

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, August 29, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to proceed directly to Bill 210.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to proceed directly to Bill 210? *[Agreed]*

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

Mr. Speaker: So I'll now call Bill 210, The Seniors' Rights Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight), who has one minute remaining.

Bill 210—The Seniors' Rights Act

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied. The debate is open.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to The Seniors' Rights Act today, a bill brought forward by the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen), and I see it's started quite a controversy already, but I think it's a— I think it's indeed an honour for me to be able to get up, even though it is a little ironic, a bit of an honour for me to get up to speak on a senior rights bill. We do demand our rights, and I'm certainly pleased to be able to rise today and speak to this bill.

You know, all comedy aside, there are some serious issues that this bill tries to address, and the seniors of this province are the people that built this province. They're the ones that made this province what it is today. They deserve every bit of respect they should receive.

And there's a number of things that are problems now. I was in the first wave of the baby boomers, and now all the baby boomers, with the exception of a few of us, are retiring. And looking at—you know, obviously, there's many different levels of seniors. There's some like myself that are still working hard, doing the people's work for the good people of Manitoba; there are some that are living totally independent; there are some that need limited assistance; and there are some that need constant care. They were the caregivers in their communities for many years, now they're the ones that require care, moving forward. Too many of them are on fixed incomes and can't hardly even afford to buy food at times, and that's a sad state of affairs.

We see a number of places where seniors certainly could be assisted and helped in this province, and this bill does address many of those issues. You know, there's so many things that come into play on seniors' care, but we have a lot of seniors in this province, a lot of people that are panelled for personal-care homes and are in hospitals waiting for personal-care beds. And, in some cases, we have personal-care beds that aren't being used.

And my own hometown is one of—is a good example. Firstly, we do have a new personal-care home there, about five years ago. The old personal-care home was 125 beds and with new one the numbers were dropped to 100 beds. And the rationale was that there would be more assisted living provided in our community. The actuality is, there were eight or nine more assisted-living units put in place, and it's totally inadequate; it's not enough. The personal-care home has been running at about 90 per cent occupancy for over six months, and the reason given is a shortage of nursing. And so people that should possibly be in the personal-care home are backed up into the hospital at a far higher cost per day. Number one, you want to keep seniors—give them every opportunity to stay in their own homes, in their own communities, for as long as they

possibly can. And if they need some assistances, some home care to remain there, it's still the best scenario for those seniors.

Once they move beyond home care, when they need more serious housing, serious care, then they—the costs, of course, escalate. And when they're in hospitals, that's the highest cost; when they're in the personal-care homes, second highest cost; and thirdly to that would be some home care in their own homes or assisted living.

There's many things that seniors struggle with, not the least of which would be the increase in the PST that has just been put in place, but add on to that the increase in hydro rates and you have many, many seniors in this province that are definitely fixed incomes. All they've got is their old-age pension, possibly with a supplement, and their—whatever they may have accrued for Canada Pension Plan, which is a fairly a low amount of money to try and make ends meet on.

* (10:10)

One of the ways that seniors—and I was recently contacted by a senior lady in Austin who requires a drug that—for her health care, that—she lives in her own home, but requires a drug that costs \$1,500 a month. If she was in a personal-care home, that drug would be covered. But because she's in her own home, her drug is not covered; it's not the list of drugs that are—is covered. She can't afford it. But she needs it for her health conditions.

The other place along that same line of reasoning like—people could be helped considerably would be on the Pharmacare deductibles. Their—the rates on the Pharmacare deductibles for people on low incomes—and I'm talking incomes that are \$15,000 a year, possibly. I know my mother is 96 years old; she is in a personal-care home. But I know what her incomes are and they're not that 'sig'—that high. It's—she, with her CPP and her old-age and supplement, is probably in the neighbourhood of 15 or 16 thousand dollars a year. And if they have—if these seniors have no other source of income, that certainly does limit their abilities.

You know, I have no—my mother has been in a personal-care home for—as I said she's 96 years old—she's been there for about four years. And I give great credit to the staff that work there. They're usually short-staffed, they're—but they're friendly, they're outgoing, they work hard and they care about the people that work there, and I give them all the

credit in the world for a very difficult job and a job that they do well.

It still is a little upsetting that they are just about always short-staffed. And it's difficult for not only the workers in that personal-care home but also for the residents of that personal-care home.

You know, at any time in this province there are probably close to 500 seniors that are panelled, waiting to get into a personal-care home, and it may be a higher number than that—and roughly a quarter of that number are in hospitals and shouldn't be, they should be in personal-care homes. And whenever possible, they should be in personal-care homes in their own community.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency—another interesting facet in my constituency is I have the Sandy Bay First Nation—it's one the larger First Nations, roughly 5,000 people, I think, a few more than that—and they started a personal-care home there probably, oh, five, six, seven years ago. It's never been finished. And there was some opportunities there to create some employment in the community with the care but, more importantly, to give those seniors in that community a residence for their senior years and allow them to remain in their community with their culture and be close to their families and relatives.

I know my time grows short, but I would certainly urge every member of this House to support this bill. Seniors like myself, it's very important to us. Thank you.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): I—it is a privilege as always to be able to stand up in this Chamber and debate a variety of topics, and today having before us this seniors' bill, a Seniors' Rights Act, it brings to mind many different things, including some of the comments from the previous speaker, the member opposite, where I—it makes me think about track records. It makes me think about what has actually been done.

I would like to sort of point out to the member opposite, he referenced in his closing remarks the Sandy Bay First Nation and the lack of work and progress on that particular personal-care home. I believe if we are all familiar with the Constitution of this country, that would be under federal jurisdiction.

So while members of this Chamber and of this Legislature would definitely have a vested interest in making sure that our First Peoples were provided—especially elders—were provided 'appro'—culturally

appropriate and medically and health-based care that was to their best interests—we would all want that. Unfortunately, that is something that is in the hands of their federal cousins, so, in that particular case, I would say he should best address that issue with the appropriate level of government there and also, again, look at the track record that has existed with that 'partic'—with this particular federal government as it relates to our First Peoples.

Coming back to the provincial side of things, though—and again, when I think about track records—again, while the member opposite has referred to his own age and may—and his role in this debate, I think one thing that is missing from the dialogue there was that he wasn't around in this 'legisla'—in this particular building and making policy at a time when his party did form government. And maybe that there's a history lesson missing there because when I think about the track record that the Conservatives had, it—which included privatizing home care, cutting home-care services and introducing home-care user fees—they were all initiatives that were experimented with during the '90s, and, as we know, that that's not the way we look after our seniors. Again, even more recently, member from Charleswood in Estimates, in 2001, called for the de-bedding of our health-care system, so I think maybe he does require a wee bit of a history lesson there.

In terms of our own work with seniors, I think we've got a pretty substantial track record where we have moved forward on a lot of things. But as we all know, especially with the baby boomers—that first wave of the baby boomers coming into being seniors—we are going to have to do a lot more work, and I think that's a given.

And I think that we've been doing very well, and the goal will now be in these tight financial times to stay ahead of the curve. And when I think about things like our Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative where, for example, we have 70 communities registered and we have things like a 24-7 seniors' abuse line offered through the Klinik Community Health Centre; we've got a provincial elder abuse prevention strategy; we've created the Manitoba Council on Aging; and one that I know that has been very popular within my own neighbourhood, as well, with family members, is the SafetyAid program.

So I think it's important to note that this government has been providing national leadership in promoting supportive environments for older adults through things like the Age-Friendly and

Healthy Aging Strategy. And one of the other things is—that not only has, from the period from 2006 to 2026—as I've mentioned, we've got this growing wave—we're going to have a senior population projected to grow by 43 per cent, which means from 14 to 20 per cent of our total population. And we're really lucky that, at this point, 93 per cent of our seniors live in the community, and that's a really important thing. In fact, one of the things that was really interesting, a few years ago, I was able to attend something through the all care seniors' centres where they had a celebration of the blue zones. And blue zones are areas where we have high concentrations of 'centarians', and Manitoba does very well with that. We have about half a dozen 'centarians' that were celebrated in my neighbourhood alone, all within about a two-block radius, interestingly enough, from my office.

And that is a really important thing to know—the fact that life expectancy is changing and with that increase in life expectancy comes a lot more complexities in our lives, multiple medical needs, those kinds of things. And this is where the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative really does come into play, as well as the kinds of supports that we've put it in other areas, whether that's been engaging the provincial departments in other levels of governments and business communities to support community efforts that will 'hel'—enhance health independence and well-being of all Manitoba seniors, or if it's things like, again, a long-term care strategy like the Aging in Place initiative which supports older adults to age in place by providing supports and housing options through the housing continuum, from independent living to a personal-care home. And that is the really important aspect of this, and I know members of my own family have been dealing with this issue where it's about choice as one's health changes and evolves.

And so whether it is something that comes about as a result of an accident that is more likely to happen as one ages and hence the need for the SafetyAid program and, again, where many people have found that that's been a wonderful preventative tool, by having that kind of preventative tool we support seniors in a way that might delay the transition into a personal-care home. Because not having that accident means not having to seek medical care, not having to recover and remaining healthy. That remaining healthy and remaining independent can literally add years to someone's life. And so these kinds of supports, as well as putting in

supportive housing units, the kinds of investments—again, when we see how we've invested in nursing homes and other care for seniors, we've added over 1,000 personal-care home and supportive housing beds across Manitoba since 1999. Again, that's a lot, but we all know that it's not enough.

