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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
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FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Ind.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
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GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
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SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
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WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 10, 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.

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Yes, on House business, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Swan: Would you see if—canvass the House to see if there's leave to move directly to Bill 223, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to proceed with Bill 223, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 223—The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act**

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member from St. Johns, that Bill 223, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Speaker, as someone who grew up in the system and knows all too well the effects that poverty can have on kids due to being taken away because my mom didn't have the supports that she needed in her home. This bill would ensure that families get those very supports that they need to ensure that kids are staying right in their homes with their parents, which would ensure that kids aren't moved from house to house.

Last night in committees, we heard a young man that was taken away from his home at five months old, and he had spoken about moving to 11 different homes and the horrific abuse that he had faced not only emotionally, physically, but sexually. And he had spoken about being sexually exploited and how his life at 27 is still in turmoil due to his experiences in child care in the child welfare system.

This bill would ensure—and we asked him last night if this bill was present when he was growing up, did he think that he would be able to stay in his home. And he, you know, made it clear that if supports were there that he would have stayed with his mother. He wouldn't have had to go live with his grandmother. And one of the reasons he was apprehended was because he was living with his grandmother and his mother but there were too many people living in the house. There wasn't enough bedrooms, there wasn't enough beds for all of the kids. And this is something I'm hearing today in my own constituency, that families are struggling not only with food and housing but also with basic furniture to, you know, have their children in a bed. And this is a reality of where we're at today in our society. We don't have enough jobs to keep people out of poverty. We don't have enough services that ensure that families can make a wage that'll keep them out of poverty.

So this bill would ensure that when families, when social workers go and visit families and they see the conditions of their house, whether they have no food in their fridge, that that wouldn't be a grounds for apprehension, that that social worker would do everything in her power to make sure that that family got the food they need, whether she was connecting them with Winnipeg Harvest or we were able to give some authority for them to purchase it out of the budget.

We pay foster parents up to \$1,750 to take these children into their homes. And foster parents are doing amazing jobs. I was a teacher for 20-plus years. I witnessed many parents that went above and beyond what the government was giving them to support these children. But we can do this very thing right in the homes of these families. It makes sense. Why move families from home to home to home?

And I've told the story about my niece and nephew, that my sister is missing. My brother-in-law became a single father, sole provider, lost his job, was struggling, wasn't sending what he needed to school for the kids. CFS was called. They came to the school. They apprehended the kids from the school. An investigation was launched. We went to court. We tried to fight to get them back into our custody, into a family home. It took six months for us to get my sister's children back. And they had moved three placements, and my sister's house was the fourth placement. And my niece and nephew still talk about that experience of being not connected to people, being in strangers' homes, not feeling love, not getting a hug when they go to bed, not being told that they're doing good in school. And we heard these very things last night from other people who presented at committee.

So if those things had been in place, my little niece and nephew wouldn't have had to experience three placements. They would have come into—the social workers would have come to the father and they would have said to him, look, we want to support you. We want to ensure that the kids stay in the home. What is it that you need and how can we help? So identifying the needs of the family is utmost. We're not saying that social workers are doing bad jobs, because we know that they're doing the best they can. And in fact, I have social workers that come to my office, that call my office, and say, you know, I'm struggling here because this family has been evicted. They don't have a place to live. And due to housing, we're going to have to take their children. You're the Housing critic; we need your support. Can you help us get this family into a house so that we don't have to apprehend their children?

Another school social worker I met with last week spoke about a family that's been trying to get supports forever, and they don't want to have their children apprehended. But he's found himself to be a single father of three young children, and he's struggling. He's struggling with his job because he doesn't have care for his children, there's no daycare spots for him in our area that are open.

*(10:10)

So they've reached out to me to say, can we help find some kind of arrangement where the father can contain—or can remain in his job, his children can be taken care of and he can still provide for his children, because he doesn't want to go on EIA and we don't

want to be putting people on EIA. He's got a job. His kids are stable, but he's not able to afford the rent if he has to pay for daycare. So we're trying to figure out a solution to, you know, support this family, and he's also grieving the loss and so are the children of their parent. So there's, you know, some behaviours at school as well and, you know, we're trying to work with these families.

And I think everyone in this House would agree that, you know, the best thing for children is to stay with their families. Our families love their children, you know. They don't want their children to be taken away. They're doing the best they can.

I was making some observations last night as we were in committee. As people were talking I was thinking about this whole idea of being indigenous myself, and if I've never, ever met a person that has not been in the CFS system—and I can honestly say I have not—every single person that I know that's indigenous has been in CFS care or their family has had contact with CFS care.

And some families, I'll tell you about a young mother who went out with some friends when I was working at Marymount. And I worked with these young, vulnerable women and I worked with their families, and it was all about reunification and getting these children back home to their families. And this young woman went out with some friends. Her boyfriend was at home. She had just had a baby. Her baby was about four months old and she went out drinking, but her husband or her partner was looking after the child.

And she ended up in the Health Sciences Centre. She got alcohol poisoning and her baby ended up passing away of SIDS. And because she was not at home with her child her baby was apprehended. That girl is now 35 years old. Her other two children were apprehended. She is now 35 years old. She doesn't have her kids anymore. She is addicted to meth. She's been in and out of jail. She's exploited her body to feed her habit.

And I'm sure the statistics would show—and I don't have them here—that every single child that's been in CFS care has had some brushing with the law in this province or become homeless.

So I implore, you know, this House. I implore the government to pass this bill today. Communities are asking for this. This has been a long time coming and, you know, it would really improve the situation of families and it would take the burden off of, you

know, the government because you're putting less resources into supporting these children at home than putting them in someone else's home.

Miigwech.

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. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I thank the member opposite for a well-intentioned bill.

Our government appointed a Legislative Review Committee to make comprehensive recommendations on fixing the CFS legislation, reviewing the CFS legislation. Grand Chief Daniels, Grand Chief North, President Chartrand each appointed representatives.

Just wondering why is this being brought forward before that committee has made any public comments?

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): We know that families are in need of support. We know that they're asking for, you know, our government to help keep their children at home, and this is what this bill is about. This is about keeping children at home, supporting families right in their home and ensuring that, you know, we build a strong community with kids who know who they are as indigenous children.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I would ask the member what proportion of kids who are taken into care are taken into care because of, essentially, poverty. When I've asked people under the former NDP government, the number that I was given was anywhere from 30 per cent up to close to 90 per cent. I think it may differ from one agency to another, but I'm interested in the response of the member.

Mrs. Smith: Well, we know that there was an MP that had a CFS reform—or open house, and he had given some statistics that 13 per cent of children are apprehended due to abuse allegations and the rest are due to poverty. So that would be 87 per cent.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I just want to say miigwech to the member for Point Douglas

(Mrs. Smith) for bringing forward this Bill 223 and, you know, beginning the discussion in respect of how poverty impacts on families.

So I would ask the member for Point Douglas: What are the consequences of poverty, not necessarily an indication that a child should be apprehended?

Mrs. Smith: Well, we see—and I see in my constituency—you know, probably 90 per cent of my constituents are living below the poverty line. And if we gave the same support to families who are fostering children in home with their parents to keep those kids at home—for instance, if they don't have a bed, buying them a bed; if they need food, then buying them food. If housing is an issue, then we can find them housing. But apprehended—apprehend should be the last thing that we're doing.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Is the member opposite aware that the current act states: Decisions to place children should be based on the best interests of the child and not on the basis of the family's financial status? How does this Bill 223 differ from this?

Mrs. Smith: So this bill would put legislation in place so that children are not going to be apprehended due to poverty.

For instance, I have a woman who's pregnant with a set of twins. She came to our office. She doesn't have two cribs; she doesn't have the necessities that she needs for two babies.

She's on EIA. They only give so much money. So she's asking for our support because she's afraid that her children are going to be apprehended due to her not having the things that she should have for her babies.

Ms. Fontaine: Again, I would ask the member for Point Douglas, based, obviously, on her personal experience but also based on meeting with stakeholders and certainly with different agencies and social workers, but more importantly with community, why she understands and believes that it is more beneficial for children's development to stay with their families?

Mrs. Smith: As I stated earlier, I gave an example of my own situation, my niece and nephew's situation, but also situations that I hear every day in my constituency office, that I'm hearing from our community members, that I'm hearing from some of our organizations in the city that work with families

around, you know, ensuring families stay together. And we know that social workers' hands are tied in terms of providing those supports, and those supports are only given after kids are taken into care. So this bill would ensure that those supports are in place before children are taken and that apprehension is the last thing that happens.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): It was saddening to hear that nearly 87 per cent of kids were apprehended due to poverty.

