

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 5, 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. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed with Bill 204?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Are we ready to proceed with Bill 209?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Under second readings of public bills, are we ready to proceed with Bill 212?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Okay, we'll call Bill 212, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Bullying).

**Bill 212—The Human Rights Code
Amendment Act (Bullying)**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Fort Rouge, that Bill 212, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Bullying); Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne (intimidation), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill, Bill 212, is designed to include all bullying under the Human Rights Code. Currently, bullying, where it's covered under the Human Rights Code, is covered under the category of harassment. And it's covered, as the Human Rights Code says, where there exists, and

I quote, a course of abusive and unwelcome conduct or comment undertaken or made on the basis of any of a series of characteristics.

Now, these characteristics would include race, nationality, ethnic background, religion, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital or family status, source of income, political belief, physical or mental disability and social disadvantage.

I think a strong case can be made in two respects. One is that when we have Bill 18, and it's not fully passed, but we have a definition of bullying that is applied to schools, that we should have the same definition to apply more broadly to society so there is not a gap and so there is one message, and I will talk a little bit more about this shortly.

And I think the case can also be made that rather than go on and increase the list of categories that could be covered by bullying to admit that bullying is bullying and that you don't have to argue if you go to the Human Rights Commission that this is on the basis of race or one of these other categories. Indeed, it will be clear to those who have attended the presentations that one of the 'comest' form of bullying, as we've been hearing, deals with—based on body image and that clearly is not specifically covered in the list of items and we could go on, and sadly it is too easy for somebody who has been a bully, right, to argue that this was not on the basis of race, it was not on the basis of one of these categories and therefore it doesn't fall under the Human Rights Code.

And what I'm suggesting to members is that it makes a lot of sense to have this now fall under the Human Rights Code, same definition as Bill 18. That would mean that if, under Bill 18, we decide that we're going to change that definition slightly before we finally pass Bill 18, we should modify the definition in this bill as well so they're complementary. I think that there's a strong argument which can be made and I'm making it that we should have one vision for what is bullying through the whole province and not just one vision of bullying in the classroom and a completely different vision of bullying elsewhere.

Bill 212 defines bullying as behaviour that's intended to cause or should be known to cause fear,

intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation of property or is intended to create or should be known to create a negative environment for another person. As I said, this is the same as in Bill 18 and I think it's very important that the definitions in the two acts be the same so that you have one message for everybody.

Putting bullying, as this bill will do, under the Human Rights Code is appropriate because the Human Rights Code emphasizes approach which use education and mediation in addressing complaints and these are tools which can be very helpful in reducing bullying. As an example, we heard earlier this week, Monday night in committee, Gareth Neufeld, a former principal who presented at the committee stage of Bill 18, and he said that when he was a principal, he first trained his staff properly in mediation techniques, as one might use in restorative justice approaches and—in which you are bringing together the person who is the bully and the person who is being bullied and you have them each under careful mediation, explain their points of view and you come to—for each of them to understand the other. And through this process what happens is an effective better improvement of understanding and, as Gareth Neufeld pointed out at committee, a very dramatic reduction of bullying in the school where he was principal. And that, in fact, is what we want to achieve, is to settle these issues in a way that provides a resolution not only for the bully—for the person who's been bullied, but improvement in conduct of the bully, and also, at the same time, has a much broader effect. In this case, we're looking for an effect in society as a whole, not just in the school, to reduce bullying in society. And I think, quite frankly, that that could be very helpful to efforts which are engaged at reducing violence and other behaviours.

* (10:10)

It's important to note that for the most severe forms of bullying, it would not preclude this—a very severe case going to criminal court, all right, and be prosecuted. But it would provide an avenue for settling the vast majority of concerns about bullying throughout the province in, I believe, an effective way.

We are, next year, to have the opening of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We as a province should be leaders in using—in human rights and the Human Rights Code in ways that's

appropriate to advance human rights for people. And, certainly, it would be appropriate to have a human—in the Human Rights Code, protection against bullying and prohibited action, as it would be under the code, but done in a way that is effective using education and mediation to improve how we address this problem.