* (10:20)

We need to keep doing more, but that's the thing, is we will continue to do more, whether it's with that, whether it's with RentAid to, again, help people remain in their homes, as their income might remain fixed but costs in our society rise. And so, at one point, that maximum benefit was for \$200 per month for seniors, families with children and persons with disabilities not on employment income assistance. But Budget 2013 increased that by \$240 a year for every recipient—again, trying to adjust to those needs. And I think that it's very important that we have been actually making progress and continuing investments, because it is about how we invest in people that makes the ultimate difference.

And I do find it rather interesting that, again, members opposite, while talking about a senior's—seniors' rights, at the same time, are willing to, you know, propose budget cuts of \$500 million that would have a significant impact on the ability of Manitoba's older adults to live healthy and fulfilling lives. So I'm not sure how you can talk about supporting their rights while undermining the very funding that would provide them with the supports, be they economic, housing or health supports, that they need to truly have those rights. It's a little bit contradictory. One has to make investments in people to actually do these things.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, there's so much here that could be said. I think the fact that we have, again, invested in people, whether, again, it's also through the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit, which is, again, something that I know has been used a great deal within my own neighbourhood, as one partner will often end up looking after another in their senior years. It's those kinds of investments. And those kinds of investments do require that we keep putting actual money into these things. And when you propose massive cuts, it is hard to do this. I think of a rather unstable Jenga game, here, where we've got members opposite proposing that we keep building things up, while, simultaneously, through budget cuts, proposing to pull things out from underneath. And as we all know, as any of us who have kids, that have sat down and spent many an hour with a game

like Jenga, eventually, something's got to give. And I would argue that with half a billion dollars in cuts proposed, that would be a huge, huge problem, to keep things sustained for our elders.

And that's—to bring me back to the first point, to look at the notion of the term elders. That's the other thing. This is not about—the term is seniors, and, yes, that's a common term. But I think one does have to go back to traditional teachings of our First Peoples and recognize that it is the elders in our community, and that in honouring our elders, we recognize their experience, we recognize what they have given to the community and that we honour them. And we honour them by providing those supports and we honour them by keeping these programs going and growing, and that we—it would be hugely disrespectful to cut those kinds of supports. It would be disrespectful to them to make the kind of budgetary cuts that are being proposed by members opposite because it would limit the ability, and, in fact, very much undermine the ability to show them the respect that they truly deserve by the kinds of programs that I said we've got in place and that we keep growing.

So I'd like to thank, you know, the member for bringing this forward and giving us the opportunity to continue debate on it. And I leave the floor open now for any of my other colleagues to add their words to the record. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I'm indeed pleased to rise to speak to Bill 210, The Seniors' Rights Act, and a very interesting bill that attempts to give seniors in this province rights to the programs, services and supports they need in order to live their lives with dignity.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, members, other side, have spoken and, you know, blamed the federal government and not taken any responsibility for their own actions. And my experience with the health-care system and personal-care homes is in the last—just few years, and I do believe that is when this NDP government was in power, and it is their impact that I have seen on those areas. Indeed, the staff are tremendous. They do a tremendous job with resources that are diminishing, and they do the best they can in those areas, but even they are concerned about the health-care system and what they see happening in it.

It is—in our health-care system and personal-care homes, dignity is one of the first things that

disappears. The dignity of the individuals that are in there is something that we often see vanish.

And, indeed, Mr. Speaker, the impact of this government's economic policies on seniors is becoming worse and worse. We see that, you know, there is the inflation rate among the highest in Canada, the highest in Canada, 3 per cent, and the wage disparity that we're seeing in Manitoba, the earning disparity that we're seeing here, and that is for people that are working and preparing for their retirement.

In fact, we see in a recent study that 46 per cent of people are now not confident that their finances will carry them through their retirement, and that's up from 20 per cent just a few years ago. And people are delaying their retirements because they need to earn more income, they feel, to take them through, because the government safety net from this government is not there. They're delaying their retirement, they're taking part-time jobs, they're having to sell off collectibles, antiques, even their homes, Mr. Speaker, and rent out parts of their homes in order to make sure that they can make it through, because they know that they can't depend on governments necessarily and they are seeing it ever more difficult to deal with.

So, you know, in seeing someone go through the health-care system into the personal-care home very close and near and dear to me, Mr. Speaker, there is a serious gap there. There is a time in individuals' lives when they are able to live on their own with supports. But usually what happens is that there is something that occurs to trigger a reliance, a need for reliance on someone else, and it may be a serious injury, it may be a fall, broken bones or pelvis, and that requires the need for assistance.

And there is a gap there. When you apply for that type of assistance, it takes a long time, and if the family is not able to pitch in and do the work in that two weeks to a month to several months, then the individual has to lie in the hospital. And we all know that if you're lying in the hospital and not able to get up, at particular ages you are susceptible to pneumonia and double pneumonia that—things of that nature that—very deteriorating and often end sadly. So there is this gap that I've seen in our health-care system, and, fortunate for our family, we had the resources that we had either the time to put into care or else we could afford to hire people that would come in and enable the loved one to live in her own

space until such time as a personal-care home bed became available.

And, again, that gap there, Mr. Speaker, and waiting to be panelled and going through that process and then waiting for an appropriate bed to come open is upwards of a year, is what we experienced, eight months to a year. And if you don't miss the—if you miss the panelling this week, you might have to wait another month, and in that month a lot of things can happen. There can be a lot of changes to the health of that individual. And, obviously, if you are working and you use your holidays to care for that individual, you likely have two to three weeks to do so and then you have to get back to work, and then what happens to that loved one? How does the care carry on?

So those issues, Mr. Speaker, are very serious and are the results of this government not paying attention to it. We then see, obviously, there's lots of opportunity there. You hear stories of elder abuse and tempers get frayed, things happen, certainly not in our situation, but people are pressured and they are pressured to the max of their finances and their time, and very difficult to make some decisions.

*(10:30)

Obviously, we've seen this government's impact on sales tax, Mr. Speaker, broadening the sales tax last year and then increasing the sales tax this year, and that has a definite impact on seniors' ability to live with dignity, because what they see is their disposable income diminishing. There's been promises made by this government to reduce taxes for seniors and that has not happened. They don't—they said it's going to happen and then, takes a certain period of time and they're waiting and they're waiting and waiting, and promises broken time and again.

So what we're seeing is that the buying power of seniors is diminishing because they may or may not have investments, and if they are invested, obviously the interest rate is very low right now, return on investments is low—does not keep up with inflation. And then we see the government taking away their income through these sales tax increases so that they have to make very difficult choices. They now have to pay tax on any insurance they have and they've increased that again this year. If they are able to drive a vehicle, the registration fees have gone up considerably. So, Mr. Speaker, we see this government taking money away from some of the

people that need it the most, and that is very discouraging to see.

So, I encourage the government to look at this particular bill and to work on seniors' rights. We know that they have done damage to seniors in Manitoba and they continue to do damage with their misguided economic policies that affect not only those on low income but also seniors on their fixed income. They—the impact on seniors, I think, Mr. Speaker, is something that this government really needs to look at carefully and, you know, they—these are some of the most vulnerable people in Manitoba that are being ignored by this government and they are a growing cohort. As we see the boomers move forward into retirement and growing that area of seniors, then that is going to have an impact not only on our health-care system but on government resources. And those are things that this government needs to pay attention to—all governments need to pay attention to—and take responsibility for their own actions.

So the dignity, as I mentioned, is a critical part of this and we want to make sure that seniors are able to live with dignity, that they're able to take care of themselves as long as they can, in their own homes if they wish or if they're able to, that there are sufficient supports in place to be able to do that. And families, of course, play a big part in that role. But, as I said, there is a gap there, Mr. Speaker, when families are not able to or when families have run out of vacation time in order to care for that loved one in their own home or in their apartment so that they need something in there. If you cannot afford to hire private care to come in and look after that individual, then what is that individual supposed to do?

I have had calls from constituents that had surgical procedures, and one of them had cataracts removed and had injured her arm and was released from hospital and told, you have to put these drops in, Mr. Speaker, or, you know, the surgery won't work. Well, she was not able to lift her arm to put the drops in and she was fearful of losing her sight because she could not afford care. The hospital had released her. They knew this procedure was taking place; it was all scheduled. Certainly, some scheduling should've happened to make sure that that 'injurvidual' was cared fair. She had no loved ones close by to help her, so it was a very dangerous situation in her regard.

So there is this gap, and I think that this government does need to pay attention to it, and,

indeed, I will allow them to speak to this. I'm sure they have many words that they want to put on the record here. So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity this morning to speak to the legislation—the proposed legislation, The Seniors' Rights Act. And, of course, I'm pleased to be able to speak after the MLA for Kirkfield Park spoke so eloquently about our government and the contributions that we have made to seniors in this province.