So I'm wondering what, exactly, does the member mean by lacking the same or similar economic and social advantages as others in Manitoba society? If the government, the previous government, already apprehended 87 per cent, then what does she exactly mean? What does this NDP mean by saying that?

* (10:20)

Mrs. Smith: Well, as someone who has grown up in the system, I think it's important to, you know, make sure that the people in the community's voices are being heard, and we're hearing that children and families need support right in their homes.

We know that there's a customary care bill coming up. This customary care bill will not support families unless they're connected to their communities. This bill would essentially ensure that families that aren't under that bill would get the same level of supports as the people who are represented under the customary care bill.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): Bill 223 is fairly vague, so I wonder if maybe the member could clarify a few things for us here. In one point, the legislation states: "lacking same or similar economic and social advantage as others in Manitoba society."

So, first of all, could the member please explain how this would be enforced and how she would define the portion that says "lacking same or similar economic and social advantage"?

Mrs. Smith: Well, there would be no enforcement. What it would mean is it would untie social workers'—social workers' hands. So, at the moment, social workers aren't able to support families with getting them food in their house. They aren't able to buy a child a bed. They aren't able to hook them up with, you know, let's say, counselling services because they're so busy right now managing the foster-care system. This would ensure that they can provide those supports to those families in those homes that

need those supports. We're talking about a reconciliation here and making sure that kids are in their homes with families.

Ms. Fontaine: I appreciate all the answers that the member for Point Douglas has provided thus far, and I think that it is important to provide kind of a whole context in respect of the importance of Bill 223.

I would like to ask the member for Point Douglas, how can investments in prevention programs help families who are at risk of apprehension?

Mrs. Smith: Well, we know with, you know, the colonization and the history of Canada that there's many families that are struggling with their parenting. We know that there's many families that are struggling with job skills. And if we invest in prevention and helping those families to go to parenting classes, to get into job-ready programs, to make sure that they have daycare, and really a wrap-around model so that it takes a whole village—and I'm sure you heard this—to raise a child. That we wrap all of the services that that family needs around that child.

Mr. Micklefield: The CFS system recognizes SCO and KO and the MMF authorities. Just wondering if the member could tell the House who she consulted with in terms of political leadership before introducing this bill.

Mrs. Smith: So there were a number of stakeholders that I consulted with. I called and asked if this was something that they would support. So AMC would be one. Ma Mawi, R2W fearless, who work with families. So when there is a family that's at risk of their children being apprehended, R2W will go in and support those families when that social worker comes so that they're aware of what their rights are as parents. Many social workers that I've talked to within the system, the four regions, would support this because their hands are tied. They want to be doing more for children, but due to legislation they're not able to provide the supports and the level of supports that families need.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I do sincerely want to thank the member for a well-intentioned initiative here. I actually do

believe the best of the member on this, and I think this is an issue that people across this House share concern and, in that sense, I believe, share responsibility.

I'm not going to be playing politics as I talk this morning. I want to share from my heart, my experience, and talk a little bit about my own perspective on this issue.

I appreciate the member sharing some of her personal experience. That's not something she has to share with the House. She doesn't have to be vulnerable that way. But I appreciate her choice to do so. I appreciate her comments about why move kids from home to home to home. And I couldn't agree more. I think that's something that does need to be looked at.

I appreciate her comments that we don't want people on EIA unnecessarily, and I agree with that as well. We don't want EIA to be the instant go-to for people. It exists for a reason and should be used for the reason for which it is intended.

But—so I agree wholeheartedly with the value that children should stay with their families, that that is not just a preference but that should be a strong preference. That should really be what we are aiming for.

But these are not new observations, Madam Speaker. These are not new things that I'm saying. These things have been noted for many, many years. The—there have been numerous legislative comments and adjustments. But, for some reason, we have not ever really reviewed the whole CFS act until now. And it was just before Christmas that I was asked to head up the Child and Family Services Legislative Review Committee. And over the last however many months that is, five, six months, I've been very privileged to lead this committee: five indigenous and two non-indigenous members, myself being one of the non-indigenous members, of course. But it's been a big eye-opening experience for me and something that I cared about going in and care more about as the committee is winding up its work just now.

We met with—I want to be accurate here. I actually don't know the number of groups that we met with. But we have had days and days of meetings with lots and lots of groups all across the province. We've been to the North. We've been across the province. We've met with groups here in Winnipeg. We've met with young people who were

in the system. We've spoken with and interacted with the children's advocate. We've met with all manner of indigenous groups and leadership, political and non-political. And then we also invited people to make their own comments online. And we received some 1,500 online responses. In fact, it was—I believe it was more than 1,500 online responses. And took all of that information and began to look for what were the common themes. What were people saying? And we have heard—

Madam Speaker: I'm having some difficulty hearing the member in debate, so I would ask that members that are having conversations to please, I guess, lower the volume or take to the loges because it's very difficult for all of us to hear this debate.

Mr. Micklefield: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I was struggling to hear as well.

So we've heard lots of things. We've heard some heartbreaking things. The member speaks of children bouncing around two or three homes. And I've heard of children bouncing around even dozens of homes. And I just cannot say how awful that must be. I can't imagine what it must be like to, on your 18th birthday, get a green garbage bag with some clothes in it and a slap on the back and a, all the best, we wish you well. Some of these young people have had such horrible experiences in Child and Family Services that they actually don't want to prolong the quote-unquote support that might be offered to them because, frankly, they've had enough. And it's no wonder that the stats are not good for these young people.

* (10:30)

Manitoba is leading the country in children in care. There's a number of ways you can analyze that statistic, but our numbers are alarming. Something like 11,300 children in care, and when you break it down we're spending about \$40,000 a child per year to keep these kids in care and one has to ask, what is the care that we're offering.

You know, it's not often that I would agree with a quote from the leader of the current NDP, but he has acknowledged what he called a terrible record on Child and Family Services. I think that we all need to acknowledge that and roll up our sleeves and do what we can to change it. Budget 2018 is a step in that direction. We see over a \$16-million increase in the family department's budget over—that's over last year. And we continue to work to that end to sort these things out.

So, Madam Speaker, something that's curious about bill—this particular bill is I'm still not really sure how it changes things. The existing legislation—which I'll just read from in the introduction, section 9: Decisions to place children should be based on the best interests of the child and not on the basis of the family's financial status. So I think that the member is echoing something that has already been acknowledged. I think that this is not a new thought. But I would also want to suggest—over the last number of months there's been quite an effort to look into the CFS act. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Micklefield: Over the last number of months there's been quite an effort to look into the CFS act and review it.

I would have welcomed the opportunity, and still would welcome the opportunity to sit down with the member to hear and to take any comments that she might have, to take them seriously. The concrete is not yet dry on the report that is being prepared and I would certainly welcome that opportunity if she would be open to taking it up with me.

I feel like we've taken apart the engine of a vehicle and we've got all the pieces on the garage floor, and then, now, a few weeks before, as we're looking at how we put this thing back together, someone else has run into the garage and said these pieces need to be in here too.

And that's not a wrong thing to do, but there's a process that's been happening for months involving hundreds and hundreds of people and that process is well under way. So it's unfortunate, in a sense, that the timing couldn't be co-ordinated so that we're not at odds in what we're trying to achieve.

So, in terms of the goals, we want fewer children in care in this province. We want the children that do have to be in care—we all acknowledge that is the case—to be in care for fewer days. We want kids to be with their own parents, and in the unfortunate times where that is not possible—we would all, I think, acknowledge that there are those occasions—that those children be with next of kin and family members.

And I also do want to sincerely express appreciation for the member's—the member honouring the good foster care that does happen in the province, of which there are many families who do good things. But, as long as there are children who are not having good experiences, our work is

not done. As long as there are children whose lives are being harmed, our work is not done.

So I think it behooves all of us in this House to ponder these things carefully, to work together and talk so that together we can make a better Manitoba for all of us.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to put a couple of words on the record in respect of Bill 223.

As I said in my preambles to some of my questions, I do want to just take a moment to honour my sister colleague, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), for bringing forward this important legislation and for sharing her own personal story in respect of her time within the CFS system. And actually, just to kind of pick up in respect of where the member for Point Douglas notes that there's not many indigenous people that she knows—and certainly, I would agree as well—that have not been impacted or have had some type of contact with the CFS system.

And I've often shared that growing up indigenous, and particularly when you are growing up economically marginalized and disadvantaged, there is always this underlying fear of CFS. And so I know that for myself, growing up, my mom would always say to me—which, my mom was never home, but she would say to me, you know, don't answer the phone and don't answer the door because it could be CFS and they'll take you away from me.