I think it's important to note that one of the problems in schools has not just been the bullying of students by other students, which is primarily where Bill 18 is focused, but teachers being bullied by parents, teachers being bullied sometimes by other teachers or, indeed, by students. And where one could address some of these issues, certainly, with workplace standards and environments and so on, having this kind of approach, under the Human Rights Code, provides a seamless approach inside and outside of schools. I mean, let's face it, we have, with the number of students in schools, and the time that people spend in school, which is substantial, it is still less than 10 per cent, probably closer to 3 or 4 per cent of a person's life that is spent inside of school. We should be addressing the other 90 to 96 or 97 per cent of time that people live, and do this so that we have a society which is better able—where people are better able to interact and get along, and we can reduce bullying and, at the same time, reduce the progressive development of issues going to the point of violence and criminal problems.

And I think that we should act. I would ask for the others in this Assembly to look at this very seriously, and I would hope that we can move together to, in fact, pass the bill. Let's put it this way one more time, that right now it's really an anomaly that we don't have bullying as a clear separate category under the Human Rights Code, with its own definition. We should change that anomaly. We should put it under the Human Rights Code.

Thank you.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to speak to Bill 212, which is a bill that's been brought forward by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) to amend the Human Rights Code. As he's pointed out, it uses language—a similar definition is used in Bill 18. The bill would make the Manitoba Human Rights Commission responsible for investigating and, ultimately, if necessary, adjudicating all complaints of bullying in society.

I want to say at the outset of my comments, that I believe this is a genuine contribution by the

member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) to continue to find ways to prevent bullying, and to increase Manitobans' safety and security. Different jurisdictions have taken different approaches, and I think it's fair to say that no one law that Parliament or a Legislature can pass is an absolute answer to this problem. I think it's also fair to say that no one person, no one political party, has a monopoly on good ideas when it comes to taking on this issue.

In Manitoba, of course, Bill 18 will give schools, teachers, administrators, others, the ability to intervene where a student is affected by bullying and, of course, give students the right to organize groups, including gay-straight alliances, to protect themselves. That bill, Bill 18, of course, is an amendment to The Public Schools Act. It is not a comprehensive code for society in general. It deals, where it can, with students.

As I believe members are aware, there is now talk of amending the Criminal Code for a very different set of circumstances. And senior Justice officials have met and have recognized there's some gaps in the Criminal Code that, if filled, could perhaps provide at the extreme end of the spectrum some greater protection for Canadians. And if, indeed, the federal government moves forward with amendments which meet what the senior officials have suggested, Manitoba will certainly support that.

Mr. Speaker, I've carefully reviewed the bill that the member for River Heights introduced yesterday, and I think it is important at this point just to highlight what's already contained in the code. Of course, the code was amended just last year to protect Manitobans on the grounds of social disadvantage or gender identity. And, of course, that change was made unanimously by this Legislature.

The code already addresses many ways in which bullying occurs in public life—if I can call it that—individuals' interactions with all forms of government. It deals with what I would call quasi-public life, the way that individuals interact in commerce in their daily life with businesses, with anybody who offers services to the public or admits the public in a number of different ways. Section 13 protects against discrimination in services and accommodations. Section 14 deals with preventing discrimination in employment matters. Section 15 deals with discrimination in contracts. And section 16 deals with discrimination in rental premises.

As the member for River Heights has noted, section 19 actually provides protection against harassment for any enumerated head set out in the Human Rights Code or, in fact, any other group status that is attacked. And the Human Rights Code is really about equality, it's about human rights and it is about the prevention of discrimination.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission—which, of course, exists under the code—is all about education, investigation, mediation and, if necessary, adjudication of claims. But, again, their work is based on group characteristics, even though discrimination, bullying in that form, can be very deep and personal, it's based on those group characteristics.

So there are three main concerns, and I know these will not come as a surprise to the member for River Heights. We've had a chance to discuss this. I was hoping his comments on the bill would address them a bit more. They haven't, so I think it's necessary to put them on the record. This bill would dramatically change the way that the Human Rights Code operates and it would allow complaints to be entered from well outside group characteristics as set out in the code. And I'll use an example which might seem frivolous but, I think, highlights the challenge.