I'm proud to be part of a government that understands how important seniors are to our communities and to our province. And we know that our seniors deserve to live in dignity and we know that our seniors deserve to live independently in their homes as long as they can. And we have done a lot of work in this province, in regards to providing programs and services to seniors, because we know that they have spent many years contributing to our society, and we hold our seniors in this province, Mr. Speaker, in high regard. And I wanted to just comment, of course, at the very beginning, about all of the work that we have done in providing PCH and support of housing beds for seniors. And it's not just for seniors, it's for seniors and their families, because we have many families in our society, young people and—that have elderly parents, because seniors are now living longer, who are in a situation where they're taking care of children and they're also taking care of elderly parents.

So it really isn't just a senior issue, it's really a family issue for many, many people, and providing an—home care to our seniors and expanding that home care is very, very important. And, of course, we know what happened in the '90s with home care. There was an experiment, of course, to see whether or not home care should be privatized, and I'm glad, Mr. Speaker, that our government fought that privatization of home care because that is really what keeps our seniors in their homes living independently, and it is an honour to be part of a government that understands that that is a right that seniors deserve.

Yesterday, in my office, I was signing my mail and I sent certificates out to people in my riding who are celebrating birthdays. And I actually signed a certificate for a woman who was turning 99, and I have noticed over the last 10 years or so that I am signing more and more of these all the time. And it really, I believe, is remarkable, the number of elderly

seniors that are living in our society that are living independently, and we, of course, want to see more and more of that happening and we want to make sure that we can provide those services to them.

Of course, I want to congratulate our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) in regards to all of the work that she has done in regards to increasing personal-care home beds. You know, I remember the '90s, when Health capital projects were frozen. That is not what our Minister of Health—highly regarded in our caucus and highly regarded in the country, one of the longest serving Health ministers in Canada, she has worked hard on behalf of our seniors and I know all of our colleagues in this House highly regard her and thank her for that.

We now have over 360 new personal-care home beds under construction or in development. And I know she was just in Niverville about 10 days ago and she made a wonderful announcement in Niverville—it's an 80-bed personal-care home. It will replace 40—the old 42-bed facility, and there will also be an increase of 38 beds.

And I had the opportunity to just be in Niverville about three weeks ago. I was announcing new classrooms for the school there, and what a fabulous, fabulous community it is. And I was actually chatting with the mayor and teasing him that the community was growing and I asked him, was it specifically related to immigration, and he said, no, it wasn't. He said a lot of people were moving there from south St. Vital, and I teased him and said, oh, are you stealing my constituents? And he laughed and he said, no, he said, we just have a really growing community. And I have to admit it really is a beautiful, beautiful place to live.

I want to mention the importance of education in regards to our seniors. We have believed that education is part of our economic growth and we cannot have a good civil society unless we have an educated society. And we know we have taken a balanced approach in regards to providing increased education funding, and, at the same time, we have kept property taxes low, and we have one of the lowest property tax increases in Canada—and that's a Stats Canada statistic—and, if you compare it to other provinces, particularly Saskatchewan, their increase in property taxes is 27 per cent; Ontario 44 per cent; Alberta 56 per cent. We have kept our increase around 9.2 per cent, and this is important for seniors who want to stay in their homes.

* (10:40)

And we know what happened when the Filmon government—which the Leader of the Opposition says he's proud of—when he participated in that government, we know that there was a 70 per cent increase in taxes for the average \$200,000 home. Well, we have not done that.

We have provided significant education property tax relief to seniors, more than \$330 million annually, because we know how important it is if seniors and families can stay in their homes. And with our existing property tax credits, one in four Manitobans already pay no school tax. And we are going to continue to work on that because we know how important that is to seniors, remaining in their homes, remaining independent, remaining healthy and being able to participate and continue to participate in our society.

We also eliminated, Mr. Speaker, the education support levy on residential property, and that saves homeowners \$145 million a year. And many of those seniors—many of those homeowners are seniors.

And, of course, one of my favourite education tax reductions that we have made is the education property tax. We have increased that education property tax credit to \$700, and we have done that in a very difficult economic time. And I want to remind members opposite that when they were in government and our country went through a major recession and there was very, very difficult economic times, what they did is they cut back that education property tax credit from \$350 to \$250. And what we have done, Mr. Speaker, over the course of our mandate is we have increased that education property tax credit from \$250 to \$700. And that is, without question, a benefit to many, many seniors in our society. And we will continue to make progress on this.

We have made a significant announcement recently in our Throne Speech and we are—we've made that commitment to reduce property tax credits for seniors and we will be looking at that very seriously and moving forward with that commitment. We said we would do it over the course of our mandate and, of course, that is something, once again, it is tax mitigation and relief for seniors so that they can continue to stay in their homes and live independently and take advantage of the programs that we have implemented for seniors.

The member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady), she mentioned the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative, and we have over 70 communities that are involved in

those initiatives. And those are all important initiatives that we are providing, not just here in the— in urban Winnipeg but across Manitoba. And it's very, very important initiatives because we believe that seniors are critical to our communities and they have paid their way in society for many, many years and they deserve, Mr. Speaker, to live in dignity. We will continue to work with our senior populations because we know that they are an important part of our society.

So I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing this forward, The Seniors' Rights Act. I can ensure him that we believe on this side of the House that seniors do deserve rights and they do deserve to have programs and services that benefit them and we will continue to work with them. And I thank all of my members, who I know—

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

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to rise and put a few words on the record in support of Bill 210, The Seniors' Rights Act, brought forward by my colleague from Spruce Woods.

And before I get into my points, I would certainly encourage the minister who just—of Education, who just spoke on the education tax credits, to actually follow up and do what they promised during the election, actually move forward with the senior tax credits. I hope they actually do it, because when you look at the farmland tax credit that they promised to increase to 100 per cent in the same election promise and the budget results from the last Throne Speech, actually, they moved giant step backwards. They moved away from it. Because not only did they not move from 80 to 100 per cent as was the commitment but they actually put a cap on it of \$5,000, which is a major blow to many in the rural communities. So, certainly, I hope we don't see that type of commitment, and those type of results, go astray.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly encourage everyone in the House to support this Seniors' Rights Act. I think we're very aware that seniors are an important part of our community. We all owe them a great deal. They are the reason that we have a lot of the resources that we have in the community to work with, and they're very important to us all. Many of them are family members, of course, but—and as a new MLA, we deal fairly frequently with seniors' issues in the community, whether they be at the personal-care home level or whether they be with the

home-care issues, or whether it be other related things that come with the problems of aging.

And in my own community I have a very large number of people that are still living in their homes, as seniors, but it is increasingly difficult for them. And getting enough home care has certainly been a challenge. But the costs of living in their own home have been continuing to increase, one way or the other. And certainly the increase in the PST has been an additional burden for many of them. A lot of them really are getting by on very little. They have the old age income, old—and the supplement, and perhaps a little bit of other income, either from CPP or from investments. And as the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) indicated, investments aren't yielding very much in terms of returns these days, so that has put some additional stress as well. And we see that a lot of these people are actually struggling to get by, and their costs are increasing, in the health-care side of things as well. And they're trying to stay in their homes as long as they can, and we're certainly looking for ways to make that happen.

Mr. Speaker, we've actually been very active in our community, to look at developing an assisted-living model because we don't actually have one of any significant in the community. And there's obviously a gap there that would be of great value in the community, for that stage in life when people can live still somewhat independently but need services of varying degrees for a long period of time. And certainly we're seeing that period of time extended, actually. We see people living a lot longer and that's having a fairly significant impact on the demand for services.

But we have a couple of other things that often fly under the radar. In our own community, we have a large number of group homes; some of them, of course, were residents at Manitoba development centre for long periods of time, and now are out in the group homes in community. And that works well for a while, but then they, too, actually, become seniors, and there is really no plan in place to deal with them. Once they can no longer get along in the group homes, the only real option for them is personal-care homes.

And I know that we have had a few instances of people moving into the personal-care homes, and the staff, they are certainly feeling very uncomfortable with this, because they have no training in psychiatric nursing, and they have no resources in that area at all. And, in fact, what

resources they do have in that area, are actually more than consumed by the increase in problems around dementia and Alzheimer's with the aging population. And they're feeling like this is a problem that hasn't got a solution. And I know I've had some discussion with our regional health authority about this and they are, frankly, a little bit nervous about what they're going to do as this problem becomes more common, moving into the future, and it will.

We've done a little bit of a survey and in the next 10 years, just like everyone else, there is a bubble from the baby boom, and there'll be a large number moving into that stage in life, and really no plan in place to deal with it. So I would certainly encourage the government to have a long, hard look at this problem, and not just wait 'til it suddenly appears on their doorstep, because it is fairly close to their doorstep already.

And member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) also mentioned the problem with the Aboriginal aging population. We have three reserves right on the edge of town, and one of the them is fortunate enough to have a very small seniors' facility, and it is guaranteed full all the time because there's simply no other.

I know from the process of going door to door in those communities during the election process, that there are an awful lot of seniors trapped in their homes in those communities. They lose their mobility or they simply haven't got the resources to get out and around. And some of those communities have a habit of not building their houses in a very dense formation in the community. So that it's quite a distance for a lot of them, even to get down to the end of the road to pick up the mail, so to speak. So it's a challenge for them. And getting out to be involved in community activities and other seniors' activities, either on the reserve or off the reserve, is a real problem for them. And so that certainly hasn't been dealt with yet.