And so that was something that I knew from very, very early on and never answered the door, except this one time, which wasn't really good. But because you always knew that, despite what was going on with my mom, which wasn't pleasant, you knew intrinsically somehow that the alternative wasn't good and that, again, as I've said in this House, no matter what is going on, children have this inherent cellular desire to be with our parents. They are our genetic connection, our ancestral connection, and we always have this really deep-seated need to be with our parents, to be loved by our parents, to be protected by our parents.

And, of course, sometimes parents are not able to do that, and in that respect, I think that most of us in this House would suggest that, you know, there are those moments where apprehension is crucial and essential in the protection of children.

But I think that one of the things that we understand, particularly as indigenous people, is that

most of our families, or a lot of our families, deal with endemic levels of poverty and endemic levels of poverty which have been intergenerational. And so it is almost as if you are drowning or you are being buried alive in all of these circumstances and situations that you have no control over. And, certainly, I know for myself that was one element of what was going on in my own experience with my mom, which I've already shared in here.

So I think that it is important to recognize the common sense of Bill 223, that we would legislate and ensure that it is fundamentally understood that poverty is not grounds for apprehension. And I know that the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) has already indicated a little bit about how that manifests itself. So how that manifests itself is maybe there's not any food in the house. Or, you know, maybe you don't have, you know, three bedrooms and a bed for each of your children for those rooms.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I could spend all morning talking about all of the different advocacy that I've done for families in respect of just poverty issues, which includes mattresses, which includes, you know, boots and hats and mitts and snow pants and all of that stuff, and food. Like, I cannot even share how often, actually, both the member for Point Douglas and I individually and collectively have gone out to buy groceries and bring them to folks, baby formula, baby food, because the reality is people struggle economically here in Manitoba, certainly across Canada, and I would suggest that it—people struggle disproportionately within the indigenous community.

* (10:40)

And, again, that is predicated upon the colonial history and all of those different state mechanisms that have really kind of entrenched and enforce our own poverty and our own disempowerment and our own oppression. And so for the state to come in while it is implicit in our oppression and our marginalization, and then to further penalize us by taking our children, it's just simply not right, Madam Speaker.

And—so I would suggest that this is—it's more than common sense, this bill. It is more than just a moment for all of us in this Chamber to vote and pass on common sense. It is a moment that, you know, when members opposite talk about reconciliation, and I know that the member for Point Douglas and myself and the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) and the member for The Pas

(Ms. Lathlin) constantly talk about that reconciliation is more than just words. It is actions.

And so here is actually a moment where members in this House can put into practice reconciliation because, in fact, I would suggest that the poverty that indigenous families are entrenched in is fundamentally and, as I said, is predicated upon this whole colonial history. And this is a moment, a tangible moment in this House at 10:41 that we can call question and we can vote on this bill, and we can move collectively with pride, with compassion and with love to support all of our children.

Miigwech.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Good morning. I welcome the opportunity to put some words on record with respect to Bill 223, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act.

Children are the future to a community. Children bring with them the history of their generation, their culture, and the hopes and dreams of their families. Families are a product of many different cultural, socio-economic and demographic areas. Families evolve from the many challenges they face. There is no one parent who can say that they have had the handbook on how to parent, and with the addition of siblings, the family evolves.

Love is the glue that essentially binds individuals together and gives them the fortitude to persevere when times are challenging. It is within this diversity and love that the identity of an individual and the family is formulated and strengthened.

Children need to have the ongoing support of family and community. Children grow when they are supported, embraced and loved. Family and community provide the bond which moulds you.

Madam Speaker, our government is dedicated to supporting children and families. Our government sees how invaluable children are. We have put forward fundamental reforms to amend the broken child and family services system that our government inherited from the previous government.

Our government realized that the old way wasn't working, and that is why we are taking significant steps to improve the way children are dealt with in the child and family services system.

One may ask how we would do this. Well, by focusing on outcomes which see fewer children in care, stronger relationships with families and

communities, and providing services which are efficient and effective. Further, to ongoing support, our government has appointed a Legislative Review Committee of CFS experts and representatives from the Manitoba Metis Federation, Southern Chiefs Organization and the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak to make recommendations on the best way to reform The Child and Family Services Act and the CFS Authorities Act.

Essentials for reform include developing a community-based prevention model that involves demonstration sites; co-ordination across the departmental services and increased alignment of federally funded services on reserves; creating lifelong connections for children through reunification and permanence, including improved emergency placement resources and availability of family group conferencing as well as evidence-based permanency initiative; the co-ordinating initiatives to produce better outcomes for children, initiatives will be based on results rather than incentives for larger case loads and longer stays in care; and, finally, by establishing a Legislative Review Committee to modernize legislation to support these shifts in practice—or, sorry, legislation.

The committee has been meeting with meeting with Manitobans for six months. They have met with 1,500 Manitobans who have contributed to the review. The information gathered will be part of the recommendations used to best reform the CFS act and CFS authorities act and are within weeks of presenting the report to government on overhauling the CFS legislation.

Budget 2018 reflects this government's commitment to our children. We are investing in priorities to support families across Manitoba by committing an increase in funding of \$60.5 million; \$35.5 million of that \$60.5 million has been designated for child protection and will be disbursed through CFS.

Madam Speaker, our government has also introduced Bill 18, the CFS amendment act, taking care of our children act. The changes to the act aim to improve outcomes for indigenous children by focusing on community-based prevention, lifelong connections and enhancing children's connection to family, community and culture. Children belong with their family and need to feel the connection that a community of supports and peers can provide. Children need their parents and elders to teach them. Support from extended family members in the

community builds a support network which helps children preserve their cultural identity and heritage.

Madam Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of children knowing their heritage and the strength that comes from being part of a community. Community helps with the building blocks to ensure the child has many supports in place which aid in helping a child succeed. Family history teaches children their connection to members in the community and their identity with relation to other communities.

Further, to ensure supports to families, our government is investing in new child-care spaces. A bilateral agreement with the federal government will help create 1,400 new spaces. The spaces will support families who are working, going to school or who need support with their own family.

Our government is committed to pursuing poverty reduction and ensuring families keep more money in their pockets, money which can go towards expenses in the home or to creating a better life for families. Rent assistance has been increased to support families on employment insurance assistance. The increase has benefited 60 per cent more than the households which received Rent Assist in March of 2016.

In addition to affordable housing, which is essential for families to prosper, families who do not have to—families do not have to worry about where they will live and have to make ends meet to keep a roof over their head are able to focus on what matters most: each other. We were the first party to call for social assistance housing allowances to be increased to 75 per cent of median market rent, creating province-wide change. Manitoba continues to provide one of the best Rent Assist programs in the country. Since being elected, we have opened and/or supported 647 social housing units, 40 per cent of which are social housing. We understand the importance of family and are taking the necessary steps to ensure that everyone has a place to call home.

With all that our government has accomplished in such a short period of time, it is apparent that we place a huge emphasis on the value of family. We are currently reviewing the CFS act because we know that the threshold for apprehension is currently too broad.

Madam Speaker, under the declaration of principles, CFS act, the ninth point states, and I

quote, decisions to place children should not be based on the best interest of the child and not on the basis of family financial status, end quote. It is unclear how this NDP bill will make a real difference. The act already prohibits the kind of apprehension this bill describes. For 17 years, the NDP took this type of patchwork attempt to address a failed system with 16 different bills on changing Child and Family Services. And every year, under their watch, outcomes got worse.

Under the NDP, Manitoba had the worst child-welfare outcomes anywhere in Canada by far, doubling the number of kids in care to almost 11,000. The number of children in care increased every year they were in office.

Manitoba has many supports in place to ensure families in need can access the resources they require: Siloam Mission, various community organizations, along with schools and resource centres offer food and basic needs to assist families in times when they are struggling to pay their bills and make ends meet.

* (10:50)

Madam Speaker, poverty is one of the most complex issues governments of the day have to face, but it is also one of the most importance. Incidents of poverty in Manitoba are the product of many different factors, both long term and short term.

Work is under way on a new poverty-reduction strategy, and under our government Manitoba is no longer the child poverty capital of Canada. Manitoba moved from being 10th-ranked worst in 2015 to fifth in 2016, the biggest improvement nationally according to Statistics Canada. As you can see, our government has already taken significant steps to improve outcomes for low-income Manitobans, but much work is still left to do.

Madam Speaker, this bill is unclear as to how it will make a real difference to the lives of low-income Manitoba families and children. On the other hand, our government is delivering fundamental reforms to the broken CFS system that will be founded on community-driven solutions and stronger supports for prevention, family connections and permanency. We will take action to address the needs of Manitoba's most vulnerable children and youth while also making sure their families have the financial resources to support themselves.