Sunday afternoon, I'll again be pulling on my Blue Bomber jersey and heading out to the brand new Investors Group stadium. I fully expect that I will be faced by several thousand green-clad Saskatchewan Roughriders fans who will be very boisterous. Their team is having a very good year; our team isn't. I have no doubt those Rider fans, many of whom I'm sure will be sitting around me—member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) knows exactly where I sit—they will very well be trying to create a negative environment for me to sit and watch my team. They will certainly be attempting to intimidate or even humiliate not just the Blue Bombers on the field but the Blue Bomber fans in the stands. That is part of the game; that's part of sports. I don't actually think anybody believes that I should have the right to go to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission to complain about the way that I was treated by someone wearing a watermelon on their head next to me.

But let me explain that that doesn't mean that those activities can't go too far. If my daughter goes to her school and she happens to wear her autographed Buck Pierce jersey and she gets bullied, I want her to have protection, and that's what Bill 18

is all about. But those are two very different circumstances, from somebody out in society in general and somebody in a school. And I think we just need to think carefully about how far the member's bill would go.

*(10:20)

The other—one of the other areas that gives concern is that, unlike the current Human Rights Code, which deals with either public or quasi-public circumstances, what the member's proposing is that every private conversation, every private discussion, could give rise to a human rights complaint. If my neighbour's unhappy with the way I've been maintaining my yard this summer, which for everybody in this House might be a very real possibility, and yells something unpleasant across the fence, that may be unpleasant, I may not be happy, I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, it should give me the right to go and file a complaint with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

Or, for example, to give another very real example, if a Conservative MLA goes to a family barbeque and they're set upon by their nieces and nephews who say, uncle, aunt, I can't believe that you stood up as a bloc and voted against more protections for children. I may actually have a bit of sympathy for that Conservative MLA, because I'm not sure what their answer's going to be. But I don't think anybody would think that that private conversation at that family event should give rise to a complaint under the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

But let me take it again to compare and contrast why different definitions are necessary. If the son or daughter of a Conservative MLA goes to school and gets bullied because of the position that their mother or father has taken, I frankly believe that the school should get involved and prevent that from happening. And that's again why Bill 18 is going to be there, to protect children from all forms of bullying.

But there are some real concerns that haven't really been addressed and I was hoping the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) would get into it but, unfortunately, he didn't.

The other question, of course, is exactly how the Manitoba Human Rights Commission would deal with these amendments if they were brought in. Of course, when the commission receives a complaint, they actually investigate. Their duty is to go out and

investigate the circumstances. Much easier if it's a government office or someone else providing service to the public; much more difficult when it's a private conversation, a private situation. Unlike a school, they can't call in the students to have a discussion. We did hear a lot about restorative justice and alternative measures which are very positive. Very, very different situation when it's the commission dealing with the society at large.

Of course, some provinces have a very different view of what human rights commissions do. The British Columbia Liberals, for example, ripped apart their Human Rights Commission, so if you want to make a complaint in BC, the Human Rights Commission will give you a copy of the code and give you their best wishes to go forward and bring your complaint.

We don't work that way in Manitoba. The commission actually takes on cases on behalf of people, which I think is very important and I know there's concerns that the ambit of this bill would really water down the great work our commission does, focusing on preventing discrimination in our province and I don't think anybody in this Legislature would want that to happen.

The Human Rights Code was brought in 26 years ago. I believe it's stood the test of time. There have been amendments, of course, as I mentioned, there's been some better procedures adopted. I agree with the member for River Heights, that their focus on mediation is very, very helpful, where you can get the parties to agree and that's all great. But I think we need to just be very careful that we manage this carefully.

The member for River Heights has a legitimate concern and, again, I don't want anyone to suggest otherwise and we know we're going to keep working on that through Bill 18. We're going to keep working on the Criminal Code and we know there will still be room to improve protections from bullying, keeping in mind that whatever we do will be mindful of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which, ultimately, as the Attorney General, is my responsibility.

There hasn't been an analysis done and there would be some concerns. So I do want to agree with the member for River Heights. There is more work to do. I agree with the member for River Heights—there may be other steps that can be taken by this Legislature, and I do pledge to the member for River

Heights that we're going to keep this dialogue going, to make sure we always take steps to move the goalposts and make Manitoba the safest, strongest place we possibly can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I'm going to address the point specifically from the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) shortly.

