to—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would just ask everybody that when a member is speaking that there be courtesy shown to the member that is speaking. We expect that of all sides and we also have guests in the gallery and we all know that these students have put a lot of work—it's their bill. They've brought a lot of work forward and they want to be able to hear what is being said on the floor too. So I would ask all members to, if they can, just—especially when we have student guests in the gallery—that we cease the heckling and that all of—statements are actually all made in a third-party manner, through the Chair.

Mr. Teitsma: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for that. I really do appreciate it.

The member for Concordia says he wants to listen to students. I'm asking him to listen to students now.

The member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) talks about a disconnect that he witnessed when he was a student at the University of Manitoba, a disconnect between student leadership and student membership.

* (10:40)

Here we have an opportunity to strengthen that bond. Here we have an opportunity to ensure that there will not be another lull, that there will be opportunities for students to stay connected with their leadership in UMSU. That's the opportunity that you have. That's the opportunity that you seem to be compelled by reasons I cannot fathom to decline.

So I want to caution the members once again, if you want to listen to students, listen to them now, call the question today.

Thank you.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to thank the opposition House leader for allowing me to speak to this. And I—there's a few things I'd like to say. First of all, I would like to congratulate the students and the member for bringing this forward. I had the opportunity to meet with the UMSU president and vice president about five or six weeks ago on this issue and not only did they present their arguments well, they presented themselves well and are excellent representatives of the future of Manitoba.

Now I just want to clarify a few things just so we're dealing with the proper facts. Now the member from Radisson described this process starting from the bottom. I will just—if the member wants to know where the bottom of this process is, I encourage him to look to his right, look to his left, look in front of him, sometimes look behind him. That's the bottom. The people in this Chamber. The people of Manitoba are at the top.

Mister—Madam Speaker, I asked a very direct question to the member and I would hope that we can get a direct answer. When the corporation—it's not a union—it's actually a corporation according to the act—joins an external organization is—and then is reviewed after a period of time, does this legislation allow for UMSU to withdraw from that organization? And the classic example, and I'm just using as an example but you can probably do any organization, is the Canadian Federation of Students. It could be the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. But once—another way to put it, does UMSU have the authority to withdraw itself from these organizations over a period of time, or are they

forced once they join, they can't get out? What is the legal implication here?

The other issue about the fees—now, Madam Speaker, I should mention, you know, student politics is a wonderful place to get involved in helping your fellow students, and from all political backgrounds. I can think of, well, the member from Wolseley, who's not here—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would remind the member that we are not to make any mention in the House of the absence or presence of members.

Mr. Fletcher: My apologies. I—the opposition House leader, myself and others, we were involved, we were contemporaries at the University of Manitoba, and we worked well on a number of projects at that time, including an Aboriginal outreach project, and the mural in the tunnel from UMSU to the science building is still there, and in the arts tunnel, it's still there, and some of the initiatives are still going on. So that's the kind of thing that UMSU can do, students encouraging future students to come to the University of Manitoba. That's good.

Now, the UMSU fees have gone from—when I was—I was UMSU president twice—a Conservative unwanted in a left-of-centre environment twice. That was—it was interesting times. We brought the student union out of debt during that time, brought Starbucks coffee to the campus—it was only the second Starbucks in Manitoba at the time and—multinational corporation for a 'photocop,' did—redid the businesses to what we now have, students will see GPAs and IQs. Those were all done under my time as UMSU president. So the student union came out of debt and we actually lowered student fees—UMSU fees. And they were about \$75 all in. Today, the UMSU fees are \$1,270.03. That's incredible.

So, yes, the tuition has gone up. But it hasn't gone up nearly as fast as the UMSU rates.

I'm just going to say that again. From about \$75 when I was UMSU president, 2001. Seventeen years later, \$1,270.03, according to rough calculations. And those fees can be found on the website.

Now some of those include the U-Pass—the bus pass. Now, are students in—going to be forced into that forever? What if the City doesn't get enough funding for a proper transit system for whatever reason and students decide not to be a part of that

plan? Can they withdraw it? Does this legislation trump whatever agreements have been made to external organizations?

There's a health plan worth several hundred dollars. Maybe that will become more necessary or less necessary. But can the student union withdraw itself from that? There are CFS fees—about six—it's about \$14 per student for each level of membership in the CFS. So \$14 doesn't seem much until you multiply that out by the 30,000 students at the U of M.

There are—the fees are, like—I have here for health and dental \$245, \$345 for the U—for the bus pass, about one thirty—\$132 for the bus pass. Health and dental is \$345 and—oh, and enhanced.

So the—well, there's a few choices there. I think in my numbers, I may have included the enhanced. So it might be just under \$1,000 if you just go with the basic plan without the enhancement. Anyway, it's a massive increase.

The member really needs to answer this question: Does the law—the amendment—allow for UMSU or prevent UMSU from entering agreements in perpetuity? Because that's the way some of these organizations work. Once you join CFS, it's notoriously difficult to get out of CFS without huge legal battles, unless the student union is prevented from entering these types of agreements without the renewal process as outlined in the legislation.

* (10:50)

Madam Speaker, there's a lot more to be said here, but the University of Manitoba Students' Union represents all the students that go to University of Manitoba. It is a great organization. It—there's a pendulum that swings far left to right, might get to centre. There was a window of rightness in 1999 to 2001. But it's a great organization, and this place should do everything it can to support it.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, first of all, I will thank the MLA for Fort Richmond for bringing this forward, and I would like to congratulate the students, the student leaders, who are here, for their efforts on behalf of all students at the University of Manitoba and for the good job that has been done in bringing forward this legislation.