Thank you.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): We agree wholeheartedly with the principle of this bill. To take a child from their family due to poverty is repulsive. With only 13 per cent from abuse, as the member stated, and therefore 87 per cent from poverty angers me.

My family down south have buried their children because foster parents weren't vetted properly. Your NDP colleagues had several years to get it right. I'm glad the member is now seeing the devastating effects of her team's policies. I hope she now has a big voice in her caucus.

The amount of money that it costs to apprehend a child and house them would be better utilized in keeping the family and community connections at home and supporting those families. While we feel that the text of the bill is vague and may not achieve its intentions, it's still a positive step in changing the conversation around apprehending children.

We also believe that Bill 18, when it speaks to this poverty issue, is also vague. Adding this amendment would show our unity when it comes to our children and both overall strengthens the CFS act.

We have worked with families down south that have had their children taken away because they don't have their—each don't have their own bedrooms or the air conditioning is broken. In my communities, air conditioning doesn't exist. It's—and we are used to seeing 28 people in a home sleeping in shifts.

When parents are trying to do the best for their children and they don't have the resources, they should not face apprehension. They should be supported that—so that their children can grow up at home. We know the importance of family bonding. It relates to the positive development of our children.

This idea would not only reduce children in care, but it would relieve a lot of the cases that are piling up around our hard-working social workers, giving them the time to deal with the most serious cases and ensuring that those kids don't fall through the cracks.

Our caucus will be supporting this bill and we do thank the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) for bringing it forward.

Miigwech.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I do appreciate the opportunity to rise today on an opportunity to speak to Bill 223 and, as I said earlier, I do want to thank the member for bringing it forward. And I know that

it is a very sensitive issue and certainly an issue that touches, I think, everybody in the House, every Manitoban, in fact.

You know, I—in our question period section here, we did ask a few questions of the member, and I guess I would just like to reiterate some of the questions that we do have on this side of the House. And, you know, the bill does seem quite vague. And I would just hope to see that there'd be more meat to the actual legislation to actually address the issue of child poverty and maybe some guiding metrics as to how that would be addressed.

I know child poverty is certainly nothing new in the province of Manitoba, and having it—having legislation that, perhaps, doesn't necessarily provide us with a road map to ending it, I'm not sure if that's going to necessarily solve the problem or any of the problems that we are facing with the CFS system. The CFS system does have a number of challenges. I know our government has taken—undertaken quite a significant reform of the system to make sure that it addresses the actual needs of Manitobans, the actual needs of the children that are in the system. Ultimately, this whole focus should be on the children and the results to actually solve the issue of children in care.

I just would be curious to know what on the NDP side of the House, what kind of consultations they have done. I know we do have a committee looking into this very issue, so I'm not sure if there's a disconnect between what's being done on one side of the House versus the other, and I think, perhaps, it would be responsible and recommended to actually have a conversation between the opposition members and the committee because, ultimately, that's really what's going to help us to achieve any goals is to actually work together and to address the issue of child poverty in the province.

I think that if that didn't happen, maybe it's time to just perhaps look further into that possibility and hopefully that members opposite would have an opportunity to discuss. I know the member from Rossmere had spoken earlier, and he's actually on that committee. And perhaps that would be a good conversation to be having instead of a disjointed effort here in the Legislature. So I do appreciate, though, that the member herself, and I know there's a number of members in this Chamber who do deal with CFS and who have dealt with CFS and currently deal with CFS and the issues surrounding it.

Manitobans on a whole, I think, are known as the most generous people in Canada, and I would know that this would be a very important issue to everybody. I myself know a number of people that, not necessarily in this Chamber but in my own personal life, that are involved with the CFS system. And they've made a number of comments saying that the CFS system does need reform.

There is no question that it doesn't necessarily reach the goal of actually addressing children's needs in the province, and that's something that, like I said earlier, if we're not actually addressing the needs of children, then the CFS system is not reaching its ultimate goal. Therefore, changes are needed. So, again, I do commend our government and members of this side of the House for taking that action to reform the system.

I would like to also suggest, and maybe something to—worth looking into—the previous government did—I believe they introduced 16 different legislations, I believe, 16 different bills, over the past 17 years to address the system. And it seemed like a bit of a patchwork approach. And, you know, I guess there's never a perfect answer, and I don't blame anyone for trying to make the system better. I do, however, think that a more wholesome and comprehensive approach would be much more effective than one-offs and trying to do patchwork.

Ultimately, if you do enough patchwork, eventually you just have more of a mess than you did before. So if we could actually address the heart of the issue and get to making sure that the system is changed and reformed to address the overarching problem of children in care and child poverty, family poverty in the province, I think that would help.

I know—just on the issue of poverty itself, low-income Manitobans are going to be receiving quite a significant help from the government here of Manitoba with Budget 2018, raising the basic personal exemption. You know, more Manitobans will be off the pay—off the taxes—or won't be paying taxes than ever before. The average family, two income, will be saving \$2,020 by 2020. It's—I think that's a positive step in the right direction, giving families the actual options and choices when it comes to how their money is being spent instead of government being more prescriptive. We believe that Manitoba families—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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

* (11:00)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Before proceeding to resolutions, we have some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you.

We have 24 grade 4 students from Harold Hatcher School, and they are in the constituency of Transcona.

And we'd like to welcome all of you to the Manitoba Legislature.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 13—Protect Manitoba Waterways from Transboundary Water Projects

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 Protect Manitoba Waterways from Transboundary Water Projects, brought forward by the honourable member for Wolseley.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I thank my colleagues for that warm introduction.

It's my pleasure to introduce this motion. I move—[interjection] All right.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe),

WHEREAS the health of waterways in the province is a concern for all Manitobans; and

WHEREAS transboundary water diversion projects pose a serious risk to Manitoba's waterways due to the inter-basin transfer of foreign invasive species, nutrients, and diseases into the Hudson Bay drainage basin; and

WHEREAS the Government of North Dakota is actively pursuing two different large-scale water diversion projects—the Northwest Area Water Supply (NAWS) project and the Red River Valley Water Supply (RRVWS) project—that would bring water from the Missouri River into Manitoba; and

WHEREAS waters from Manitoba's Hudson Bay drainage basin and the Missouri River have not been mixed for thousands of years; and

WHEREAS the most recent environmental assessment done on the RRVWS project is ten years old, but identified over two dozen foreign invasive species that live in the Missouri River; and

WHEREAS these inter-basin threats could cause severe and irreversible damage to Manitoba's ecosystems, water quality, and to commercial and sport fisheries; and

WHEREAS the Federal Government and previous Provincial Governments have long opposed and successfully delayed both the NAWS and RRVWS projects; and

WHEREAS North Dakota officials are currently completing design work and early construction, with a goal of active construction on the RRVWS project in 2019; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has to date failed to take action or address concerns over the RRVWS project; and

WHEREAS the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 between the United States and Canada provides the International Joint Commission the authority to examine transboundary water projects.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to protect Manitoba waterways by immediately requesting the federal government to initiate a formal referral of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project to the International Joint Commission.

Motion presented.

Mr. Altemeyer: Madam Speaker, pleased to bring this resolution forward for debate and consideration this morning.

I have to admit, I am a little confused as to why bringing this resolution forward is necessary because you would think if there was an imminent threat to the health of Manitoba's waterways, that this government would already be making that a top priority. If they had failed to make it a top priority, you would think at the very least they might make it a medium priority or have done anything about this issue, and yet we have heard absolutely nothing from this government since they took office.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And the remarkable thing about that, Mr. Speaker—or, Mr. Acting Speaker, is the potential threats of this project are absolutely enormous to

the health of our environment here in Manitoba, to the health of people, to wildlife, to ecosystems and some very serious threats could come out of this to our economy.

Let me provide some background—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —and some context to—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I have—I hear a lot of heckling, so I want to be able to hear the speaker.

Mr. Altemeyer: Quite clearly, I've struck a nerve with the government. I think they recognize they have made a mistake in not addressing this issue and, as usual, they try to shut down voices that they don't like to hear. Unfortunately for them, we do still live in a democracy, and if they don't want to listen, they can leave.

The background to this issue is quite fascinating. North Dakota, of course, has wanted to merge the waters of the Missouri River and combine them with the Red River in North Dakota for decades. The earlier version of this project was more commonly known as the Garrison Diversion project. And while we were in office, I'm very proud to say our government was exceptionally adept and successful in blocking this project from taking place. We used a combination of legal and diplomatic lobbying efforts to make that happen.