I do want to say that I think we've had a bit of a breakthrough this morning. I'm so grateful that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) stood up and spoke. I can't wait for Hansard to come out so I can—can I send it out? Because he gave a very, very interesting example, maybe not the one I would have wanted to use, but he gave the example about the sporting analogy and the Blue Bombers and about how if he were going to go to the game on the weekend, as he will and I will, and we were offended, or took some offence, by the sort of things that the Roughrider fans were doing, if they hurt our feelings, that that wouldn't necessarily be something that should go to the human rights complaint.

And that's exactly the argument that many of the people who are coming to the Bill 18 committee are saying. The exact same argument that the Minister of Justice put on the record that I'm going to send out and make sure people see is the exact same argument, that just because your feelings are hurt about something, maybe that doesn't rise to the level of bullying or a human rights complaint or harassment, just like the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) said. So I actually think we've had a breakthrough this morning. He gave the perfect example, and I can't wait to hear it repeated back to him at committee in the days ahead. I look forward to that. He gave the exact example that all of these individual people coming to the committee hearings. In fact, he actually answered his own question. He said, why is it that you could vote against the bill, and then he gave the answer. Because of that exact reason, because we want to ensure that people aren't being labelled as bullies because they've accidentally hurt somebody's feelings, like the Roughrider fans might be doing to me on the weekend.

So I want to thank the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) for giving the exact answer to the question that he asked, that I'm going to ensure that everybody that I can reach is going to see his comments because he made the argument better than I could. He made it more succinctly than I could ever have done it, that those hurt feelings or sort of feeling uncomfortable aren't necessarily rising to the level of bullying. And

so I thank the Attorney General gratefully. He was wonderful, the comments he put on the record, Mr. Speaker.

I want to speak specifically to the bill that was introduced by the member for River Heights. And, you know, it's topical, obviously, and it's important that we have the discussion. One of the things that's become clear over the first two days now of hearings on Bill 18 is we have heard from young people who are still in school being bullied; we've heard from adults who have relayed their experiences of being bullied. And consistently now, we've heard from 98 per cent of those who've been bullied who said they don't think this bill would help them today or have helped them in the past.

And it's really interesting—it's interesting that the ones who are the ones being bullied, the ones that the Bill 18 is actually supposed to protect, are the ones who are coming out and saying, well, we don't support the bill because it wouldn't have helped us. So those who've been bullied for 98 per cent of the reasons that kids get bullied—body image, language, ethnicity; we've heard all of those at committee—feel they've been abandoned by the government. They feel there's an antibullying bill that isn't actually supporting them. It's as though the government brought in a bill to protect a certain group and then all of those people that they say they were going to protect came out and said we don't support the bill.

That's been the fascinating thing about the Bill 18 committees is that 98 per cent of those who are being bullied are saying we don't support the antibullying bill because it wouldn't help us, we feel abandoned by the government. But we will look forward to further discussion on Bill 18.

But I just want to again emphasize I'm so grateful that we've had a breakthrough and that one of the NDP members, a minister nonetheless, the Minister of Justice, gets it. He finally gets it in terms of what one of the concerns is about Bill 18, and we look forward to distributing his comments far and wide in the province of Manitoba.

On the bill that's been brought forward by the member for River Heights, I want to say to him, thank you for bringing it forward. I think the discussion is important. I'm not entirely sure that the Human Rights Code is the exact place to have this particular provision. I think the provisions on harassment deal with a lot of the issues in terms of outside of the schools or the workplace or for adults,

but I don't disagree that the discussion is worth having.

When I've looked at the harassment provisions in different human rights codes across Canada—and they exist in almost every one, and they certainly exist in Manitoba—I think it does cover a lot of what the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has brought forward in this particular bill. I do also think that there are things outside of the Human Rights Code that could be done in the Criminal Code, and I know that Minister Rob Nicholson is looking at provisions to make it a criminal offence to distribute images without consent that are personal images, and I think that that is something that is very valuable. And that would certainly address some of the issues of bullying that we've seen in cases in Nova Scotia and in cases in British Columbia.

In fact, I want to just remind the Legislature, if it needs a reminder, we have another antibullying bill before the Legislature here. It's a bill that I brought forward with the support of our caucus. In fact, a number of presenters at committee have specifically referenced that bill or referenced the bill in Nova Scotia, which that bill is modelled after, and said that's what we need in Manitoba, that that would actually give some teeth to dealing with severe cases and repeated cases of bullying. So I want to remind the Legislature that it's not too late. We have several days left at least in this session and we can still work on that bill and we can still pass that bill for the benefit of kids who are being bullied.