I—from what I can see in reading the legislation, the sections which deal with the increase in membership fees are clear, not ambiguous, and I

don't think will present any particular problem, and they're very reasonable.

I have some concerns about the changes related to the relationship with external organizations, and my question was not answered very clearly. So let me expand a little bit upon my concern.

In article 8.2(1), it says the corporation must not become a member of an external organization unless the council has first conducted a referendum of the members of the corporation on the question of the membership in which the membership was approved by a majority of the votes cast, and the referendum must have been conducted in accordance with bylaws under clause 8.

Then we have 8.2(2): for greater clarity, subsection (1) does not apply to the periodic renewal of the corporation's membership in an external organization.

And it seems to me that the area of potential concern is where the—where UMSU now has a relationship with an organization like the Canadian Federation of Students, and whether there has to be, at this juncture, a referendum because of the change in the legislation or whether the Canadian Federation of Students would be exempted under clause 8.2 so that there would not have to be a referendum. And I'm sure that the students, when they present at committee stage—hopefully it will get there—will clarify this and make sure that the intent is very clear in terms of how we move forward.

In the clause 8.2(4), which deals: If the corporation's membership in an external organization is voted on by the council and is not affirmed by a majority vote, the council must take all required steps to terminate that membership. Now, as I read that section, I am presuming that that's a majority vote of the council, but it would be possible to interpret it as it was a majority—was a majority vote of all students, and maybe it just needs a little bit of clarification in the clause just to be absolutely sure, because the last thing you want is any ambiguity in how the bill is written.

So this, I think, is an important step forward. It is an important and democratic step forward in moving to have greater ability to consult with all the students through a referendum and to ensure that there is a wide discussion. And I'm sure that's intent because, you know, as we've heard, the student fees have gone up a lot and it's about time that we make sure that students have the ability in the mandated kind of way

to have an open discussion and to be able to discuss and consult with all students, and have all students' input in a referendum with regard to whether there should be or should not be that membership fee increase.

I am looking forward to meeting with student leaders not just on this bill, but on issues about where we need to go in terms of moving Manitoba forward, in terms advances in post-secondary education. Because I think that it is important to be involved in questions of finance and cost, but the bottom line is that we want students to have the best possible educational experience that they can, and if there're ways with the changes in technology and changes in what's happening around the world, that we can improve the quality of education, if we can learn from other jurisdictions, that I am very keen to sit down with student leaders and have those discussions.

Madam Speaker, with that being said, I'm going to pass this on to others to speak, and, hopefully, we will shortly have a vote on this bill.

Thank you.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I'm pleased to get up and speak to the bill and, of course, welcome the member bringing it forward to the Legislature today.

Of course, like other members I want to welcome members of UMSU here as well and to take in today's proceedings.

I want to tell them, though, Madam Speaker, in relation to some comments made by our—my colleague, our friend from Radisson, that it's patently unfair to say to us this morning, when the bill's introduced for the first time, pass it or else. That doesn't seem very fair. I'm only going to get, in fact, this morning, all of three or four minutes to speak on it. I think other members of the House want to speak on it.

So it—I want to assure them that no one here in this House today is saying no. But members and—again, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —our friend from Radisson had his opportunity and I think all members of the House take seriously the debates that we have here on bills that are—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —brought forward, and the fact of the matter is, if this is a priority of the government, as my friend from Assiniboia was alluding to, there are many mechanisms by which the government can bring this forward, once again, at the earliest opportunity so that it can go on to the second reading and go on to committee for public hearings where we can hear more from students and, to be quite fair, not just UMSU, but other members of the student community who might have some observations on this bill—or others.

So I take exception to a member of this House getting up and saying that I shouldn't—or other members of the House shouldn't have an opportunity to be able to debate the bill and to discuss it more fully so that we have a complete and proper understanding of exactly what the intent of the member is, what UMSU's intent is, how other students feel about it. We haven't heard the Minister of Education get up and speak on it as well.

So I think that there's some work that needs to be done here, in terms of the process part of what we do here in the Legislature, which the member from Radisson, quite frankly, like the government in general, wants to be like a bulldozer and simply say to other members of the House, you know, we're not interested in what you have to say. We're not interested in your opinions. You're not interested in your questions. Pass this bill today, or else. And that's simply, categorically, untrue and unfair to the other 56 members of this House who want to engage in a spirited and meaningful public debate on issues that matter to students, to the academic institutions, to families. And I'm sorry that the member for Radisson's (Mr. Teitsma) 10 minutes wasn't enough for him, Madam Speaker, that he feels—

* (11:00)

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 5—Recognition of Wetland Importance

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 Recognition of Wetland Importance, brought forward by the honourable member for Selkirk.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): I move, seconded by the member from Dauphin,

WHEREAS wetlands help to prevent flooding, store carbon and remove sediment, nutrients and contaminants from waterways; and

WHEREAS wetlands contribute to safe water supplies for shallows and deep wells; and

WHEREAS wetland areas promote healthy ecosystems and biodiversity by supporting many forms of plant and animal life; and

WHEREAS Manitoba has lost up to 70% of wetlands in southern Manitoba and continues to lose wetlands at a rate of nine acres per day; and

WHEREAS other jurisdictions in North America have implemented a three to one ratio replacement policy for lost wetland areas; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has fully committed to reducing flooding and improving water quality and nutrient management through the Grow program; and

WHEREAS prairie wetlands in Manitoba store approximately 67 million tonnes of carbon; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's boreal region is rich in wetlands, store as much as 27.9 billion tonnes of carbon, and provide a critical habitat for species at risk such as boreal woodland caribou.