But, after the provincial election here—shortly after the provincial election here, actually, there were numerous media reports in North Dakota that that state felt, following the election of Donald Trump, that they had found a way to move this project forward. And the government of the day here in Manitoba was either not paying attention to those developments or had chosen deliberately to stay silent on the issue, and therefore it fell to us as the official opposition to provide the research, to provide the information and to hold, now, multiple public events where we have been sounding the alarm. Still, we have no action from this government on the issue.

What is the extent of the potential damage—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —from this project should it proceed? Well, let's consider, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the Missouri River drainage basin and the Hudson Bay drainage basin, where we live, have not

been in physical contact with each other, the waters have not been combined, for thousands and thousands of years. That amount of time means that different species have come to populate those respective drainage basins. And, when you merge drainage basins that have not been in contact for that long, you run the risk of mixing foreign invasive species into the communities downstream. Those communities downstream are represented here today by some of the same people who are busy trying to heckle and stop this debate from even happening. It is the communities right along the Red River, from the border straight through Winnipeg, north to Selkirk into Lake Winnipeg. All of them could suffer many different types of negative impacts, and they could be quite catastrophic, particularly for our commercial fishery. The biggest threat that this project poses—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —is the introduction of foreign invasive species. An environmental impact study conducted not by Canadians, but conducted by the Americans, found that there were 26 foreign invasive species that are not in the Hudson's Bay drainage basin: 26 different potential foreign invasive threats, the impacts of which we can take a guess at but we really don't want to find out in person because once a foreign invasive species arrives, who knows what it will actually end up doing. And we need only look at other examples of foreign invasive species to see the truth of that. The solution to foreign invasive species is to prevent it in the first place: prevent it, prevent it, prevent it. And yet we hear nothing from this government on this project.

There are also some additional problems with merging the waters that could come here. You can end up with additional—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —sulphates. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: You can end up with additional sulphates in the water, which means that all the municipal water treatment plants, any community that's using the Red River for its irrigation, for its drinking water, for any other community uses, they are going to have to pay more money to pull that additional pollution out of the water. You're going to have additional amounts of phosphorus and nitrogen coming up the Red River. The phosphorus—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer:—that we have in Manitoba that ends up in Lake Winnipeg, half of it already originates from outside our borders.

Given this government's behaviour on water issues, they have zero leg to stand on already to try and encourage and work with other jurisdictions to do the right thing. And now they're staying absolutely silent about the threat of the Red River Valley water project. And they have had, Mr. Acting Speaker, they have had multiple opportunities to do the right thing, to sound the alarm.

They could point to, for instance, the fact that on the website for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, it is quite clear that no water treatment process has been selected yet. They've identified three different options. There's a very wide range in how much pollution and how much of the threat of foreign invasive species will hopefully be dealt with depending on which of those three they go with.

One of them would remove sand and silt from the water, and that's it. The other one would be a much more robust treatment system which, hopefully, a government in Manitoba that cared about protecting its citizens and its waterways would be lobbying for.

But you have to remember that in order for even that robust system to work, that system will have to be perfectly designed, it will have to be perfectly built, and it will have to never fail, because as soon as you end up with some water mixing from the Missouri with a foreign species in it entering into the Red River drainage basin, that's where the problem can start, and you cannot stop it after that happens.

This government helps fund a wonderful organization called the Red River Basin Commission. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: The Red River Basin Commission held a conference just a few months ago which I attended, which some members from the government attended. And lo and behold, there was a presenter from North Dakota coming up to talk about why they want to do the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. Do you think they even mentioned the threat of foreign invasive species? No, they did not. Honourable member for Southdale (Mr. Smith) should have been there and he would have learned that first-hand. *[interjection]*

* (11:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: Did anyone from the government who was in attendance, did they stand up to raise any concerns, any concerns at all, with the representative from North Dakota? There were Tory MLAs in the room. There were Tory MLAs in the room, did they do anything to stand up for Manitoba's water? Absolutely not. They sat on their hands, they kept their mouths shut. They said nothing.

It fell to me to raise these concerns, and other representatives at the conference to do the same thing. *Why—[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I'm going to call out some of the members here that are heckling continuously. I've—I actually have one of—member who is actually trying to get at another member who's not even speaking. So I want to just warn everyone, I'm going to be calling out next time around.

Mr. Altemeyer: The heckling is disappointing. It does seem to indicate this government is still refusing to listen to science. They're refusing to listen to the threats. They are refusing to take any action on this whatsoever.

And the potential threat, as I have identified already, is very, very real. There has been, so far as we can discern, no actions. No actions whatsoever. Not a single piece of correspondence from this government to anyone at our federal level, to anyone in North Dakota. And the mechanism exists to initiate a formal referral.

The International Joint Commission, for over—or, well, since 1909, almost 100 years—it has helped mediate water issues and water disputes between Canada and the United States. The Province can and should have already contacted the federal Department of Foreign Affairs and requested them to initiate a formal review of this project with the United States and have the International Joint Commission sit down with all parties and find a far better solution than what is currently unfolding.

This government is sitting on their hands. They cannot say they are not aware of the threat. We are doing everything we can to protect Manitoba's water. It is time for this government to finally tear the blindfolds off and take action on this vitally crucial threat to the future of Manitoba.

Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following 'sequence': the first question may be asked by a member of another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question; and no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Good morning to everyone in the Chamber.

I want to ask members opposite—I know he was the legislative assistant, I believe, to the environment minister, Gord Mackintosh, at the time when aquatic invasive species had come into Lake Winnipeg after the NDP had failed to heed the warnings of Dr. Eva Pip and many others who were saying that they were coming fast and furious. Gord Mackintosh had concluded after Lake Winnipeg had become infested that it was a lost cause, but that's okay that we have 100,000 other lakes in this province to celebrate.

I wonder if members opposite agree with Gord Mackintosh that Winnipeg—Lake Winnipeg is a lost cause because of their failed activity to act on zebra mussels.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): If the minister is actually concerned about foreign invasive species, then this is a resolution she should be supporting—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —not playing political games with.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I want to thank my friend from Wolseley for bringing this forward.

Can he tell the House what the provincial and federal governments to date have done about these issues?

Mr. Altemeyer: Absolutely nothing.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I thank the member for bringing this forward.

I'm interested to know, because, I mean, if this project were to go ahead, it would be very important that we have the baseline research done in a very thorough way. Is that baseline research completed?

Is it ongoing because always conditions are changing?

Mr. Altemeyer: Excellent question. I thank my colleague from the—from River Heights for it.

There was, as I mentioned, an environmental impact statement prepared in the United States. It is, however, a decade old. So, so far as I know, neither the American state government nor the federal government or anyone from Canada has done any follow-up research to see if there are any additional threats or any changes in the water quality or type in the 10 years intervening since that report was initially written.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Can the member from Wolseley please explain to the House why he and other members opposite, including his own leader, talked out the wetlands resolution and initially opposed Bill 212, The Invasive Species Awareness Week Act, if he and his party are so concerned with invasive species from transboundary waters?

Mr. Altemeyer: Again, same as with his minister, if he's actually concerned—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —about having—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: Is it feeding time?

Is—if he's actually concerned about foreign invasive species, he should be a little bit more interested in preventing new ones from arriving than he is interested in raising awareness about ones that are already here. We need to do both, sure, but when you've got 26 new foreign invasive species, and his own downstream community of Selkirk stands to be one of the ones that suffers the most, I think his citizens expect better from their MLA.

Mr. Allum: Maybe it would be helpful if the member could review what the role of the International Joint Commission is and what it's done in the past in relation to transboundary water projects.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you very much for the excellent question from my colleague from Fort Garry-Riverview.

Our government as—recently when we were in office used the International Joint Commission very effectively. We were able to engage our federal

government in Canada, and they in turn engaged their American counterparts and reviews of this project and another one, the Northwest Area Water Supply project, were both subject to International Joint Commission scrutiny. And under the law, the international treaty, the IJC does have the capacity to take measures to stop projects from happening when they're going to have negative impacts downstream. I do not understand why this government is ignoring this perfectly reasonable—

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

Ms. Squires: So the members opposite had said that—or makes it sound as though absolutely no work had proceeded on the project in question during his government's time in office, and he makes it sound as though that all the work had happened after his government lost power.

But how does he explain the \$130 million US that was spent by the Americans on this project during his government's time in office if he claims that his government was holding this project at bay? How does \$130-million US investment in this project square with his facts?

Mr. Altemeyer: First of all, I said no such thing. I said it was her own government that has done absolutely no work in preventing this project—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: —from being completed. So happy to have a chance to clarify that.