*(10:30)

But I do think ultimately the best solution, Mr. Speaker, is to find a way, a bill, that will protect all kids. I have concerns with the definition that's embedded in the minister—member for River Heights' bill because it mirrors the definition of Bill 18, and that is a concern. We are concerned that teachers are going to get captured under that bill. We are concerned that they are going to be captured as—through false allegations. We've heard from teachers—in fact, I was interested, we had the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society come before committee. I appreciated the fact that he came to committee to make a presentation. And he made a declaration that teachers weren't concerned. And so that—I found that interesting because I'd been getting different feedback from teachers, both in my community and around Manitoba.

And, you know, it's kind of made me worried, because when the Teachers' Society came to the

committee on the PST increase and said that all the teachers were in favour of the PST increase, that really surprised me because I've got a lot of teachers in my family, I know they weren't in favour of the PST increase. And the next day I spent the whole day responding to angry teachers who were saying, that wasn't our view, the union wasn't speaking for us, we don't agree with the PST increase.

So I had to ask the president of the MTS union, can you tell me, because I don't want to be dealing with emails all day the next day—yesterday, after his presentation—just assure me that you actually spoke to teachers, you asked your teachers about Bill 18 and they're okay with it, right? Well, I found it that he said, no, they didn't. They didn't actually survey the teachers. So that was a little bit concerning that we had presenters saying that they spoke for everybody when, in fact, that wasn't the case.

But we've talked to a lot of teachers. In fact, we put out a survey. We had about 17 or 18 hundred responses, I believe, many teachers who responded and said they are concerned. They're concerned because the definition might result in them being falsely accused. They're concerned because they think it's unenforceable.

I talked to a teacher who's—teaches grade 1 students, and she said, under the current definition where hurt feelings is included, she said, all of my students, my 25 students in grade 1, they'll all be bullies by the end of the month and they'll all be victims at the end of the month because of how broad that definition is. So she says, I have no way to enforce this; I essentially have to ignore it and hope that nobody actually comes and tries to ask what I'm doing, because, she said, I wouldn't know what to do with a definition that broad. And so I have concerns that that definition is embedded within the legislation that the member for River Heights has brought forward.

But, ultimately, I do hope that we're able to, through the Bill 18 hearings, bring forward some amendments and have some changes that will ensure that all kids are protected, because I get worried when we listen to presenter after presenter who is saying, I wouldn't have been protected, or, I'm not protected, if they are currently being bullied in schools. That's really worrisome, when 98 per cent of the kids who are being bullied for a variety of reasons are saying, I've been abandoned by the government under an antibullying bill. Not only does it give false hope, it certainly, I think, makes them

look more negatively upon government because they feel that they're not important. Kids who are already being bullied are already vulnerable. They may already feel that they're not important, and then they hear from their government that they're not important, that they've been excluded from an antibullying bill. It's a terrible thing to do to a young person, Mr. Speaker.

But I'm optimistic today. I'm optimistic today because now I think we actually—and I'm glad that the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) is engaged and I hope she talks to the Attorney General (Mr. Swan), because now I think we have a breakthrough in the NDP caucus because he gets it, he gets it that hurt feelings can ultimately entrap you in a different way that you don't expect. He gave a great example and I intend to distribute that example across Manitoba. We finally have a breakthrough. I thank the Attorney General for finally coming around and seeing things the way many Manitobans do.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I thank the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for bringing forward this Human Rights Code Amendment Act regarding that which gives us some chance to discuss about the human rights. And I'm sure we can make so many amendments, that's important, but at the same time we have to make sure we have the system where education is given in human rights. Maybe we should have some compulsory course in education where human rights are taught. And like—I don't know where to start. We can speak for a long time about human rights.

I come from the country where I think human-violating human rights was in the society's ethics, and what was—there was caste system. Caste system was great to start with because caste system, that was division of labour, that was good. But later on it got polluted and people misused it and people were bullying from—higher caste people would bully the lower caste. And even lower caste people did not have a chance to—did not have the right to read and listen the scripture. They were not allowed to do that. That was bullying itself.