That the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue to acknowledge the need to protect wetlands and to strive to replace damaged or lost wetland areas in order to halt their depletion and ensure the ongoing health of one of Manitoba's most essential ecosystems.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Selkirk, seconded by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski),

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue to acknowledge the need to protect wetlands and strive to replace damaged or lost wetland areas in order to halt their depletion and ensure the ongoing health of one of Manitoba's most essential ecosystems.

Mr. Lagimodiere: Madam Speaker, in order to understand the importance of wetlands, one must understand the soul of wetlands. There are those who describe marshes as the kidneys of the waterways. As a veterinarian and outdoorsman, I can say

wetlands act as much more. They are the kidneys, filtering and removing waste and purifying the water. They are the lungs, removing carbon and releasing oxygen. They are the liver, helping detoxify and remove sediments.

Growing up, I spent countless hours in and around wetlands. I was amazed by the diversity of life and miracle of life, from watching frogs' eggs mature to tadpoles and then to mature frogs. I watched migratory birds in the spring and fall. I studied fish as they moved in and out of fluctuating water levels. Never did I reflect on the fact that one day I would be standing in the Manitoba Legislature presenting a resolution to urge the government of Manitoba to protect and preserve Manitoba wetlands.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, properly managed wetlands have the potential to save governments and landowners significant costs by retaining water on lands to prevent infrastructure damage from flooding and provide storage that can be used to irrigate in times of drought.

A 2017 study by the University of Waterloo that looked at the benefits of wetlands and flood conditions found that maintaining naturally occurring wetlands can lead to financial cost savings of up to 29 and 38 per cent respectively in urban-rural and urban areas during heavy precipitation and flooding. This study concluded that preserving wetlands is both a socially and economically beneficial practice.

In 2011, 3 million acres of agricultural land went unseeded due to flooding, with an estimated cost to the Manitoba economy in excess of \$1 billion. In 2014, 3.5 million acres of land went unseeded or had crops drowned out. Again, the estimated cost to the Manitoba economy is in excess of \$1 billion. Over the last 40 to 60 years, wetland drainage and loss in southwestern Manitoba has resulted in the loss of storage capacity equivalent to two Shellmouth Reservoirs. In times of drought conditions, wetlands help to keep water on the land where it is readily available for agricultural use. The economic consequences of a drought is not confined to agriculture. The entire economy of Manitoba is affected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Waterloo study also found that preserving wetlands is an important piece of an effective climate adaptation strategy. Wetlands, including peatlands, naturally accumulate and store huge amounts of carbon, playing an important role

in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Wetlands help mitigate the effects of climate change by sequestering carbon in vegetation and soil. Lost wetlands both reduced the overall carbon storage capacity of Manitoba while simultaneously releasing formerly captured carbon into the atmosphere.

In Manitoba, annual wetland drainage releases over one half million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The 100,000 hectares of drained wetlands in the last 40 to 60 years have released approximately 33 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This is comparable to two years of emissions from all light vehicles in Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our boreal forest is one of the most carbon-rich ecosystems, holding more than twice as much as tropical forests. It is estimated that as much as 27.9 billion tons of carbon are stored in Manitobans' boreal wetlands. This is equivalent to almost a century of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions.

Boreal wetlands also play important recreational, cultural and subsistence roles for many indigenous and northern communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, wetlands act as important nutrient and pesticide sinks. They're reported to be able to retain up to 80 per cent of the nutrients and 62 per cent of pesticides coming off of adjacent lands.

However, the capacity for wetlands to reduce nutrients and pesticides entering our streams, rivers and lakes is dependent on the assimilation capacity of that wetland. Loss and damage to current wetlands can have significant impacts, allowing increased nutrients and pesticides to enter our lakes.

Our Lake Winnipeg faces this challenge. The lack of a healthy, naturally functioning wetland has resulted in increasing levels of nutrients entering Lake Winnipeg. This has resulted in increased algae blooms, which seriously impact the sustainability of this unique water resource.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, wetlands are second only to rainforests in the level of biodiversity they contain. Wetlands provide all three essential components of wildlife habit-habitat: food, water and shelter. As many as 80 per cent of prairie species depend on wetlands for at least part of their life cycle. Muskrats, moose, otters and many varieties of birds, snakes, frogs and insects all rely on wetland ecosystems at some point in their life.

The prairies support the highest density of breeding waterfowl in Canada and provide critical stopover sites for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds.

Wetlands are an essential spawning habitat for many species of fish. Wetlands provide habitat for over 600 species of plants and animals, including 17 species at risk in Manitoba. There are 11 endangered species and there are five threatened species in Manitoba.

Wetland areas are also home to an enormous array of plant life. In Manitoba wetlands, ferns, sedges, grasses, mosses, shrubs and black spruce are the most common types of plants. The unique soil and water combinations of wetlands make them home to many varieties of rare and unique species.

For example, the wetlands in my constituency southeast of Lake Winnipeg known as the Brokenhead Wetland, contain 23 species of provincially rare and uncommon plants, 28 of Manitobans' 36 orchid species, including the rare ram's head lady's slipper. You will also find eight of 10 species of carnivorous insect-eating plants in this wetland.

People have been attracted to this wetland for centuries as our First Nation communities have always used these areas for hunting and for gathering medicinal plants.

I invite all Manitobans to visit our very own Brokenhead Wetland.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I moved to Selkirk in 1986. Being an avid outdoorsman, I was soon exploring the Red River, Netley-Libau Marsh and Lake Winnipeg by canoe and motorboat. Netley-Libau Marsh, at that time, was a huge, vibrant, functioning wetland, full of wildlife, all types of birds. It is well-known worldwide for its large concentration of fall migratory birds.