* (10:50)

We've had some discussions, actually, not too long ago, with one of the reserves to see if they had some interest in moving in that direction. They don't actually have any senior facility on that reserve and we're continuing to pursue that to see if that can't be an option in the future.

And we do have, as every community of any size has, is a personal-care home in the community. And, certainly, we've had a lot of issues. I've had

representation from families who have loved ones in there, you know, concerns about the level of service, concerns about the food, also concerns about when we had some health scares in there. We had flu epidemic go through and it was certainly a big issue and did actually result in some deaths and there was a period of time when we had isolation in some parts of the personal-care home to help deal with that, try and deal with them as they arose.

But the staffing issue—staff work extremely hard, but they always perennially seem to be short of people. And, in fact, in our own community, if we didn't have outside agency help coming in, I don't think we could continue to run that, and—which is a very bad indicator and certainly costs more; that's an issue, but just—we should have the resources in the community. We obviously need to recruit more aggressively in the community.

And there are often some issues who—surround that that make you wonder what—whether the best interest of the residents is really being kept as primary thing. We had a very long-term, stable situation with some workers in the Alzheimer's branch—or Alzheimer's ward of our personal-care home, and they had been on day shift for many, many years in there and were suddenly told that they had to, as everyone else in that particular ward was doing, would take—changing shifts. And so, they had to go on night shifts. And of course their own family situation didn't actually allow for that. So, rather than do what we had hoped, they actually quit and went casual at another facility. And that worked for them, but that left us with a gap in the Alzheimer's ward there that took quite a long time to fill, and when you're dealing with Alzheimer's patients, stability is a big issue. And it certainly upset the stability and it was something that was of great concern for those who had—for the families who had loved ones in that ward, and it did cause a lot of repercussions through the whole system. So we need to be, I think, a little more flexible on what we're doing in the future when it comes to moving staff around.

We've also heard from nurses that were very upset because—at the end of their shift, they have to review all of the medications and make sure that everything is in good order and sign off, and another nurse is to come on at the next shift. And here they are, at the end of their shift, and they don't know what nurse is coming on and they can't really give any advice to the next one because they're not sure who it's going to be. It's left open. There'll be, obviously, calls made to try and get someone to

come in and—but there's often a gap of several hours in there, which is cause for concern. There's a nearby facility and they do share some resources when they run short-staffed like that, but it's certainly been a concern for the nurse at the end of the day, that they're signing off and they really don't know who is going to be there to deal with the responsibilities in the next shift. And that's a—and credit to them, because they're very responsible people and they're working very hard to make sure that they do everything right.

One other point I wanted to mention in the few seconds I have left, with the expansion of the regional health authorities, placements in personal-care homes have actually been often at a much larger distance from the community. And that is certainly not only difficult for the individuals involved if they have family members, but for the family that is left in terms of trying to find time and access to go visit. I can think of one couple where the wife was placed in a personal-care home quite a distance away and the husband couldn't get there.

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

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): It's always a pleasure to speak about an issue that's near and dear to my heart. It affects me, being a senior. But I wish that I could say that I am in support of this bill, but then I find it to be a redundancy of what we are actually doing right now. Without even talking about it or without even writing about it, the NDP government has instituted programs that have benefited senior citizens all over the province. We are the point province in enhancing the rights and circumstances of seniors. We provide national leadership in promoting those supportive environments for older adults through the age-friendly and Healthy Aging Strategy.

Just from personal experience, in my constituency of Tyndall Park, we have the Westlands co-op, dedicated for becoming a residence for senior citizens and a good mix of older adults. I was speaking to somebody who was moving in this month at the Westlands co-op, and she said, my house is too big for me. I need to move into something more affordable and more senior-friendly. And she found it as—at Westlands co-op. It's one of those facilities that provide a better quality of life for our senior citizens.

The Keewatin/Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council is one such organization that has provided

programming for senior citizens, wherein senior citizens are assigned each other's number so they could check up on one another. They call it the well-being checkup. They call each other at 7 in the morning, and if there's no response, they will find a way to determine whether that senior citizen might not be well and needs help. And it is a program that has been started a long time ago, even before The Seniors' Rights Act, Bill 210, was thought about.

We also have the Men in the Kitchen!. If members of the Legislature could remember, I had guests here in this Legislature, men who wanted to be able to cook. And those same people are senior citizens who are using the kitchen and their cooking skills to make friends among strangers. And they are recruiting, and I have resisted becoming a member because I don't want to admit that I'm a senior citizen yet, but soon—soon—I will be joining them, and I will invite all of us who are 50 and up, including Ian, the member from Portage la Prairie—I withdraw the name, Ian—*[interjection]* Can't be. And I'll invite all of us to become members of Men in the Kitchen! and I assure you I'll teach you how to cook those noodles the member from Steinbach can remember during those karaoke nights. And I hope, and I just hope that in the near future, all of our citizens, senior citizens and not seniors, will be afforded every right that they are entitled to.

* (11:00)

The strategy that the government has in—

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

The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution under consideration this morning is sponsored by the honourable member for Steinbach, entitled "Enhancing Respect for Manitobans."

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 35—Enhancing Respect for Manitobans

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), that,

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba provides any Manitoban the opportunity to make a presentation at committee regarding proposed legislation; and

WHEREAS this input from Manitobans often results in improvements to legislation and is an important democratic right; and

WHEREAS some provincial government ministers continue to disrespect Manitobans by paying more attention to their electronic devices during committee hearings than the presenting 'public'—public at these committees; and

WHEREAS some provincial government ministers have disrespected Manitobans presenting at committee by labelling those opposed to their legislation as howling coyotes; and

WHEREAS some provincial government ministers have disrespected Manitobans by publicly stating, even before committee hearings on legislation, that they are unwilling to listen to presenters who disagree with their legislation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly commend those Manitobans who exercise their democratic right by making presentations to committee on proposed legislation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge provincial Cabinet ministers to refrain from insulting, ignoring and disrespecting Manitobans who make presentations to committee in opposition to their proposed legislation.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Steinbach, seconded by the honourable member of St. Paul,

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba provides—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Goertzen: Good morning, and pleasure to bring forward this resolution on behalf of all Manitobans, not just those who come to committee and make a presentation but certainly in particular on their behalf, Mr. Speaker.

And I hope that the House views this as a friendly resolution, a friendly debate and a kind—look at it kindly, and perhaps might take a little tweaking. You know, there might be a couple of friendly amendments, and I'd be open to that discussion in the spirit of the resolution, if there's a couple of nuances, you know, we could change within the resolution to get unanimous approval before noon. I've always

said that there's no monopoly on a good idea, and so I look forward to those friendly amendments from the government.

But ultimately this resolution is brought forward for those Manitobans who are coming to committee, who may yet come to committee on bills that we had before the Legislature and those who've come before on committee. And the reason why this is important, and particularly this session, is because we've seen a number of different instances where government ministers at committee, in this session and in previous sessions, simply were disrespecting Manitobans.

Now, I appreciate that system under which we operated Bill 20 in the House, the committee system, was improved in terms of the structure, and I think that that was a good reflection upon all of us, but that's not enough. It's not enough just simply to have a good structure in terms of how you bring forward presenters and how you align them up and ensure that they have a dedicated day to come and speak.

Once they're actually at committee there is a rightful expectation that they're going to be listened to, that they're going to be respected by all members of the Legislature, and we've seen a number of different things, both in committee and outside of committee, where that isn't happening. We've seen in this House where the Minister for Local Government referred to the presenters on Bill 20 as howling coyotes, disrespected those Manitobans, said that their views weren't truly important, that they truly weren't respected. And more than that, he insulted them, Mr. Speaker.

And I know I heard from many of the people who came out to speak on Bill 20. They were concerned when they heard the minister's comments. They were concerned and, quite frankly, they were upset by the comments of the minister, because a lot of them, in talking to them, they—some of them took time away from work. Others had to drive in from a fair distance away from the Legislature, so it was an inconvenience. It wasn't an easy thing for them to do, to come to committee. And then to be insulted by the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) for their presentation was very disturbing to them, and I can understand why they were quite concerned about that.

Beyond that, we've also heard government ministers indicate that they have no intention to listen to people when they come to committee. I've heard the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) say that.

I hear the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) say that I'm wrong but I can give him, actually, the newspaper article where the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) said she has no intention—no intention—of listening to anybody at committee, and that's very unfortunate. That is not the kind of thing that a minister should be saying when it comes to legislation. You should be going there with an open mind, willing to listen to people, whether they're on your side or not. It doesn't matter.

And I see the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), he's kind of warming up. He's like a pitcher. He's a—he's like a pitcher in the bullpen, you know, but, but he's like a pitcher who's going to throw four balls because he's going to get up and he's going to rant and he's going to rave and he's going to actually do—he's actually going to make my point by his very actions, because he's going to stand up and scream and yell, which is actually how the people who come to committee actually feel themselves. They feel disrespected.