And, secondly, yes, the Americans have been proceeding with pieces of this project, which they were allowed to under American law, but what North Dakota has managed to do is they have reinvented the Garrison diversion project. A lot of that infrastructure is now lost because they have selected a new route which does not involve federal lands and they do not need federal funding. It's up to this government to find new ways to block the project or at the very least ensure that Manitoba's interests are protected to the maximum extent possible.

And right now, her government has done—

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

Mr. Allum: Of course, this—these issues have impacts for all Manitobans, but they are particularly concerning for Manitoba fishers. Could the member

explain what the implications are for those folks as well as for communities surrounding Lake Winnipeg?

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you very much, and another excellent question.

Let's just hit a few of the highlights. Whirling disease, for instance, if it comes to Manitoba, could have an absolutely devastating impact on the commercial fishery. This is the same industry that members opposite are desperately now trying to find private industry to come and set up new fish processing plants.

I would think the government could be liable to a lawsuit if they knew on the one hand that they weren't doing anything to prevent foreign invasive species from coming here which could wipe out the industry that they want people to start building in.

There are also multiple new species of cyanobacteria, the blue-green bacteria that are already causing problems in Lake Winnipeg. New versions of that are contained in the Missouri River. They could end up here. This government needs to start taking this issue seriously.

Mr. Lagimodiere: Well, I'm glad the member from Wolseley brought up the fact about the algae in the lake and the concerns there, when, in 2013, the Global Nature Fund declared Lake Winnipeg as the most threatened lake in the world.

Can the member from Wolseley please explain to the House why the NDP government stood idly by while our lake became infested with zebra mussels, and why the algae blooms have been occurring and why it is the most threatened lake in the world right now?

* (11:20)

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, I think the member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere) knows this already, but just to put it on the public record, with regard to zebra mussels, a single female zebra mussel can, of course, lay hundreds, if not thousands of eggs in a single year. And those are microscopic. They're called veligers. And they float downstream.

So the honourable member could have stood in the middle of the Red River with his hip waders and a nice fishing net, 24-7, it would not have stopped the arrival of zebra mussels eventually into Lake Winnipeg. Once they arrived in North America—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: –it was inevitable that they were going to spread. The duty of this government now–
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: –is to try and contain that spread to the best of their ability; that's what we attempted to do in office. And it is also this government's duty–

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

Mr. Allum: The member touched on this issue in his opening comments and we're well aware that the current provincial and federal governments have done little to date. Maybe he could just review what previous provincial and federal governments have done in the past about NAWS in particular.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, and I thank the–my honourable colleague for that question because it introduces yet another fascinating angle of this story, which makes absolutely no dissent–no sense with this government's behaviour.

After we sounded the alarm about both the Red River Valley Water Supply Project and the Northwest Area Water Supply project, this government finally took action and filed an appeal of an injunction we had won in US courts which blocked the NAWS project from happening.

That's a perfect example of how a provincial government can stand up and rightfully defend the rights of their citizens and of our little piece of the planet here. We are not getting any of the similar action from this government on Red River Valley Water supply. They need to tell Manitobans why that's the case and be held accountable.

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

Ms. Squires: So our government does take the issue of water from–transboundary water coming into our watershed. And it reminds me of a project about a decade, decade and a half ago, called Devils Lake that the former leader of the NDP had tried to grandstand on, to no success. And he was unable to stop not one drop of water from Devils Lake from entering our watershed.

And I wonder if members opposite agrees that his former leader's failed diplomacy on stopping the

Devils Lake water from coming into Manitoba was a complete failure on his government's part.

Mr. Altemeyer: Absolutely, if we had had more support from members opposite at the time, if we had had–[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: –more support at the federal level–
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: –anything's possible. We might have been able to–[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altemeyer: –we might have been able to change that scenario.

But the main point, Mr. Speaker, is that if we hadn't tried to fight that, then, for sure, we would've ended up with Devils Lake water coming to Manitoba. What we do have now is a committee underneath the International Joint Commission, which regularly reviews the water quality that is coming north–I would invite the minister to spend a little bit of time reading some of those annual reports. She might get some interesting lessons of what is already happening and it could reinforce the importance of her finally taking action–

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

Debate

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

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): And just to be clear, our government does oppose these projects and we take the issue of foreign waters and the potential of carrying foreign invasive species into our watershed very seriously.

And I do want to thank my department and everyone involved in our government for the ongoing efforts that they have been doing to advocate for Manitoba at every level. And just because members opposite poor research didn't show–didn't confirm for him the actions that our government has taken, doesn't mean the government

hasn't acted. It just means he doesn't know how to research.

But, so very clearly our government has opposed these projects and are working to protect Manitoba interests at every step of the way.

So this issue came to light days after I was appointed Minister of Sustainable Development and it was probably the first time members opposite had accused me of failing to act. And at that time, I took that allegation very seriously, and, in fact, I still do take allegations very seriously when I'm accused of not acting. And so I do go back and I look into the project and say, okay, guys, I'm—we're not acting fast enough. What is members opposite talking about? And I had thought maybe we were at the front end of a project. But, lo and behold, I found out that we were at the tail end of a project. So, for 17 years, work had proceeded on the Northwest Area Water Supply project, the Red River Valley supply project, other projects to divert American waters into our watershed, and nothing had occurred.

And I thought, well, why is it that they were unable to stop this project from proceeding? And then now that we're at the tail end of the project, \$130 million US had been invested by the Americans on these projects so—and thousands of tons of dirt had been excavated and projects had been proceeding, and no—they had not been able to prevent not one dollar, not one ounce of effort. They were not able to prevent any of this work from proceeding, despite members opposite hyped-up assertions.

And I thought, you know, this is funny too. They had a leader who was in Washington at the time. And I thought, surely to goodness, Gary Doer, if this project was a priority to Manitoba, Gary Doer is in Ottawa—or is in Washington. He's got access to these people and he's surely in conversation with these people. He can get this project stopped. And so I took a look. I took a little history lesson, refreshed my memory on a few things, and we know that Gary Doer had opposed the Devils Lake water from coming into—or he failed to oppose the Devils Lake water, because that water is coming into Manitoba despite all of his blustery remarks during the time.

And I say blustery remarks because I found, thanks to WikiLeaks documents that were revealed not too long ago, that showed that—his former leader, Gary Doer, in all of his work to try to stop the Devils Lake, he had hardened relations with the North Dakota people and Americans in general. And the

summary from a cable from a high US diplomat said that the US and Canada are clearly on a collision course over Devils Lake, one that could have been avoided in a number of ways over the past two years.

So we know that Gary Doer had failed—he had negotiated in an attempt to have failed diplomacy, and that's what the Americans called it, and he had hardened attitudes from the North Dakotans, from the Americans against Manitoba. The cable, the WikiLeaks cable goes on to say Canadian behaviour on the Devils Lake over the past several years has been unfortunately disingenuous. Furthermore, the angry rhetoric and intransience of the provincial government in Manitoba—which, of course, was the former NDP—now escalating at the federal level in Ottawa has helped harden the attitude in North Dakota rather than move towards a solution.

So that was the members opposite approach to trying to stop water from entering the—trying to enter Manitoba. And the cable goes on to say that this issue is a prime example of failed diplomacy.

So, in case members opposite has forgotten about this WikiLeaks document, I would like to table that for the record and that there's also some corresponding stories that show that there was a bitter Canada-US water tiff that, you know, thanks to Gary Doer that had helped harden these relationships with Manitoba.

So here, that brings us to today. We have got these projects that are proceeding at rapid-fire progression. I mean, like I said, the Americans had spent \$130 million US on these projects. We had a hardened relationship that we had to rebuild with the Americans. We had to rebuild trust. We had to rebuild a relationship with them so that they could even—after all of Gary Doer and the NDP's failed diplomacy, we were lucky that they even answered the call when Manitoba phoned.

But, thanks to our government and our negotiations and our diplomacy, we are back in talks with the Americans so that we can make sure that Manitoba best interests are served when it comes to these critical negotiations.

And we do know that the stopping of aquatic invasive species is absolutely integral to the protection of our waterways, and that is why we have a full strategy to try to prevent the spread of zebra mussels. But as the member opposite had clearly noted in his earlier assertions, that they had let the

aquatic invasive species known as zebra mussels into the water, they had done nothing.

According to Eva Pip—and I know member opposite, he quite likes Eva Pip and he quotes her frequently. But she had said in 2014 that the NDP government was just not listening and that they were not acting fast enough, and she was sounding the alarm bells and she wasn't able to get the attention of members opposite.

And then, of course, when aquatic invasive species came in there was a decision to dump about \$500,000 worth of potash on the beach or in the waters, to no avail. And that wasn't very helpful at all and it didn't do anything to stop the spread of aquatic zebra—invasive species by the name of zebra mussels.