After 17 years of NDP environmental mismanagement, this one vibrant—this once-vibrant wetland is now little more than an open lake. There is little vegetation; there are very few birds. This wetland no longer has the capacity to remove the nutrients it once did. It is no longer capable of doing its critical role in helping control the water quality of our largest freshwater lake.

Bird populations have declined by 80, 90 and sometimes up to 100 per cent. In 1995, there were 100 pair of black-crowned night herons nesting in

the Libau Netley marsh. By 2012, only one nesting pair was identified and last year none were reported.

In 1970, 325 foster terns were nesting in the region. By 2012, less than 50 nests were counted.

In 1986, over 25,000 mallards and wood ducks were counted moulting in this wetland. By 2012, less than 50 were identified.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the threats to Manitoba's wetlands are many. Manitobans' wetlands are threatened by industrial development, as wetlands are often drained to make room for commercial and housing developments.

Wetlands are threatened by agriculture. Wetlands are often drained to increase the amount of arable land. Historically, government policies have discouraged wetland preservation by taxing farmers who own wetlands.

* (11:10)

Wetlands are threatened by hydroelectric development since changes in the water levels and water flows caused by hydroelectric dams can be severely damaging to our very sensitive wetland areas. And wetlands now have new threats, those of invasive species.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, wetlands perform an important role in our environment and need to be preserved, protected and restored. Studies have found that preserving wetlands is an important piece of an effective climate adaptation strategy. Wetlands are important in mitigating the effects of flooding and drought, and the wetlands contribute to safer water supplies for both shallow and deep wells. Wetlands also promote healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. Wetlands remove sediments, nutrients and contaminants from our waterways. These are all highly important roles wetlands play in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba needs to continue to acknowledge the need to protect wetlands and strive to preserve and replace wetlands to protect one of our most essential ecosystems.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 10 minutes will be held, and each—questions would be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member of another party; any subsequent questions may follow a

rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I want to thank the honourable member for Selkirk for bringing this forward. I appreciate the spirit of the resolution. We have debated wetlands in many ways in past months.

I'm wondering if he could give the House an update on the status of his government's campaign promise to bring in a comprehensive ALUS program across Manitoba.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): I appreciate the question.

And, with respect to the ALUS plan, scientists estimate that Manitoba currently loses 3.6 hectares of wetland areas a day, and the protection and preservation of the wetlands in Manitoba is an essential part of this government's Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan.

And our government's taking significant steps to ensure our province is—our province has the most comprehensive water management system in all of Canada. And that is why we came up with our made-in-Manitoba climate action plan containing land use and conservation measures.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley—or for Dauphin.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): I want to—yes—and I want to thank the member from Selkirk for bringing this—bringing forward this really important resolution that recognizes wetland importance.

It is a very dynamic subject and I really do commend the member for highlighting the importance of wetlands amongst—among other things.

So can the member describe any consultations that have taken place with interest groups and others outside of government about the general issues being addressed in this resolution?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Yes, in preparation of this resolution I consulted with a large variety of groups and members of the Manitoba general public, including some members that are—groups that are in the gallery today supporting this resolution.

I consulted with Ducks Unlimited, the farmers. I consulted with the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation.

I talked to Grand Chief Daniels and Grand Chief Dumas, Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, minister of natural resources for the Manitoba Metis Federation, the lake friendly group and many other groups concerned over water quality in Manitoba—

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

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to thank the member for Selkirk for bringing this motion forward. He's certainly an extraordinarily well-qualified member and perhaps underutilized in the government, so I'm glad to see this motion.

As a right-of-centre naturalist myself, I agree with everything the member has said. I wonder—he mentioned—I'm urging the government to do certain actions. Urge means urgency and suggests that the government is not doing or taking action in certain areas, or the government before that. I'd like to provide an opportunity to ask the member—

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

Mr. Lagimodiere: Thank you for the question.

I need to acknowledge that we are working on a plan for long-term water management in this province, and this resolution is in line with Bill 7, The Sustainable Watersheds Act, which is Canada's most comprehensive watershed legislation to improve the health of our waterways.

The Sustainable Watersheds Act will set out a foundation, implement growing outcomes in watersheds known as GROW. And GROW is a program for ecological goods and services that would give agricultural producers and landowners incentives to participate in restoring grasslands and wetlands. And this model will help reduce flooding and improve water quality and nutrient management within the province of Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Altemeyer: I note that the member was unable—or, perhaps, unwilling—to answer my previous question about their campaign promise about a comprehensive ALUS program across all of Manitoba. I'll give the member another chance.

Can he inform the House of even a single new project that has been funded under the ALUS program since his government came to office almost two years ago?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Once again, I need to say that our government is working on a plan for long-term water management in the province. And this resolution is in line with Bill 7, The Sustainable Watersheds Act.

The Sustainable Watersheds Act will set out a foundation for implementing growing outcomes in watersheds—GROW, which is a program for ecological goods and services that will give agriculture producers and landowners incentives to participate in restoring grasslands and wetlands in Manitoba.

The model will help—also help reduce flooding and drought problems within the province. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): While I'm certainly supportive of the effort to improve our stewardship of wetlands in this province, I'm concerned that in this year's budget there were significant decreases in the funding for the Department of Sustainable Development and in critical areas that would be important for managing wetlands.

I would ask the member: Can he explain what that—impact that's going to have on the ability of the Province to be able to exert the stewardship that it needs to exert due to these budget reductions?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Thank you for the question.