So there was a person came, Guru Nanak, and people consider him a leader of the Sikh religion, but I consider him a leader of human rights who challenged the system, tried to create a casteless system, and he said their society should be such, nobody should—forced to feel an outsider. So that

was important. Slowly, slowly that theory developed and the system got created and at the end the 10th guru said, there's just one—there's only one race; that is the human race.

And you will—so proud. We know we are having a human rights museum. There, Mahatma Gandhi's statue has been installed, but I wonder how we will be able to put that statue on some recognition to those people who even did—500 years before Mahatma Gandhi—who stood up against those—who's for the human rights. Ninth guru, who was sixth guru and he was Sikh, but Hindus were forced to convert their religion by the king who was a Muslim. So that guru sacrificed his life for the other religion. How we can say there is not—those people are not important. I think those people—their name should go to the Human Rights Museum. And that's—I think, if we create this system, the Human Rights Museum itself, that will be, itself, a bullying if the people—those kind of people are not included.

But I'm going to give you some stories—my personal stories. My son was playing outside—he was 4 years old—and also some girl was playing outside. She came to him. She told him, you are Paki, and that was a derogatory word for the East Indian used at that time and still sometimes used. And my son did not know the difference, but that girl learned from her parents. But my son did not know the difference, and he said, you are Paki, and he was very proud to tell me. He came home, Dad, I told that girl, you are Paki. So I was wondering how much difference between he does not know about the discrimination, but that girl knows about discrimination. So discrimination starts from the home. That's why we should have some education at the school level so that we can start from the beginning, so no part of the society could be discriminated.

Another time, like when I came to Canada, in Vancouver, and there was no such day when you won't listen—racial slurs. One day, we were going down the road, and the people in the pickup, they had eggs in their hands. They—thrown those eggs at us. Another day, we were playing in the park, and in that park, a couple of kids came. They have water in the plastic bag they—thrown at us because they learned that from their parents that these people are not as good as we are. These people should go back where they come from. That was the—at that time.

So it's very important we start in the schools comparative studies in cultures and comparative

studies in religion so that people can more understand these differences and they can enjoy the differences. They can celebrate the differences as compared to discriminate.

I can tell you, like, many stories. I was working at one place, and people buy Lotto 6/49, but they will leave me out and not ask me to participate in that one. And that was hurting—that was hurting. I—but you have to tough it out.

* (10:40)

And, similarly, at another place I worked, a person told me, you know, you come from there where you beat your wives and you are not as good and you cannot tell us anything that you are better people than us. And I said, listen, watch it. There is no culture is good or bad. All cultures have their distinction, but I don't think you really understand our culture. If you understand our culture you won't say that. So, again, it comes back to the education because those people are prejudicing against because of ignorance. So it's important we start again teaching in the school so that ignorance can be eliminated—maybe not be eliminated, but can be reduced. This way I think we can really create a better society. But don't forget this is a great country. People come to this country because we have better human rights protection. But we have to go farther we—I have come a from long way. When I came over here, like, about all those incidents I almost wanted to go back to India. I wrote a letter to my father to send me a ticket, I don't want to stay over here. But later on I changed my mind, and I think I made a good decision to stay over here because of the kids can be in a better environment and it can be better person. It can have more opportunity.

Sometime I tell our people who come from foreign countries it's not—like, this country is a great country. Nobody can stop you what do you want to do and how far you want to go except yourself. Only what is stopping you yourself because if you are really determined nobody can stop you.

So this is a great country and we must have to keep continuing. I know there is sometimes a difference between how the other people live, and for those people don't hurt us. Why we are worried about? Why we are want to stop them? Sure, sometimes we use our religion part of our own prejudices. No religion tells that one should be discriminated. Discrimination is not part of any religion. Sometime it's interpretation of the—those scriptures. That's why I think do—in the Sri Guru

Granth Sahib Ji, that book that said, do not say that these scriptures are not true, but those people are all opposed—those people are opposed of lying who don't—do not want to translate in the proper way, who do not want to interpret in the proper way. So that's important for us [*inaudible*] let we go back to our scriptures, think according to the time how those scriptures can be used, how those statements can be used and also, we should all make sure that because no—nothing always is improving, improving and evolving. You cannot stick to the old ways. It doesn't matter what has been said in the past and how it has been interpreted. I think it's a matter of interpretation of the scriptures not the [*inaudible*] trans—interpreted those books according to the changing time, according to the science. I don't think we will have any problem with the bullying.