And I would ask the member for Thompson, you know, instead of, you know, winding up the engines and ready to come down to—taxiing down the runway, ready to take full flight in about five or five and a half minutes, that he actually reflects on the issue of listening to people at committee, that he actually reflects on the issue that's at hand here. And he could speak to the minister beside him who said she has no intention of listening to people at committee. He could turn around and speak to the minister behind him who said that those who came to committee were actually howling coyotes and said it on the public record—a terrible sort of thing to say to Manitobans, because, ultimately, it doesn't matter if people agree with us or disagree with us at committee, the point is we're there to listen, and maybe we can get some good ideas.

But what happens when you go to committee—and we saw it, of course, on the committee for the pork moratorium. We saw it on the pork moratorium committee, where all we saw was—you know, it was like there was some kind of BrickBreaker tournament going on on the NDP side. You'd see all these NDP—at first I thought they were hanging their heads in shame. I actually had some hope that the NDP were listening to what was going on at committee, at the pork moratorium hearings, because when I looked on the other side of the table, all of the NDP Cabinet ministers were hanging their heads and I figured, well, finally, they've been shamed by the speakers who are coming. They're finally listening.

And then I realized they weren't hanging their heads in shame. They were looking at their BlackBerry's playing BrickBreaker or solitaire or whatever else that they were doing. They weren't actually listening.

And, in fact—and I know the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) says, well, it's not true. Well, she either wasn't there or she was playing BrickBreaker, because the actual people at committee made a point of it. They said it at committee. They said, get off your BlackBerry's, they said to the government ministers. Now, she probably wasn't there. She's probably a little bit like the Premier (Mr. Selinger), probably a little bit like the Premier who begs people to come out to a committee and then doesn't show up. You know, he spends—the member for—the Premier—the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) spent days begging people—begging people—to come to committee and then he pleaded with us, send the bill to committee. Send Bill 20 to committee. We want to hear Manitobans. And when it finally went to committee, where was the Premier? MIA, he was gone. Didn't come to one committee hearing. Didn't walk into the room, you know, do the royal wave to a few people and leave. Didn't do anything. Didn't even bother to show up at all, and that was noticed. I mean, that's another sign of disrespect. That's another sign of disrespect.

I don't expect the Premier to be at every minute of every committee hearing. I understand that he's got other things to do, but surely you could show up once, you know, and put down the wine and caviar and walk over to the committee room and just say hi to a few of the people that you're actually expected to represent. Would it have been too much? You know, I recognize it was hot in the committee room. It was warm during some of the committee hearings, both in terms of the intensity of the debate and the actual temperature in the room, but is it so inconvenient for the Premier to actually go and listen? And if he had listened, I suspect he might have had more control over his own caucus. He might have been able to stop the member for La Verendrye—or the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), sorry, for going and calling all of these individuals howling coyotes. He may have been able to stop his Minister of Education for saying, I'm not going to listen to anybody when bills go to committee, because that's not respectful and it's actually hypocritical to one day demand something go to committee and the next day refuse to listen or refuse to show up, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:10)

So, you know, there's a lot of different things here, I think, that the government needs to learn from. First of all, they need to be open-minded before bills go to committee. They have to be willing to listen and say that they're going to actually listen to Manitobans, that's No. 1. After those committees have happened, they shouldn't then go into the public and insult—and insult—the very people who came out to the committee, regardless of what side of the equation they're on, Mr. Speaker. I know there's going to be other committee hearings held on different bills. There'll be people of different views and, you know what, I want to hear that. I want to hear people on both sides of the issue, and we're going to respect people on both sides of the issue because that's actually what's important; we're actually going to listen.

Well, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) is shaking his head. He's not going to listen. He's not going to respect people. I can't believe he's still not interested. It's about listening to people and respecting them, and you don't have to agree with everything. Maybe at the end of the committee hearings, you know, you learn a little bit, but, you know, you have a little bit of a difference of opinion, but you've learned something, you know? And you might not agree with everything that comes out of the presentation, but you actually listen; that's what we do as representatives. But it's symptomatic of a government that's long in the tooth, that's been there a long time, that believes they know better than most Manitobans, doesn't want to actually hear from those Manitobans, are willing to insult them, don't want to come and hear the committee hearings, Mr. Speaker.

So I hope that the government will take this resolution in the spirit that it was given—in the friendly spirit that this resolution was given, to give them an opportunity to say that they do respect Manitobans. It's in the resolution that they respect Manitobans. I suspect they won't, though. They'll talk it out, because they don't respect Manitobans. I'm not a—I'm not clairvoyant, but I suspect the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) will get up and yell and scream, Mr. Speaker, and wave and flourish, and that'll be a sign—that'll be a sign that nothing is changing in the NDP, so I hope I'm wrong. I hope that when I sit down in 15 seconds the member for Thompson doesn't get up and start ranting and start raving and start screaming, and then at least there'll be a sign that maybe there's some hope, there's some changes coming in the NDP caucus. But we're going

to find out in three seconds if the member for Thompson gets up and starts yelling.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think the speech by the Opposition House Leader really sums up a lot of this session. This is day 100. This is probably one of the, you know, very craftily drafted resolution, because he talks about respect in the resolution and spends 10 minutes showing absolutely no respect for anyone, colleagues or other.

But what does strike me by—is this Order Paper, in day 100. You know, the member opposite just got up and he spoke—well, I wouldn't call it eloquently—but he spoke about the importance of our committees. I have never seen a session of the Legislature where we have a day 100; we have 33 bills they haven't even sent to committee yet, Mr. Speaker. They're so concerned about hearing the public that—on 33 bills—like 18, which they filibustered; 33, which they filibustered—on those bills they haven't even seemed important enough to send them to committee, and I think it's been weeks since we've had a committee of the Legislature listening to members of the public. But what's also interesting is he said that, you know—our minister, on Bill 18, has said that, we want that to be a clear bill. We're not interested in the kind of talk from members opposite amendments' that would gut the bill. But what's interesting on Bill 33, what have they said? We've said we're open to amendments; they said, we don't want to amend it. So, you know, there are words I'd use to describe that. I think some of them are unparliamentary. Beauchesne has taken on a new meaning over the last period of time thanks to the Leader of the Opposition, but this is very much the hallmark of this session and from the House leader and for members opposite.

You know, I think if you're to sum it up, it's feigned indignation, because—let's talk about the committees. You know, members opposite have been to the committees, and, you know, it's interesting; when they had views that didn't agree with their views, what did they do? They heckled the presenters. They tried to shut them down. Now, that's why, by the way, this is very craftily done. I'm sure the member opposite used all his legal skills because it doesn't mention opposition MLAs are anywhere. Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, that would be—I think it's parliamentary in this context—hypocritical.

And I want to say that what's interesting is while I'm speaking, though, you know, the Opposition House Leader is on his BlackBerry. Now I don't know if that's showing disrespect to me in this speech, but I got news for the members opposite who seem to be stuck in the horse-and-buggy era. You know, I do use my BlackBerry. When I'm on my BlackBerry, Mr. Speaker, it's usually keeping in touch with my department—I'm also EMO minister. I think it's important, if I'm in a lengthy committee hearing, to make sure I'm following that. Occasionally, I actually keep in touch with my family—this kind of session where sometimes BlackBerry is the only way I've been able to keep in touch with my family.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? For the member opposite to turn around and talk about people playing on their, you know, on their BlackBerry. I don't know—see—does he go around and spy on other members' BlackBerrys? Because, you know what, if he does, that doesn't show a heck of a lot of respect for his colleagues.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, it's really important to put on the record that I have had some experience with disrespect shown in committees. And I want to start with—and I won't name the member because he's departed, not from the House, but a late member. And I'll never forget sitting in a committee where he was reading a newspaper. And one of the presenters took some objection to that and he said—and this is—was put on the record and the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) knows who I'm talking about here. And the way that only he could, he said, I may have to be here but I don't have to listen. That was the kind of attitude of members opposite when they were in government and they had committee hearings.

And I think it's important for the Opposition House Leader who seems to think he knows what a filibuster is, Mr. Speaker. I don't know, in my world—I'm not in the—I'm not from the 9-to-5 school of filibustering that the member opposite is. I also believe that, you know, when you're a House leader it's not bad of a strategy to follow the tactics.

But the fact is, when I did speak overnight on the MTS bill, it was because the government was going to shut down the committee in the middle of the night and we knew there were presenters coming at 9 o'clock—9 o'clock the next day. And I spoke tactically to achieve a strategic goal of keeping that committee over-going, Mr. Speaker. And I didn't quit at a set time.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we also routinely sat until 2 in the morning, 3 in the morning, 4 in the morning; this was not unusual. And one of the things I would have expected from the Opposition House Leader—because the opposition, to their credit on this, has been part of the solution, along with our House leader.

What amazes me is that the committee hearings that we just had on Bill 20 were probably some of the most civilized, in terms of hours, the most organized, in terms of notice to presenters. But rather than put that in the resolution and give credit, you know, he's part of the negotiations—discussions took place for that—he had an opportunity to say we're making some government improvement. And perhaps it could be a part of further discussion in terms of our rules. That—show far more respect to the presenters on a very controversial bill than any of the committee hearings I saw when we were in opposition. And believe you, Mr. Speaker, we had many that went many hours and showed no respect to the presenters.