I just need to remind the member opposite that our government is creating a trust fund intended to provide funding support to achieve the goals and objectives of our provincial green strategy, particularly those related to conserving ecosystems and natural infrastructure. And the trust will be funded by the budgetary savings, with an initial endowment of \$102 million. The trust will be managed by The Winnipeg Foundation, with the use of proceeds administered by the Manitoba heritage—Habitat Heritage Corporation.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is in sharp contrast to the NDP, who ended up cutting \$17 million from conservation budgets and—in the past, and—

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

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): We know—I'd—first of all, I'd like to thank the honourable member

from Selkirk for bringing this very, very important resolution. We know the wetlands are the heart and soul of our environment, our ecosystems.

I'd like to ask the member: Does the resolution reinforce key government priorities, and does it address specific requests from public or stakeholder groups?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Thank you for the question.

Once again, I'd just like to state that our government recognizes these—recognizes the importance of wetlands, shorelines and riparian areas as unique ecosystems that provide ecological services that are vital for our environment and our economy. And, once again, this resolution supports Bill 7, The Sustainable Watersheds Act, and under this bill, we see no net loss of wetlands.

And it is important to show that it also supports the request from stakeholders such as Ducks Unlimited that wish this government shows initiative towards protecting and conserving wetlands. It supports requests from indigenous groups that rely on wetlands for hunting, gathering—

* (11:20)

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

Mr. Altemeyer: The honourable member referenced that his resolution is in line with the government's Bill 7.

I'm wondering, then, perhaps he can explain to us why Bill 7 makes no reference to the Lake Friendly Accord, which engaged other jurisdictions to sign on to the agreement not to send excess nutrients to Manitoba.

Why are most of the action items around protecting wetlands not going to come into effect on royal assent, and why are class 3, 4, and 5 wetlands not protected in the legislation either?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Once again our government recognizes the importance of wetlands, shore lands and our 'prariant' areas, and this resolution is in line with Bill 7, The Sustainable Watersheds Act. And, under this bill, we will see no net loss of wetlands in the province of Manitoba.

And, again, we are supporting the groups that are here today—Ducks Unlimited, Manitoba Metis Federation—that want to see wetlands in Manitoba protected and preserved.

As stated in my notes, there are many benefits to having wetlands from flood and drill protection, to detoxifying nutrients coming off of wetlands to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Michaleski: The member from Selkirk really points out that wetlands serve many functions and there's many stakeholders. Can he ask—can he answer, what are the consequences of not protecting wetlands?

Mr. Lagimodiere: Water-based drainage and water-retention planning will help us protect our wetlands. Protecting wetlands is vital because they improve water quality, reduce flooding, they reduce our carbon footprint, they provide habitat for a large array of plants and animals. And, besides containing a disproportionately high number of plant and animal species compared to other land forms, wetlands serve a variety of ecological services including feeding downstream waters, trapping flood waters, recharging ground water supplies, removing pollution, providing fish habitat and wildlife habitat.

Wetlands can also be key drivers for local economies given their importance to agriculture, recreation, and fishing—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up. The time for question period has expired.

Debate

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

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I think to summarize my comments about this resolution, is that its words do not match well with this government's actions at all.

The questions that I was asking illustrated this point, I think—quite clearly. The member could not point to a single new project that has been achieved anywhere in Manitoba which is helping to protect wetlands. This is despite their campaign promise to bring in a comprehensive ALUS program—ALUS standing for Alternative Land Use Services program across Manitoba. Here they are halfway through their mandate with nothing to show for that and no sign that any action is going to happen anytime soon.

The member also referenced Bill 7, their government's legislation along these lines. The backstory to this of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this government—or rather, that political party—had

two chances already to implement this legislation—even a stronger version of this legislation. One time when we were in office and they were in opposition, and then one time last year when I reintroduced a strengthened version of the bill. They refused to let that pass as well.

And what have the consequences been of that decision by this government?

Using the member's own reference points, he indicates Ducks Unlimited has estimated Manitoba's losing over three and a half hectares of wetland per day; put into monthly terms, that is 110 hectares of wetlands lost every single month since this government took office. And there is a significant cost to that inaction, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That total now adds up to over 2,500 hectares of wetlands that have been lost under the Pallister government's watch.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development has done a very good recent study on the value of wetlands—Ducks Unlimited as well. The estimation is the lost ecological services of flood retention, nutrient removal, biodiversity and carbon sequestration and other services, is close to \$9,000 per hectare that is lost, which means this government has lost almost \$1 million in ecological benefits from its inaction and deliberate blocking of proactive wetland protection legislation and that nearly \$1 million per month adds up to a \$22-million loss to date in ecological services since they took office.

We can also look at some of the details behind that very large and very alarming number. This government's inaction means that every month they have lost 225 million litres of additional flood protection capacity on the landscape. That means they have lost over 5 billion litres of water-retention capacity since they took office. The member, in his comments, was quite right. Wetland protection would have absolutely helped in past flooding situations from '97 and forward and will help in the future, but not if the government doesn't do anything and not as—if the government blocks proposals that could've been implemented sooner.

When it comes to nutrients that are leaking into our waterways and lakes and rivers, we are losing the capacity to retain almost 200 kilograms of phosphorus per month, which means since the Pallister government came to office, an extra four tons, over four tons, of phosphorus has ended up in our waterways. Ducks Unlimited estimates it costs

over \$200,000 per ton to remove this from the waterways, which means they have again lost over \$900,000 in the time since they came to office. And when we look at nitrogen, we're losing the capacity to absorb 11 tons of nitrogen per month, which is 253 tons per date at a cost of just under 10 grand for ton, which is another 2 and a half million dollars to the negative on this government's ecological balance sheet.