* (11:30)

And so then, once Lake Winnipeg was completely infested—and we're seeing the signs of that on the beaches today, and it's absolutely heartbreaking—but what's even really, really gut-wrenching is to read back on some of those quotes with former environment minister, Gord Mackintosh, saying, well, we have 100,000 other lakes in this province; let's not fuss about a lost cause called Lake Winnipeg and let's focus on these other 100,000 lakes. That was their strategy when it came to protecting the water in Manitoba.

And we know that many, many international bodies such as Sea-Watch and others had said, you know what? Don't even take fish from these lakes under the NDP. They almost brought the collapse of the entire commercial fishery because there was a warning to not—for consumers around the world, not to take fish from Manitoba because the unsustainable and impractical ideology and methodology of members opposite when it came to managing our fisheries. They allowed Lake Winnipeg to become the most-threatened lake in the world in 2014, according to another, very credible international body.

And we know that Lake Winnipeg is the jewel of this province. We are certainly taking a different approach. I'm not going to ever say, well, you know, Lake Winnipeg is a lost cause, like Gord Mackintosh had, but we have 100,000 other lakes in this province to celebrate, so let's just forget about that one. That is not the approach of this government. We are taking a stand for Lake Winnipeg. We're taking a stand

against the introduction of invasive species into our aquatic waterways. We are continuing to work with the Americans to ensure that Manitoba waters are continually protected. We are also working with them on nutrient targets and ensuring that the water that's coming from America has got some reduced phosphorus, reduced nitrogen and certainly, we know that they can contribute to the cleanup of our lake.

We do know that over half of our water and over half of our nutrients come from outside of Manitoba boundaries. But we have to play a leadership role here in the province, in terms of showing our initiatives to clean up the lake, to protect our waterways and that's exactly what we're doing. So then we can go to say to other jurisdictions, whether it's Saskatchewan or Alberta or Ontario, who's sending their water our way, or south of the border. And we know after years of failed diplomacy and these hard-earned negotiations.

And I also would like to table another CBC doc-news story for the member's reading pleasure about the angry rhetoric and the dispute on the Devils Lake, just so he can have a little bit of context, so he knows exactly where it is that we're coming from. But we've moved beyond that. And I'm happy to share with the House today that we've moved beyond the angry rhetoric of the Gary Doer days; we've moved beyond the angry rhetoric of the NDP and moved into a more collaborative approach with the Americans on reducing their nutrient loads in their waterways; at certainly getting the best deal for Manitobans when it comes to the protection of these waters.

We are working hard to ensure that Manitoba waters are protected from invasive species. We're working to reduce the algal blooms by working on nutrient reductions here in the province. Playing a leadership role with our waters, right here in Manitoba, and then playing a leadership role and encouraging all of our partners in this wonderful watershed to join hands with us, stand shoulder to shoulder and protect Manitoba waterways.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I am pleased to get up and to give my complete and utter support to my friend from Wolseley's very important resolution before us. This is a matter of incredible concern to Manitobans in the present, Manitobans in the future and the reality is, is that the resolution itself is very proactive. It seeks to encourage the provincial government to work with the federal

government to refer the matter of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project to the International Joint Commission. It doesn't get into partisan rhetoric, like we just heard from the minister. But, in fact, it puts forward a very important suggestion and recommendation about how we can address these important international questions now and into the future.

And so I have great respect for the member from Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer). I have to say, while I have the chance, that we're going to miss him greatly now that he's said that he won't be staying—running in the next election, and we'll miss in particular, his voice on these very critical questions that would be otherwise ignored by the government were it not for his tenacious advocacy on behalf of these issues and these questions.

However, I have to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I couldn't be more disappointed with the Minister of Sustainable Development's (Ms. Squires) response to the resolution. Frankly, I quite like the minister. I have great respect for her. I think she has showed great courage during her short time in the House—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —and I would go so far as to say that she's one of the better ministers, which may not be saying much but is—and nevertheless I do want to compliment her for what I think is often a progressive view of things. And then each and every time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she disappoints me because she goes right into the hyper-partisan rhetoric that has really very little place in the House when we're really talking about critically important issues.

On that, in her 10 minutes, she spent nine and a half minutes talking about the NDP and the—and she bullies the NDP and harps on the NDP. And she spent all of 30 seconds talking, vaguely—and I must say, very vaguely—about the actions that she's taken as a minister of the Crown to address these questions.

And so I invite her to aim higher and do better and take these issues seriously and not simply resort to the same old hyperpartisan questions and actions that we've seen from this government since they arrived in this House in April 2016. Had she said these are the actions we've taken to date, had she tabled any documents or evidence to support the actions that they've taken to date, had she shown

anything in a budget about any investments that she's made and the government has made to address these questions, then we'd have the basis for a good and solid and responsible debate in this House. But instead, she resorted to the same tactics that I hear from the members opposite as they heckle away on issues that we all as elected members of this House need to be concerned with—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —and be proactive on.

The member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), as is usual, sits there making cheap and idle heckles at us when all's we're—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I'm hearing a lot of heckling here, and it's—we have to have some decorum in this Chamber here. It's getting quite embarrassing, actually, to listen to all the heckling that's going on. So let's have some respect here.

Mr. Allum: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you so much for intervening.

Worse, I think, when I think about the minister's reaction to the resolution, is that she didn't actually address the resolved part of it which simply asks the provincial government to protect Manitoba waters by immediately requesting the federal government of Canada to initiate a formal referral to the Red River Valley Water Supply Project to the International Joint Commission. She didn't care to comment on that particular—the most important part of it: why not or why she would? In fact, she simply ignored it by, as I said earlier and several times already, resorting to the kind of hyperbole that really—she's a better member than that and she's a better minister than that. And I would expect her to do better in future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to wind up my comments now by saying we on this side of the House, I believe our friends in the Liberal Party, independents, support this resolution. Let's all stand together. Let's stand for Manitoba waterways, for the Manitoba environment. And let's stand as Canadians to address these issues so that there is a real future for all of our children and grandchildren.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any others?

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): I would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Anishinabe, the Cree, Oji-Cree, the Dakota, the Dene people, and the homeland of the Metis nation.

* (11:40)

In discussing this resolution there are a number of important facts that need to be put on the record. We need to acknowledge that Manitoba has robust environmental protection laws that are amongst the best in Canada. As a government, we are practical environmentalists. We are proud to put forward science-based initiatives in which Manitobans have had the opportunity to provide input.

Members here may not realize, but Manitoba receives 70 per cent of its water from upstream waterways. The Saskatchewan River brings water from Rocky Mountains to our province.

The Red River drainage basin sees water from both North Dakota and Minnesota enter our province. Together, these transboundary drainage basins have a combined drainage area of over 623,000 square miles. This large transboundary drainage area in itself makes scientifically-based water management decisions critical to protecting both water quality and quantity in Manitoba.

Over the last few years, under the NDP watch water quality has been an increasing concern for residents of Manitoba and, in particular, the residents of Selkirk, St. Andrews, St. Clements, Gimli and Grand Beach. Residents living in these drainage basins and along the Assiniboine, the Red, the Saskatchewan and Lake Winnipeg are concerned because they know these drainage basins are affected by both natural and human substances.

The Red River supplies drinking water as well as water for industrial and agricultural activities to municipalities in southern Manitoba, Minnesota and North Dakota. Both rural and urban human activities have resulted in higher than normal concentrations of nutrients, pesticides, herbicides, medications, fecal material and biota in our waters.

These are—these all contribute to negative consequences of water quality and ecosystems. Dischargeable treated and untreated municipal sewage from non-compliant, out-dated treatment plants remains a significant contributing factor to poor water quality.

Our government has proposed amendments to The Water Protection Act to provide a means for water management groups and governments in Manitoba and other jurisdictions that share a transboundary river basin with Manitoba to measure water quality and track progress on reducing nutrient levels in water bodies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before proceeding any further with discussion on proposals from the members opposite, we need to acknowledge the Auditor General's report on the previous government's environmental protection successes. The NDP had years to take action. However, their legacy is clear. They mismanaged watersheds. They ignored the concerns of scientists and Manitobans. For years Manitobans watched the decay under the NDP, who sat on their hands as invasive species entered Manitoba with no prevention, no detection and no treatment plans. Manitobans watched, year after year as our water quality decreased with decisions being made based on political whims and not science.

The Auditor General's review is quick to point out the lack of meaningful targets, the lack of scientific data being used to support major decisions when the environment was concerned. The previous government is famous for using environmental issues as political tools to purposely mislead Manitobans into believing they actually cared about our province.