And I want to say to the member opposite because, you know, when I look at some of the provisions here—I mean I dealt with, you know, some of issues he's put on, in terms of BlackBerrys, et cetera. I am very proud of the fact that this Legislature is really the only Legislature that has hearings on every bill that is brought forward.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am open to amendments on many of the bills. There are some where, you know, there's a clear bottom line. And I say on the record, it's not a sign of disrespect for the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) to say that we're not backing down on the fundamental principle, Bill 18, to protect all students and gay and lesbian students against bullying. That's called having principles.

And we are open, if people come out with good ideas on Bill 33—apparently, members opposite have no good ideas on Bill 33. They've actually decided, before the committee hearing, they're not interested in any amendments.

That's why, by the way, this resolution doesn't apply to opposition members; very, very well crafted. I'm, you know—I must give the member opposite—he's used his legal training to, you know, I think there's—in the legal profession they're called weasel words. There's enough of them in this resolution.

And I want to say the member—members opposite, what shows real respect I think is understanding what the parliamentary process is all about. It is about debate. And, indeed, at times, it's about passionate debate.

And I want to put on the record for the Opposition House Leader, I know he was clairvoyant—yes, I'm passionate about speaking about respect. But part of respect—and I say this seriously to the Leader of the Opposition—is showing respect for the role of all members of this Legislature.

* (11:20)

I had a fair amount of respect, by the way, for the government members that sat through many of the committees in the '90s on many of the controversial bills. I particularly had a lot of respect for some of the government members who had to sit there during the MTS debate on a bill that never went to their caucus. And I know that, Mr. Speaker, because they told me it never went to their caucus. And I have a lot of respect for anyone that is prepared to sit through those long committee hearings. And yes, tempers will flare; and yes, members opposite did heckle presenters, but there are ways in which you can deal with that. If there's issues at the committee, raise a point of order, you know, put it on the record. I mean, I did that as Opposition House Leader at many committees. There are ways in which you can—you know, you can end the debate, talk about, well, you know, whether you're prepared to amend or not. But to bring in a resolution that talks about respect and then shows very little respect for other members of this Legislature or for the processes of this House, to my mind, again—and I use it in a very parliamentary context—is the ultimate in hypocrisy.

And I want to say, as we come out of this 'sentia'-session, which we eventually will—who knows when that may be—I want to say to members opposite that we made some significant progress over time. I think this year we, probably, for every step forward, we've taken a couple of steps back. And it has become somewhat acrimonious, and I certainly appreciate your words in the ruling, Mr. Speaker. I think it was a ruling that was important for all of us, and I include myself and everyone else in this Chamber. And I do think it's important, though, that when it comes to things like our committees that we put on the record—which this resolution really doesn't—the fact that it's the finest example of democracy that we have in this province that any

Manitoban—that every Manitoban can come forward and make a presentation. And if I'm in the committee hearing, I want to put on the record that I can multi-task. I may be looking at my BlackBerry once in a while, but I'm there because it's important to listen to Manitobans.

I also want to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, that at committee hearings, I'm prepared to listen to any and all Manitobans on any and all bills. And I say to members opposite, if they're really serious about respecting our parliamentary process and our committees, how about starting by sending the 33 bills you haven't sent to committee yet. Send them to committee. I'll be there, BlackBerry in hand, listening to Manitobans.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): I have some documents to table for the Legislature. I appreciate very much this resolution from the member from Steinbach and am pleased to be the seconder for it. We just heard from the member from Thompson talking about all his great respect for this Chamber. It was just this week where he referred to other members as homophobes, and I don't think that was very respectful. In fact, then he went out and denied that he even said it. Respect is an important thing for this Chamber and it's an important thing for committee. And I sat at committee for many, many hours and, yes, I saw the things that are mentioned in this particular resolution. And, in fact, it was the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and I think we even called him at committee, the fact that he sat hour after hour playing BrickBreaker on his BlackBerry. And it was quite obvious what was going on.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is a serious matter. People came forward, lots of them every night—we called over 30 people every night, and they wanted to come forward and they had important messages. And for members to, once in a while—whether it's open up a letter and read a document, or maybe they got a—an email or a text from a family member, I mean, I don't think people are that legalistic and feel that you can't reference something that might have come on your BlackBerry. It's the fact that hour after hour, and we've seen it over and over again, where individuals play BlackBerry. And I've just tabled for the House a whole series of articles that I would like to raise as a caution to members. And I know they've been distributed.

I'd like to quote one from Yahoo! News that talks, BrickBreaker is an illness. And I quote a

sentence out of here: They have an addiction not to work or email but a will breaking the game. And it talks to the dangers of BrickBreaker, and I would caution members opposite. Here's another one put out by CNBC: Newest CEO Hurdle: BlackBerry Game Addiction. Corporate America has a new addiction moving through the top ranks, reports CNBC's Darren Rovell. So why does the Wall Street Journal report that so many C-level executives are hooked? Whipkey paraphrases Mount Everest scaler Sir Edmund Hillary: Because it's there. And that's what—that's the dangers we see from members opposite who seem to want to sit.

And I'll read a few more headlines, Mr. Speaker. BrickBreaker: mindless amusement or vicious addiction? BrickBreaker is an incredibly mindless game that can be played in spare moments online at airports, during boring conference calls, et cetera. And they could have included in that, committee meetings late in the evening.

And I would suggest to members that they have a look at these articles, because it can become an addiction, and instead of listening and focusing on people in committee, what you're actually doing is starting to get involved.

Here's another article from venture capitalist: Why is the BlackBerry BrickBreaker so addictive? And I quote: He was talking about the BrickBreaker game on the BlackBerry. It is such a game that one addict, the CEO of Lehman Brothers, had to have the game removed from his BlackBerry, only to put it back. There's an individual, again, high-ranking individuals, who get caught on it.

I have another one, Jakarta Globe: CrackBerry fans struggle with second addiction—BrickBreaker. And I'd like to point to members a sentence out of this article: The game has long been the secret shame among executives. The original users of the BlackBerry, Joel I. Klein, chancellor of the New York City schools, told The New York Times in March that he was a recovering BrickBreaker addict who once scored close to 5 million points.

Another article, and this comes from the US edition of WSJ.com: BlackBerry addicts also can't resist the little game. Here's another one put out by The New York Times: The phone beckons; got game? Another article, Mr. Speaker, out of The New York Times: Wall Street prepares to crack BrickBreaker habit. And this is the good news out of this. And I would recommend to members opposite who find that they can't get off their BlackBerry, new

versions of the BlackBerry mobile device won't come equipped with BlackBerry.

Mr. Speaker, I think we owe it to the public, and I would recommend to members, have a look at these articles, read through them. Perhaps there are individuals that are playing too much games on their BlackBerrys instead of referencing them once in a while, instead of looking at them. You know, we, over the years, have had the ability to have letters sent in or notes sent in. We all have work. Members—some members have departments that they're running. Others, you know, a family member might have taken ill, and what's important is that that be looked at, referenced a little bit, and then focus be given to the presenters.

It is important that—and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) said the only legislative chamber in Canada that actually must allow for the public to come forward and speak to its bills, but that doesn't mean that members opposite can show those individuals the disrespect that we have seen over the last months and years. We have an obligation to listen to them. They don't take a lot of time. They don't have a lot of time to make their presentations, and I have found over the years that I have learned a lot.

In fact, on Bill 20 there were a lot of individuals that came forward indicating that they had been organizers, supporters, volunteers, donors of the NDP party, and were saying to the New Democrats at the table, because of what happened and taking away the referendum, that they were no longer going to support the NDP. And I know that is painful, and that is part of governing, making decisions, and they have to live with this particularly poor decision.

It doesn't mean you can sit there and ignore people. It doesn't mean that you can treat them disrespectfully. And we heard from the member from Thompson, who was actually disrespectful at committee and has been disrespectful with the way that he sits there and continuously looks down, Mr. Speaker. And it's not as if the public doesn't see what's going on. And they have put a lot of time in. We have, over the Bill 20 presentations, received a lot of information. In fact, yesterday we had the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) was quoting from a letter that had been tabled at Bill 20 committee. And the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who was working his BlackBerry here in session, got up on a point of order and said, oh, if you're quoting from a letter, you have to table it. He

wasn't paying enough attention at committee to know that that letter had been tabled at committee, and he wasn't paying enough attention in session during debate yesterday to know that the member from La Verendrye actually said, I'm quoting from a letter that had been tabled at committee, and got up.

* (11:30)

And, Mr. Speaker, it shows that there's slowly a disengagement, a detachment from what's going on here, because individuals are spending far too much time on their BlackBerrys playing BrickBreaker, and I would suggest to members opposite that isn't looking at an email. That's not looking at a text and quickly responding to a department or a staffer or a family member. You've got to be careful. Those kinds of mistakes are coming fast and furious and we see it on a more regular basis. You know, if you want to take a moment and perhaps go work on a puzzle or a online Sudoku, you know, we do have loges. You can go sit on a couch, you know, take yourself away from the fray of it all. There's something that you can do.

But when we're at committee and the public is there—and today there isn't an awful lot of public. In fact, I don't think there's any public, so it's not like they can see what's going on here. But at committee, where we have sometimes a hundred, 200 people sitting ready to present, you know, those individuals deserve the respect for us to be looking up. You know, maybe we're reading their presentation on the desk, but to be looking down between our knees for hours at a time, I mean, it's obvious that you're working on an electronic device. It's not as if you've got a document on your table and you're following along with what they're saying.