And, against all of this, they keep citing a number of plans and things they hope to maybe perhaps possibly someday do if they ever get around to it, and the evidence is staring them square in the face, of what it is that needs to be done. I would also point out that the so-called conservation trust, I believe, is the language they used, will not be providing anywhere near this level of financial support to be able to make up for the losses that their inaction has already incurred. At \$100-million investment, it will take yet another year for that investment to provide any returns, and that's assuming the stock market in which it is perhaps invested, does not collapse as we saw happened, well, yesterday. And if that fund even hits the industry average, let's see, of 5 per cent, 5 per cent of \$102 million is maybe \$5 million; that compares not very well to the \$22 million in lost services that this government has already incurred. And that \$5 million is supposed to solve all the problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They cite that fund in just about—as an answer, a so-called answer, to just about every problem that is sent their way. No one in their right mind believes that that fund all by itself is going to be up to the task of solving the issues that this government is trying to avoid dealing with.

On the legislation itself, I have already noted in my questions, there are a number of noticeable omissions from Bill 7, which the member himself indicated he is in favour of and which his resolution is based on. The Lake Friendly Accord managed to get other provincial governments to sign on to it, managed to get other—managed to get state governments in the United States—while we were in government, we got those other jurisdictions to sign on to the Lake Friendly Accord, indicating their commitment to help clean up Lake Winnipeg within their jurisdictions because the water flows downhill from those neighbouring jurisdictions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I'm sure you know, and the Lake Friendly Accord was a very valuable and very open document that any municipality or any state government or individual NGO could sign on to and

support, and Bill 7 will remove it entirely and cancel it as if it doesn't exist.

* (11:30)

Quite possibly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this government knows its other changes to weakening water protection legislation means they have no moral high ground left anymore to go to anybody and ask them to take extra steps to protect water, which this government is not only opposed to doing themselves but is actually actively heading in the opposite direction.

Most of the action items which the member keeps pointing to, saying this is what our plan will be if we ever maybe perhaps consider getting around to it—those actions in Bill 7 will not come into effect on royal assent. That is the government's choice. They have decided instead they will only come into effect at a later date when Cabinet feels like it, maybe, if they ever reach that point.

The importance of the more permanent and larger wetlands, the class 3s, 4s and 5 wetlands are really the key. Those are the ones that can absorb the most water, absorb the most carbon, absorb the most nutrients. There is no mention in this legislation that all three of those classes of wetlands are actually going to be protected by this government. That is a fundamental flaw.

Any government that was serious about protecting those levels of wetlands should, indeed, be putting that forward and we see nothing in the member's resolution about that. We see nothing in the Bill 7 legislation.

And one final point, the member also referenced the changes that have happened to Netley-Libau Marsh. Well, I have spoken with representatives from the Red River Basin Commission. They have been trying to get this government's attention. We know that is difficult, to get the Premier's attention, or, heaven forbid, a meeting along those lines. But they have a dredging project that they would very much like to proceed with. The government would actually save money and it would help restore the marsh using the latest science.

Dr. Gordon Goldsborough could provide a full briefing to the member and to the Premier—if he ever feels like showing up and doing that part of his job of listening to Manitobans—but, again, no mention of that in this resolution and no mention of that in the bill.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of the language in the resolution is accurate. The holes in the resolution are enormous and they do not mesh with the government's track record to date.

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

I just want to remind the member of when you—the language that he uses, like, jobs and stuff like that—of—indicated the member.

So I just wanted to warn you—or no presence or absence of a member from the Legislative Assembly not being in the House. You indicated about the Premier (Mr. Pallister).

An Honourable Member: He's never in the building, but I understand your point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, I believe that's a challenge to the Speaker, and it's disrespectful of the member from Wolseley. So.

An Honourable Member: Apologize.

Mr. Altemeyer: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I was not in any way referencing the Premier's presence in the Chamber. I was referencing the Premier's accessibility. I withdraw the remark—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, yes, it's not a debate. *[interjection]* Pardon me?

The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Again, thanks to the member from Selkirk for bringing this very important resolution forward and recognizing the importance of wetlands.

Our government believes in bringing an effective and balanced approach to environmental and economic protection, and protecting, preserving and replacing lost wetland area will benefit all Manitobans by providing both economic and ecological benefits.

The member raised many times that wetlands are important. I'm not going to remind the House of NDP failures. I just think this issue is pretty important to a lot of Manitobans.

So we know that there's natural value, public value, economic value, all kinds of different values attached to wetlands and many, many stakeholders. And when you talk about wetlands, plant and wildlife habitat, nesting for waterfalls, spawning habit, also recreation, sport fishing, infrastructure

and flood protection is something that I've experienced in municipal government and in the world of agriculture. These are important functions of wetlands.

But often wetlands are at odds with government. They're at odds with agriculture, industrial, commercial, recreational development and hydro interests. So for over 100 years—and I've said this before, we've—these interests have helped shape and provide an economy out the plains, bush, rock and wetlands and helped to provide a secure, high quality of life for many generations of Manitobans.

The point is there are many diverse issues and stakeholders in this but most, if not all, of the stakeholders would agree that wetlands serve a very valuable ecological and economic function and that we should be striving to halt their depletion and ensuring the on-going health of 'Wanatampa'—Manitoba's essential ecosystems.