So the bullying is—bullying can be stopped by the education. I think I emphasis on that one.

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I'm pleased to get up to speak a little bit about the bill that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has brought forward. I want to thank him for this contribution to the discussion that we're having in the Legislature about bullying, about discrimination and about some of the ways that we as legislators can look at new tools and some innovative tools, and I think this is a very innovative approach that he's brought forward today.

I also—I've been sitting here wondering if I should get up or not, and I have to say throughout this debate and many other debates in this House I have mightily resisted the temptation to get up and speak on this issue because I know where I stand and I know where the people who sit around me stand and have always stood, and that is clearly on the side of equality and justice for every Manitoban. And I don't expect to change a lot of hearts and minds over there, but there are moments where your own human dignity demands that you get up and defend yourself and your community, and I think this is one of those moments.

Listening to some of the debate and presentations to Bill 18 over the last couple of nights has been reminiscent, in many ways, of the debates that happened 25 years ago—26 years ago now, when the Human Rights Code was brought into Manitoba. It was brought in by the NDP government of the day.

And there's also much that has changed in that time, and much that has changed is because that code was brought into law. And some of the arguments that are reminiscent of that time is this ongoing argument that somehow to extend protection, to extend rights, must diminish the rights of others. And that is false; it's a false premise and it's a false argument. But it's an argument that continues to be made. And I think every time we've seen that human rights get extended, get enlarged, we see that it does not have a negative effect on other people; it does not have a negative effect on other people who've already enjoyed those rights.

This was an argument made against allowing women to vote, that somehow if you allowed women to vote, this would wreck the family, that women would not be at home cooking supper; they'd be out—horrors of horrors—and be engaged in political activity. Those were arguments of the day. Women have enjoyed the right to vote for many, many years. There's been no—I would argue—no real diminishment as a result of that on anybody.

These were arguments that were made in the American south when people were fighting for civil rights, were combatting things like prohibitions against marrying people of different races. There's also laws that religion was used to justify at the time.

When—recently I rewatched the film Lincoln and the discussion about abolishing slavery. And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that on both sides of that discussion, those who were pro-slavery and those who were against slavery used in their discussions religious freedom as a reason. Either those who were motivated to abolish slavery were motivated, in many respects, by their faith, and those who were motivated to hold onto it were motivated, in many respects, by their faith.

So these are arguments that have been with us since the beginning of time. But it is a false argument.

And the other thing I want to make very clear, and I'm going to continue to say, and we're all going to continue to say—because I think that the misinformation that the opposition has put on the record regarding Bill 18 is destructive and needs to be corrected—Bill 18 protects all kids. It protects every kid from bullying. Every kid. It protects my kid. It protects the children of the members of the opposition. It protects grandchildren of people in this Chamber. It protects all kids. Every child who is

bullied is protected by that legislation, no matter on the grounds that they're bullied.

And the Human Rights Code, and every element that is in the Human Rights Code, is part of Bill 18. Every grounds of discrimination is part of that bill: ancestry, nationality or national origin, ethnic background, religion or creed, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital or family status, source of income, political belief, physical or mental disability, social disadvantage.

And in addition to that, the code prohibits discrimination based on other group stereotypes, rather than on individual merits. So any child that is being bullied, for any reason, is protected by Bill 18. And we're going to continue to say that because that's the truth. And the only way sometimes that you can fight something that isn't true, is by continuing to state the truth.

And what else does the bill do? The bill goes on to say that as schools are crafting a policy to help combat bullying by creating an environment that's free of prejudice, that one of the things is—that they cannot do is say no to students who want to come together and sit in a classroom, and talk about how to fight bullying. That's one of the things they can't do.

So if a group of students wants to come together and form an antiracism coalition, to fight against what they perceive as racism in their schools, to kind of try to foster a greater understanding, a school board can't say no to that.

If a group of students want to come together and launch a campaign in their school to get kids to stop calling each other words that slur people who have intellectual capacities—there's a very famous campaign going on right now to stamp out the use of what people call the r-word—a school board can't say no to that.

If a group of students wants to come together and form an organization and meet to talk about how do we break down gender stereotypes in our schools, how do we help make sure that both boys and girls are able to exist, to be healthy, to not fall prey to the same kind of gender stereotypes that many of us were raised with, a school board can't say no to that.