We owe them respect and I—we've heard lately about having a respectful workplace, which I think is something we definitely need. We also need to have a respectful committee system whereby individuals come forward, whether it's two or three individuals or whether it's two or three hundred individuals. And I can tell you that I've now—in a lot of cases, I've left my BlackBerry either in my office or I leave it often in my car.

And I know that there were complaints on CBC news that politicians—and I don't know who it was—they didn't say who it was—were actually going to Folklorama and were working their BlackBerrys. And I would say I don't know if it was any of the 57 of us. Maybe it wasn't. I don't know who it was, but we know that the public is watching us. We

know that the public is listening and this—and they look at us as their leaders and when we go to events like that and we're sitting at a Folklorama and working our BlackBerry, I would suggest—and I've done this now as a practice for years—I leave my BlackBerry in the car. In between pavilions, I can pull it out—before I start my car, of course—check to make sure there was nothing that came in and then go to the next pavilion. But we have to watch it as elected officials.

I think this resolution calls us all to account, and especially members opposite. When people come, even if they disagree with you, be very careful. Put away your BlackBerry and pay attention.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): And I'm always honoured to get up and speak to the House and honoured to get up and speak to this particular resolution that talks about respect—respect for Manitobans, respect for the citizens that we serve. I think it implies a respect for one another in this Chamber, and yet to follow the member from St. Paul, Mr. Speaker, every time I think that he's reached a new low, he digs himself even deeper.

I distinctly remember being at the Bill 20 hearings when he was there, and the member of Kildonan asked questions, which are in Hansard, asking people where they've come from, what their state of life was, what they did for a living—that kind of thing—and then I remember distinctly hearing off the 'remember'—off the record, the member from St. Paul heckling the member from Kildonan about his questions. And so I think that when it comes to respect, it's pretty clear that the member from Kildonan probably can't spell it. He certainly doesn't know the definition of it and, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, he never, ever practises the principle of respect in this Chamber and, I dare say, probably outside of it as well.

But when it comes to talking about respect for Manitobans who came to committee, I did listen. I was at the committee hearings and, notwithstanding the numerous words spilled by the member from Steinbach on this particular subject, on the matter of Bill 20—he had the temerity the other day to say, oh, that, no, that 90 per cent of those who came to committee were in—opposed to Bill 20. Well, that's utter nonsense. Those of us who know that there probably was, in fairness, a majority of those who came who had objections to what was in Bill 20. But there was also a very strong minority who came to

committee on those evenings and during the Saturday that we were there, who spoke very intelligently about the need to continue to invest in Manitoba, to raise revenue not only to build infrastructure for future flood crises but to invest in critical infrastructure about roads and bridges and also to invest in hospitals and schools and to the fact that that—those kinds of investments raise the employment levels in our province and, consequently, is the way in which people spend and keep the service industry going as well, Mr. Speaker. And I'm proud to say that we have among the lowest unemployment rates in Canada, and that's as a result of the investments that this government has made over the 14 years that we've in—been in power.

Now, we want—I want to take a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, to talk about some of the folks who did come to committee that are never, ever mentioned by the opposition in their long and lengthy speeches about Bill 20 and about committees and about respect. And I want to start with Mr. Sig Laser, who was there on the first night, and he gave a wonderful presentation, a very informed presentation, a factual, evidence-based presentation.

And I want to spend just a moment just to quote him, if I could. And Mr. Laser said, and I quote: Manitobans are well aware of the extraordinary flood-related costs we are facing, and the lag time before participatory federal funding becomes available. There are necessary and urgent infrastructure investments that need to be made with respect to flood mitigation and protection. Some have defined infrastructure very narrowly in terms of roads and bridges, the so-called horizontal infrastructure. I believe—Mr. Speaker, I'm still quoting—says Mr. Laser, I believe a broader definition is in order to include the vertical infrastructure of facilities for schools, for hospitals and recreation, all of which are necessary aspects of efficient modern economies and have a reasonable quality of life.

Now, when the opposition ignores Mr. Legger-Laser's, advice to committee, how respectful is that? Where is it in nature of the respect that comes for a citizen of Manitoba, who has a very well-informed position on these issues, and yet, not once have we heard the opposition refer to Mr. Laser's presentation at committee. Shame on you.

Next, I want to refer to Ms. Elizabeth Carlyle. And she says—she said, and I quote: "Manitoba has a lot of things going for it, and we've heard about some

of those things . . . but I think we have to face up to the fact that sources of revenue in Manitoba are limited. I mean, objectively, we do have to make some tough decisions with the infrastructure needs that we have. And I think that the PST increase is a reasonable way to go when you balance all the factors."

Now, Ms. Carlyle goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, and I'm still quoting: "The federal government has retrenched so much over the past few decades that it's hard to remember what they now fund. They seem to have cut more than they actually fund, and it leaves Manitoba in a bad position. It also has been the case that previous provincial governments," referring, of course, Ms. Carlyle was, to the Filmon years when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting at the Cabinet table, "have made massive cuts both to revenues and to programs, and I think that that has to be factored in. When you have a half-billion dollar of built up lack of resources," says Ms. Carlyle, "it's bound to have an impact on the current government."

And then she concludes, Mr. Speaker: The current government has wisely invested in hydro power, roads, floodways and schools and hospitals, healthy living, child care, housing, socio-economic equity, poverty reduction, social services and plenty more. More could be done, and that's where the PST increase comes from. And it's not about spending blindly, but it's about providing services and infrastructure that people need and have to get somehow.

That's what Ms. Carlyle said to committee. And yet not once—not once in all the words spilled by the opposition have we heard them refer to Ms. Carlyle's informed, well-educated opinion and advice to committee. Not once. So shame on them again.

And then finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the presentation made by Mr. Bill Heather, who is a friend of the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) and that who came to committee, one would've thought, to support the member from Emerson's very narrow-minded position on these issues, and, in fact, his real good friend came to support the government position.

* (11:40)

And I want to quote just a few things that Mr. Heather said at committee about Bill 20. And he says, and I'm quoting now: And putting it very bluntly, I believe the Progressive Conservatives are only trying to make hay with this. I don't believe that

you guys, he says, referring to the opposition, really are caring about Manitobans at this point. I believe you are interested only in gaining power.

Well, truer words have never been spoken, in my opinion.

And then Mr. Heather goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, you know, what you guys, with the attitude that I'm hearing today from this group—again referring to the opposition—Manitoba is finished, he says. But we're not finished because of the 1 per cent increase; we are finished because of the poisoned attitude and environment that we are creating in this province. We are poisoning—and he's referring to the members of the opposition again—we are poisoning the minds and the attitudes of ourselves and more so about our young people.

He goes on to say, my concern and the reason that we are in this predicament today is I blame it on, I believe it's called, the balanced budget legislation that was passed by—and he says, who was it passed by? What government, he asks. And what—once you guys passed that balanced budget legislation, Cliff—and he's talking to the member from Emerson at this point—and you locked your own hands, and if you would have—yes, Sir, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: [*inaudible*] remind the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview that we are not to refer to members by other than their constituency names or ministers by their portfolio, even if we're quoting from third-party documents. So I'd like to caution the honourable member with that regard and to make sure that he follows the rules and practices of this House.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I didn't know it went to that level in a quote. So, again, as a rookie MLA, I'm always willing to learn and I appreciate you providing me with that instruction.

You—it goes on to say, and you locked your own hands and if you would have been in power today, I believe that you guys—he says, referring to the Progressive Conservatives—would have been in the same predicament.

So the problem isn't that we broke the referendum, we're not having a referendum 'etpric'—et cetera, et cetera, et cetera—that we broke that, he says. The error was made in 1995 when the Filmon government was in power and when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting at the Cabinet table.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say very clearly that we, on this side of the House, respect all Manitobans and we respect the opinions. We want to hear from both sides of the issue. But this side of the House will take no lectures from that side of the House on respect. Every single day we don't see it from them, they don't practise it and I don't believe that they understand the very resolution they put forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): It's always a great opportunity to be able to get up and talk about different things in the House and the resolution brought forward by the member from Steinbach.

I do want to just clarify for the member from Fort Garry-Riverview that the individual he talks about, Mr. Bill Heather, is not from 'riversen'—Emerson; in fact, he's actually from Dawson Trail. And speaking of the member from Emerson, I know he sat there very clearly and listened to Mr. Heather talk about his position, and what he talk—and obviously that was a supporter of the NDP, and there was supporters there for the PC government. We listened to everyone, and that's what we're talking about here.

Very clearly—very clearly—what we want to do and see in this resolution is that all members pay attention. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago, the member from Fort Garry-Riverview was the Chair of a committee. And I can tell you, the member sitting right beside him was on his BlackBerry the most—the whole night while presenters were there. And I found that wrong; I found it was disrespectful for all Manitobans.

And whenever we sit there and we're not paying attention—I have no problem, in fact, I'll be the first to admit I use my BlackBerry same as everybody else. But I do sit back, I go away from the table, sit on the side of committee—I sit on the side of committee and I do whatever I have to do there. I'm not at the table.