Member suggests a balanced, practical and responsible approach to legislation that respects all stakeholders, while still recognizing the vital importance of wetlands and watersheds and water management in natural and economic terms. Steven—or Scott Stephens from Ducks Unlimited sort of makes a comment along the same way. He says an investment in wetlands is not only an investment in critical habitat for wildlife, but it's also an investment in green infrastructure, jobs for rural communities, a sustainable working landscape, and in providing Manitobans with opportunities to connect with nature.

So, good governments make difficult decisions regarding sustainable development for its citizens. Our government is taking significant steps to ensure our province has the most comprehensive water management system in Canada and is working to be a strong model for others to follow in terms of water management and protection. This resolution is in line with Bill 7, The Sustainable Watersheds Act, which is Canada's most comprehensive 'waterhead'—watershed legislation to improve the health of our waterways, an issue that's important to all Manitobans.

Without a doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, agriculture will be affected by this resolution, by Bill 7, and by Manitoba's Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan. Madam Speaker, agriculture producers are businesspeople and private landowners, but they're also reasonable, responsible and practical conservationists, and members of the

community who produce a wide array of produce using different techniques to serve the demands of many.

Now, there is a lot of stakeholders and a lot of emotions when you start talking about water. There is land and water alarmists, animal rights activists and environmentalists often lobby against agriculture producers and their production methods. And private property rights and values can either be restricted or taken away in the name of saving the environment. Government policies have also discouraged wetland preservation by taxing farmers who own wetlands at the same rate as other farmlands. And this is not fair. Nor does it reflect the reality that today's producers are 'environmentally' responsible, they already invest heavily in safe, sustainable production measures and are willing help to protect and preserve our environment and our wetland areas.

So private property and agriculture incentives and opportunity need to be part of the solution. Our government is implementing the GRow Outcomes in Watersheds or the GROW program. GROW's programming for ecological goods and services that would give grass—agricultural producers and land-owners incentives to participate in restoring grasslands and wetlands. This model will help to reduce in—flooding, improve water quality and nutrient management.

And, if I can use another quote from Dan Mazier, the president of Keystone Agricultural Producers—he says from this farmer's point of view, it's a really positive change for the province when the—and this—he's making these comments regarding GROW. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Dan Mazier speaks for a lot of producers, a lot of agriculture and they do view the GROW program as a positive change for the province.

* (11:40)

We are also creating conservation trust intended to provide significant financial support to achieving the goals and objectives for our provincial green strategy and particularly those conserving ecosystems and natural infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, our government understands and respects the role of agriculture and the unique relationship between agriculture, wetlands, water systems and our economy and society. Agriculture does understand the value of sustainable development and watershed planning. They understand measured outcomes and the importance of sound

science. They understand that watershed base drainage and water retention planning will help protect our wetlands, improve water quality, reduce flooding and infrastructure and to help stop illegal drainage. Helping and working with agriculture is one of the best ways to preserve and protect our wetland ecosystems and the best way to achieve a no net loss of wetlands.

Working against agriculture, like the members opposite, who ignored or failed to disclose sound science and based decisions on political ideology or opportunity, is just plain wrong. The NDP not only failed to meet any environmental targets, but they cut funding to conservation districts and helped to destroy confidence in the image of agriculture and agricultural producers across Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this resolution from the member from Selkirk encourages this government, this Legislative Assembly and all Manitobans to continue to acknowledge the need to protect wetlands and to strive to replace damaged and lost wetlands in order to halt their depletion and ensure the ongoing health of one of Manitoba's most essential ecosystems.

This is an important resolution because as we move forward in debate it reminds us all of what's truly important, and I thank and congratulate the member for bringing the resolution forward and 'concourse' all the members of the House to support it.

Thank you.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I'd like to, again, raise the issue of best practices. In regard to the member's resolution, he—all the goals are very laudable, but it's the overall strategy that I question.

The \$100 million going into a lot of the items, or supposedly to a lot of the items the member has stated, should be found from the Consolidated Revenue Fund through reallocation or tackling the structural deficit.

The government has argued that these funds come—will come from a carbon tax. A carbon tax is a tax basically on everything and does not do one iota to reduce carbon emissions. It just costs families, seniors, everybody in Manitoba more money for home heating, for gasoline and anything else that deals with fossil fuels.

So the source of the revenue for the government's plan is false. The premise is false. There should be no carbon tax.

However, there—the program itself is laudable and if the government wants to do it, do it, but do it through re-allocation or tackling the structural deficit. Don't do it on the backs of the people in Manitoba that can least afford it under some premise of a carbon tax that really has nothing to do with carbon—it's a revenue generator; let's call it for what it is—and then make a bunch of claims. So that's the first thing.

So the \$370 million that the carbon tax—or, we'll just call it a tax—will generate, plus there will be a tax on the tax—and then a tax on the tax, depending on where PST falls—will cost a huge amount.

Now, let's go to the—notwithstanding the bad connection between the carbon tax and the fund, let's assume for a second we're just talking about the wetlands. The member is correct. The wetlands are almost priceless in many regards. For example, the flood in the Assiniboine River Basin in 2011 was not due to global warming, as claimed by many—or climate change. It was due to improvements or increases in runoff and irrigation on the fields that feed into the Assiniboine River.

So, when there was a quick melt, all the water ended up in the river at the same time rather than what a wetland would do—it would delay the water from going into the Assiniboine River over time. Now this is proven and modelled. Stantec engineering did a study recently—relatively recently on the watershed of the Assiniboine River, and the amount of precipitation in the basin has not changed, but the rate of runoff has. And this is where wetlands can be very helpful.

Another area that wetlands can be very helpful is in the area of actual carbon reduction. According to the international panel on climate change, each acre of wetland absorbs 306 tons of carbon each year. Now I—unlike most members, I do not have any notes in front of me, but I think you can go to the international panel on climate change and find these numbers.