They were superficial in all their actions, setting targets that were unrealistic and unattainable. They were too arrogant to listen, too arrogant to listen to the concerns of Manitobans, too self-involved to actually listen to the recommendations of our scientists.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is our government that now needs to do the hard work necessary to restore the confidence of scientists, Manitobans and industry experts in our environmental stewardship legislation programs and our sustainable development ministry, and this confidence-building effort extends to every aspect of government, from Education, Child and Family Finance, Agriculture, Crown Services, Municipal Relations, Justice, Health, the list goes on and on.

After 17 years Manitobans lost their confidence in the government's ability to make logical, common-sense decisions. Restoring confidence is not an easy task after a decade of debt, decay and decline where all Manitobans lost their faith and confidence in the government's ability to manage the affairs of the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, good governments make the difficult decisions necessary to ensure the protection of sustainability, quality service for the

citizens. These decisions need to include detailed review of the science prior to making decisions regarding the environment.

Our government is working to restore the confidence to Manitobans in our environmental stewardship legislation and programs. We recognize that river basins such as the Red and Souris rivers are shared with our neighbours in the United States, and we remain committed to collectively managing these waters to the benefit of the basin as a whole.

Manitoba acknowledges the importance of water management projects to mitigate flooding and provide drinking water and irrigation for the residents of North Dakota. In the event that proposed interbasin water transfer projects such as the Northwest Area Water Supply project and the Red River Valley supply project are permitted to proceed by US authorities, it has been our position that the projects must be implemented in a way that addresses the potential risks and consequences of the transfer of aquatic invasive species into Canadian aquatic environments, something the opposition never addressed when they were in power and had the opportunity.

The Sustainable Watersheds Act is taking significant steps to ensure our province has the most comprehensive water management system in all of Canada. We are creating an integrated and strengthened watershed planning process through an enhanced suite of complementary measures. We will build a solid framework for environmentally and economically sound decision making. This is completely opposite to the political-motivated decisions of the previous government. This is a key aspect of making Manitoba Canada's most improved province and will help rebuild Manitobans' confidence in the government as the caretaker of the province.

Through The Sustainable Watersheds Act, we are fulfilling our election commitments to implement watershed-based planning for water resource management and to implement a province-wide program based on the Alternative Land Use Services model for ecological goods and services. Amendments to The Conservation Districts Act will recognize the importance of watershed-based planning. Conservation districts will be renamed watershed districts. And over time, their boundaries will be updated to reflect actual watersheds for more holistic water management. We will also empower watershed districts to have more meaningful

engagement with indigenous communities and organizations outside their boundaries to implement their watershed management plans. These changes will also provide additional administrative flexibility to individual districts, thereby eliminating red tape.

We believe in integrated watershed management planning and value the input of watershed residents, government and other stakeholders working together to create long-term management plans for the land, water and related resources in the watershed basin. That is why our government is proud to support the work of groups that work to achieve common goals for water protection and management, groups such as the Red River Basin Commission and the Assiniboine River Basin Initiative.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in considering this resolution, we need to ask ourselves, is this an important issue for all Manitobans? The answer to this is yes. Water quality affects all Manitobans. We cannot live without quality water. However, I, for one, have difficulty in taking seriously someone whose government had 17 years to take concrete action on environmental issues but preferred to use that time to posture for political purposes and was ineffective on moving through on any important environmental issues. In fact, this member and his party stand in the House daily and do everything they can to sideline environmental bills and resolutions aimed at addressing the very concerns he proposes to hold important. Members in this House and all Manitobans need to know that these transboundary water projects have been in the works for the entire time the opposition was in power. And yet the NDP made no progress in addressing these concerns.

I will stand and follow the lead of our Minister of Sustainable Development (Ms. Squires) whose department has made more progress in protecting the environment since coming into power than the NDP did in 17 years.

Miigwech and thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that the government seems to have created considerable confusion with the two speakers who have been up on this resolution. The first speaker, the minister, said that she opposes any transfer of water. The second speaker says that he supports transfer of water but with some fashion that the water is treated or dealt with so that there's no organisms transferred. But the second speaker, the MLA for Selkirk, doesn't give us any details of how he proposes to do that, what research has been done

to show that that is safe and would protect against the transfer of these 26 and possibly more organisms from the Missouri basin into the Red River basin.

* (11:50)

Let me back up for a moment. I'm, you know, concerned that the Conservative Pallister government is not even looking, apparently, at a referral to the International Joint Commission. I mean, the International Joint Commission is a fair body which deals with these sorts of issues and deals with them well. The International Joint Commission could look at what the MLA for Selkirk is proposing, that the water be treated, and make sure that whatever approach is taken would actually meet the test that it's effective.

And one has to remember that—when you're talking as has been talked before about things like zebra mussels, that they can be very prolific. So you don't have to have much transfer in order to get a significant impact from a species coming from another watershed.

So there is much to do, clearly, in this area. We are at an important time in terms of decision making with the project of—the Red River Water Supply Project having been proceeding—continue to make progress even as both NDP governments and Conservative governments have been in government in this province. We would have benefited, quite frankly, from up-to-date information on precisely what's happening. Sadly, the government's web page provides information, but it is—has missing gaps and it is not up to date. And perhaps the minister and her government could start by making sure it is fully up to date with whatever is happening.

Would have been nice if the minister had provided a little bit more information about exactly what the status of discussions with North Dakota are at the moment. It's to be noted that the paper that the minister provided, this article, talked about how there's actually a suggestion for Manitoba and Canada to participate in some of the assessment of their treatment approaches being looked at in the United States. I—we have no idea whether this government is doing any of that.

And, indeed, it's not clear from the question that I asked the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), you know? Is the research been done? I was actually trying to ask from the point of view of Manitoba. Has Manitoba made sure that the research is done on our side so that we actually are absolutely sure that

these 26 organisms or species are not present in, for instance, the Red River Valley? Clearly, it would be very important to have the ongoing research in terms of the water in the Red River Valley so that it would be possible to detect changes should they occur and be in a position to mitigate problems if they do arise. Certainly, we would hope that there would be effective and ongoing research. But the minister didn't talk about that at all, so we are left with more uncertainty rather than parity in terms of precisely what's happening.

Clearly, we need—and it seems to be agreed around this Chamber—that we must protect our water and our waterways. We need a healthy environment. We want to make sure that the water quality in the Red River and in the—at Lake Winnipeg doesn't deteriorate. We want to make sure that whether our concerns with regard to issues of dissolved solids—salts, suspended sediments, nutrients, trace elements, pesticides and biota who—which may be transferred, that we are actually very knowledgeable about what is going on, that we have the research base on an ongoing basis and that we are fully up to date, as I have said, in terms of the information which has been provided, whether it be on government websites or from the minister herself.

It would have been useful if the minister spent a little bit less time trying to blame others for past problems and a little more time talking about where we are and what the minister's plans are. I was left with a lot of uncertainty about what the minister's plans are moving forward, and that certainly would have been useful and helpful if the minister had spent more time talking about this.

The question of a referral to the International Joint Commission on the Red River water supply project was not really addressed by the minister, whether in fact the government has considered this, what is the status in relation to previous referrals to the International Joint Commission on this issue, what is the option now, whether we use it or we don't. It would appear to be a desirable option to have helping us people with the wisdom and the expertise and the background on the International Joint Commission helping us reach a—the best possible situation and future for Manitoba.

The—there are clearly, as we know, a number of organisms—it's said there are 26; it is likely that there are more than that that we are uncertain about, particularly when we start talking about very small organisms. With the, you know, the current research

approaches to detecting species, we now have, as an example, DNA approaches which are detecting a lot more species than previous approaches. So far as I know, that sort of DNA analysis of species present has not been done for either the Missouri River or the Red River. Certainly, we would want to have that done in the Red River. Why is that? Why hasn't that research been done? Why is this government standing up and blaming everybody else when there's clearly a need for this very important research because using DNA assessments, you can detect very small quantities of organisms and you can often detect a lot more organisms than were present before.

So it's a considerably refined approach under many circumstances for detecting organisms—presence of organisms, what is there, but from what we know, the background work in this regard has not been done for the Red River.

And I would urge the minister to look at this area as quickly as possible and make sure that the research is being done because the—what was done 10 years ago is not up to date, and we need to make

sure that we actually have a province which is up to date.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Miigwech.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I'd like to put a few words on the record regarding the resolution from the member from Wolseley.

Manitobans are practical—are environmentalists, and we've seen that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And with 70 per cent of its water from upstream jurisdictions, transboundary water management is critical to protecting water quality and water quantity in our great province. These—or protections encompass trans—international and interprovincial boundaries. Saskatchewan River—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Swan River will have 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

Thursday, May 10, 2018

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