So we're open to amendments. We're not saying this resolution is the one that's going to be the one that's—that has to be adopted. We're open to friendly amendments. And it very clearly is enhancing respect for all Manitobans. I don't know what part the government gets on that side of the House. This is a prime opportunity for them to step up to the plate and say they're sorry. And if we'd done it on our side, and if I'd done it, I'll be the first to stand up today and apologize to the public.

I remember and I—and the member from Thompson brought in a very good suggestion. I think, whenever we get through session, whether that be Christmastime or next spring or whenever that might be, I would love to be able to sit down and talk about—talk about the fact that we need some changes to our committee.

I remember very clearly, on Bill 17, we sat through the night, and the member from Thompson talked back about the MTS bill back in the '90s, which they love to spend most of their time talking about, because they can't talk about what happened since 1999, so they want to talk about what happened in 1990.

So it gives us an opportunity to sit down, once session is over, and maybe look at exactly what we did on Bill 20, whereby we had 30 presenters where we need to focus, we need to pay attention. And, yes, if there is an issue—if there is an issue that any of us—any member of this House has that's so burning that they can't take a minute and sit back in between presenters and do their text, their email—whatever that may be—I don't have a problem with that. At least it's showing respect and that's what this motion and this resolution is all about.

So encourage them—members from the other side—to take another look—take another look. We're open to amendments. Let's get together and make sure that this Assembly—and the respect for all Manitobans is most important and that we follow that respect and show respect. That's what it's about, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]* I have been told that I'm the hardest working backbencher, but it's always a pleasure to speak in this Chamber and pretend that I'm lecturing to a bunch of kids, especially with respect to R-E-S-P-E-C-T, respect.

Respect is something that was given to me by my father when I was growing up. When he kisses me on the forehead and says, I love you, my son, that's respect. And in return, what I did was I did everything that he asks of me, anything possible that a little one could do. They call it respect.

In this Chamber, I have seen a lot of madness—insanity, even—to such an extent that we pretend that we are respectful of each other. We pretend that we are not being rude or impolite. We use language that's abusive. If it were taken out, it would have been a good fight. I have been heckled but I have

been called names and I'm getting used to it, and it's not something in my nature.

But respect—when we speak about it, are we really doing it? You cannot impose respect on the basis of a resolution. It is conduct, it is your demeanour, it is the manner in which you speak and the language that you use. It is not something that could be legislated or voted on or amended. Generally, respect is something that we learn from our elders. Respect is something that's not even earned. It is something that's normal in our everyday lives.

For me to speak about it and be emotional about it, I'll tell you why. Thirty-three years ago when I first came here, I was demanding respect, because I was a trained lawyer, a trial lawyer and a good one at that. I never got it. Why? Because those were the rules.

* (11:50)

Same thing here. On October 5th, 2011, I got elected. On October 19th, I swore that I'll serve the people of Manitoba and I'll provide them with a lot of respect.

How do you do respect? You try to do the best you can under the circumstances. You do not dally or delay or pretend that you're helping the passage of legislation when what you're trying to do is obstruct it—that's not respect. They call that obstruction; they call that disrespect.

When you propose amendments that are superficial, it's not respect. It's not. It is disrespectful for the process and for the building and for the Legislature.

When I say that there's a lot of madness, I'm not calling you names. I'm just telling you the atmosphere, Mr. Speaker, the atmosphere of madness and insanity, to such an extent that we're doing nothing but we're getting—we're wasting \$12,500, more or less, per day over the last 100 days, doing nothing except politics at the extreme. Is that respect? It's not.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): It's an honour and a privilege for me to rise and put a few words on the 'resp'—on the record with respect to this great resolution brought forward from the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). And I want to thank him for bringing forward this resolution for debate here in the Legislature, because it is about respect.

I think the member has spoken very passionately—the previous member who just spoke—and he spoke very passionately about his thoughts about what respect means.

And I would like to share with you some of the thoughts that I have on what respect means in the Manitoba Legislature. For one thing, it's—just before I get to the committee hearings themselves, Mr. Speaker, what—how to treat Manitobans with respect, is to listen to Manitobans.

So forget about the committee meeting for just a moment. But when members opposite were going door to door in the last election campaign, they went door to door and they campaigned based on not raising the PST, not raising taxes. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) called that is nonsense, the very notion that he would ever raise taxes after the election. And we know the first opportunity that he had when he came in, he broke that promise to Manitobans. That is the ultimate in disrespect to Manitobans. When they go out during election campaign and they say one thing, and then immediately after they get elected, they do the exact opposite. They get out and they expand the PST, they hike the taxes for Manitobans. And then the following year they go out and they increase the PST by 14 per cent. That is the ultimate in disrespect in this province of Manitoba.

But when we look at committee, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to look at committee and the behaviour of members in committee. And I think it is—I know, certainly, when I was first elected to the Manitoba Legislature, we were sitting through the night at that time. And I do recall those times and I do recall people coming in at 3 o'clock in the morning and so on, and it was disrespectful at the time. And I think we've moved in a direction that is positive, where we're not doing that anymore and we're being more respectful of Manitobans in that way. So there are some things that have taken place that are good.

But there are more that we can end—that we can do to enhance the respect of Manitobans. And I think we all, in this Chamber, want to enhance the respect of Manitobans.

And that's why this resolution, I'm not sure why members opposite would not be supporting it today because—unless they are afraid of ways of enhancing respect for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. I think it's very important to support this kind of resolution when it calls on enhancing further respect for Manitobans.

I know, Mr. Speaker, also, when I first was elected to the Legislature, there was no such thing as BlackBerrys, I don't believe, at the time. And so we had things called PalmPilots, and I was going through cleaning out one of my drawers the other day and I found an old PalmPilot in there. And I came—I was probably—it was quite, quite large and I pulled it out. And I thought, wow, have we come a long way in terms of technology. And I think technology is—we should embrace technology in all its forms. I think it's wonderful and it's positive that way.

But there are also things to do with technology that we need to respect. And there are times for the use of those technologies and embracing the technologies and there's times to set them aside. And I think during committee—I think all members would agree that during committee, when members of the public are before committee and they are presenting to us—and again, we know that it's people in the public, they don't come forward often in the Manitoba Legislature to speak out on their beliefs, but when they do, they're there for a very good reason. And we, as legislators, owe them the respect and the opportunity to come forward and to listen to them, to hear what they have to say, because a lot of those people are very passionate about what they believe in and why they're coming forward. And so for us to be on BlackBerrys at the time, it's really inappropriate.

And so, I'm not sure if members opposite are disagreeing with that. If by speaking this out and by voting against this, I'm not sure if they're disagreeing with the very notion that we shouldn't be on our BlackBerrys while people are presenting in committee. And that sort of alarms me, because it does go back to respecting people in Manitoba, listening to people in Manitoba. And we know there's been so many instances where members opposite, in various legislation they brought forward over the years in the Manitoba Legislature, they bring it forward without proper consultation with the public, and I think that's very disrespectful. That consultation needs to take place before legislation is brought forward in the Manitoba Legislature for debate, and that consultation hasn't been taking place over a number of years in this Manitoba Legislature since the NDP came to power.

That homework should be done beforehand. It's similar to what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) did when he went out with his prebudget consultation meetings. Nowhere in those—the

presentation did it mention anything about a PST increase. And so, he was not properly consulting with Manitobans on one of the biggest issues that he implemented and that he brought forward in this Manitoba Legislature. He kept that from the public, and to me that is very disrespectful. He didn't even have an—give them an opportunity to listen to them because he didn't even present that prior to presenting a bill in the—prior to presenting his budget in the Manitoba Legislature.

So I think there's a lot that we can learn from in terms of being respectful of Manitoba—Manitobans, in terms of being respectful of people who come forward in committee and listening to them, but not just those coming forward in committee. Members opposite and all members of this Manitoba Legislature should see fit to listen to Manitobans and to take to heart what it is that they have to say, and so I encourage all members of this House to support this. This makes sense, this is about enhancing respect for all Manitobans—that is the name of the resolution. It is exactly what it's all about and I don't understand why members opposite wouldn't want to see this move forward, so I think it's time that we call for the question.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Well, unfortunately, this resolution isn't about what the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) says it's about, because if it was really about all of our behaviour, it would apply to all of us, and it does not apply to all of us.

This is yet another example of the opposition saying, hey, we're perfect. No flies on us. We do

everything perfectly. Any problem that happens is all the fault of somebody who doesn't agree with me, because I am perfect.

And I got to tell you, I've sat on many committees for many, many, many hours, and the bar of perfection for the opposite side has not been met at any of those committees that I've sat at. So I don't disagree that we all need to be aware of the fact that when we're in committee and people have taken the 'kye'-time to come to present to us, whatever their presentation is, that we should listen respectfully. But I think that's something that applies to the other side, as well. And I've certainly sat through committee where we've had people come and the opposition has disagreed with them and they have not acted with respect towards those presenters. They've heckled those presenters, they have called those presenters names under their breath. I've witnessed that behaviour, so let us not pretend here that one side are angels when it comes to this and it is only members of my party who should be acting respectfully. If the opposition is serious about having more respect in this Chamber and in committees, then they should apply those rules to everyone. They should apply those rules to themselves and they should, perhaps, start by talking to their leader about how to be more respectful in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable Minister of Family Services and Labour will have eight minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, August 29, 2013

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