Now, so that's—annoyingly, the Americans are the only ones that seem to use acres and tons, but an acre is equivalent to 0.4 hectares, or if you go the other way, 2.5. So it pays, if you're really serious about reducing carbon—it is to protect wetlands. And

what Manitoba should have done when it came to the carbon tax is say, Ottawa, you're not doing anything that's practical in regard to raising taxes on everything, but this is what we're going to do in Manitoba. We're going to protect wetland. We're going to count that as a carbon sink, we're going to give—get credit for that carbon sink. And, Ottawa, we're going to be more effective than all your other programs combined on that basis alone.

So, if Manitoba—as the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) described, losing all the—you know, thousands or millions of hectares—not millions, thousands of hectares—it reduces the amount of carbon that can be absorbed by Manitoba.

And, in fact, if you go—if you include the boreal forest, I believe the boreal forest absorbs 680 kilograms per hectare per year of carbon. So, if we protect our boreal forest and wetlands together, Manitoba does not end up being a carbon emitter. We're actually a carbon sink.

* (11:50)

When people talk about the greenhouse effect and GHGs, they only talk about emissions. They don't talk about preservation of habitat and it's very frustrating because you could take this logic and carry it to Brazil and Indonesia and instead of incentivizing the destruction of wetlands and rainforests and boreal forests, you can incentivize it the other way. And Manitoba should take advantage of that.

This bill, I'll also mention, talks about watersheds. I presented to this place a suggestion of preserving the Seal River watershed. This is one of the few watersheds left in the world that has been untouched by human development—goes from Hudson Bay to—almost to Tadoule Lake. It's about 50,000 square kilometres—huge area. But it's a unique opportunity. At present, there are no mining claims, there are no roads. The First Nations may be interested. I know the Dene have expressed interest in preserving that watershed, but we also have to create economic opportunity. So, we need to enhance the mining opportunities in the North, as well, and it is now possible to have mining and watersheds coexist and mutually sustainable.

Madam Speaker, the government has a lot of work to do on this file. They should challenge Ottawa on their basic assumptions and use the Manitoba advantage of our—

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just a few comments on this resolution.

First of all, I'm pleased to note that there is strong support for looking at wetlands for plans for wetlands, that there's a recognition in this resolution, for example, that Manitoba has lost up to 70 per cent of its wetlands in southern—I think that would apply to southwestern as well as southeastern Manitoba. I think there's areas where those numbers are probably low and it may be higher, but the direct consequence of that loss of wetlands has been increased flooding, has been flooding not only of farmland but flooding of communities, flooding in many parts of Manitoba. So it is important that we are paying attention to this.

I note that the resolution includes a recognition that there is a continuing loss of wetlands at the rate of nine acres per day, and it would seem to me that this government has been in power now for two years, that we have not seen as high a priority as we should have in this area. We have not seen the action. There's no evidence that the rate of loss of wetlands has decreased at all, and so I'm pleased that we have this resolution but I'm disappointed in the performance so far of the current government.

I think it is important this resolution recognizes that we need to be considering agricultural areas, the prairie wetlands and we need to be considering the boreal forest. And the two are different enough that we're going to need different approaches, one in the agricultural area and a separate approach in the boreal forest. I think there is a significant potential with the right sort of planning to store significant amounts of carbon. I note that the member, in his resolution, talks about implementing a three-to-one ratio replacement policy for lost wetlands; I presume that's three acres of wetlands for every one that is lost. The member is nodding his head. And that is important that we have a plan that can actually achieve that because that is a significant goal, it's important, and we will support this resolution because it speaks to the importance of wetlands and doing a lot better stewardship than we have in the past.

I want to note as well that being able to start counting the storage of carbon in wetlands, there are, as in other areas, there are positive effects in storing and there are negative things which could lead to loss

of those stores in wetlands. And so one of the things that we need is much more activity than we have at the moment, in research, on the storage of carbons in Manitoba-based wetlands so that we can validate any claims that we have for carbon storage in moving forward.

We also need significant research in our boreal forest because, once again, it is not just a question of storage but also of loss in terms of carbon. You know, for example, as we're all too aware that we have fires in our boreal forest, and so, on one hand, we have carbon stored in trees, and the other hand, we have carbon going up in the atmosphere with fires. And we need to know how the balance worked; we need to know how to exert proper stewardship of peat bogs and wetlands of all courses.

And so it is vital that we have very substantial investments in research to be able to validate the approach that we're taking in terms of storage of carbon, and that validation then can then be used in whether it's getting carbon credits or offsetting. Right now, the current way we have of accounting for carbon dioxide and other nitrous oxide and methane generation doesn't adequately allow us to capture the storage of carbon. And so we need to make sure that we're moving forward in our accounting process for carbon, and so that in fact we can, if we were able to move to being carbon neutral, get credit for that and make sure that we have all the evidence to back that up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down now so that hopefully we can have a vote on this resolution, which I think we should move forward.

Thank you.

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Question.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): I stood up earlier but was not called. But, anyway. I would like to thank the member from Selkirk for bringing to this Chamber this very important resolution. I have learned a lot from the discourses that have transpired so far. The member from Selkirk, from Dauphin, my colleague from Wolseley, Assiniboia and River Heights, there were hard facts and figures that we cannot overlook, and these are quite important.

I fully appreciate the presentations so far, especially about the importance of the wetlands, not just to Manitoba but to the world as a whole. The member from Selkirk mentioned wetlands act as heart, lungs—

* (12:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Logan has eight–nine minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

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