* (10:50)

And yes, if a group of students want to come together, and say that we want to fight against bullying based on sexual orientation, a school board can't say no to that. That's what the bill does.

Is it the final silver bullet that's going to end all bullying? No. And I don't think anybody has claimed that. But it's always interesting in these debates that you both hear that we can't—we shouldn't have this legislation because no legislation could do anything about bullying and we shouldn't have this legislation because it doesn't go far enough to do anything about bullying. Neither of those arguments, I think, are adequate. It doesn't do everything. It does some things. And the things that it does is to help create an environment where bullying can be prevented.

Many, many other things have to be done, that's true. And I had hoped—when we had a vote in this Chamber, I'd hoped that at least some members opposite—I didn't expect them all—but I hoped that some of them would be courageous enough to stand with those kids who are trying to fight bullying in their schools. I'd hoped for that. I knew, based on past practice, that it probably wasn't going to happen, because I know—and I've seen other votes in this Chamber—that despite the fact that members opposite have been extremely welcoming and pleasant to me and ask about my child and are congratulatory to me, there sit across me members who voted against my right to be a parent. That is true. I live with that fact. When they had the choice to decide whether or not my name could be on my child's birth certificate, there are people sitting opposite right now who voted against my right to have that. And I appreciate their well wishes and I appreciate that they treat me well, but when it came time to take a stand on whether or not they were going to protect my rights or not, they said no.

And I sit across from their leader who, not once but twice, voted against my right to be married. And that's the truth. And he's pleasant to me, and I believe we have a cordial relationship, but that is the truth. When it came time for him to speak publicly about my family, he called my family a social experiment. That's what he said. And I guess it doesn't really—you know, according to the members of the opposition, it doesn't matter my feelings are hurt about that, but that's the reality. That is the Leader of the Opposition. That is his belief. When it came time for him to take a stand and say that, you know what, if a person is beaten up because they're gay, that crime deserves extra punishment, he said no to that. He voted against that. So it's not, perhaps, surprising that when it came time once again for members of the opposition to decide whose side they're on, to decide if they're going to stand for rights for all people, to decide if they're going to be courageous and perhaps

engage in some difficult discussions with their constituents, as all of us have had to do, they decided not to take that path. They decided to once again stand up against human rights, to stand up against equality. And I am sorry for that because I don't believe that's how they all feel.

But I'm also sorry for that because of the message that we've sent the students of Manitoba who are coming together, who do believe in social justice, who do believe in fighting equality and are much more courageous than we are. For kids to come together in a high school, in any high school in this province, and sit with each other and talk about their differences, break down some of the barriers that exist and say, we're going to stand together because those who stand together against bullies are always going to be stronger than the bullies, that's courageous. And who but those kids deserve our full support? Don't they deserve every one of us standing with them? And it's a shame that that's not going to happen, Mr. Speaker. But I know what side I'm on. I'm on this side.

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

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): This is a great privilege to rise this morning and put a few of my thoughts on this bill. And I thank the member from River Heights, the Liberal leader, whom, I must say, I admire for his hard work. And, at times, when he brings the issues, like the member from Fort Rouge said, we feel, at times, internally, that, yes, he's right. I mean, no one, Mr. Speaker—I have spoken here several times—no one has the monopoly to say that we are always right and no one has the monopoly to bring any new ideas and good ideas. So, I'm positive, more optimistic today by looking at the debate—type of debates we are having in this Chamber, trying to make things change and trying to make the world better.

And I must like to say, particularly to the member from River Heights, that I had a mentor who now lives in Vancouver, John Mann, who educated me, who told me that you keep fighting for the rights, because he, himself, has gone through a huge amount of discrimination when he was in Vancouver and, like the member from Maples said, that people would spit on him publicly. And he said a race relations act is what my dream is. So now I see we are working together to bring something like that closer. And the member from River Heights, I thank him to bring this redefinition of bullying—a little

more defined so that it goes into the Human Rights Code.

Talking about human rights, Mr. Speaker, this is a very emotional issue for me, because I have been speaking for several times here about the Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and how he has changed the lives of millions and millions of people in the world. And there are leaders like Martin Luther King, there are leaders like the Nelson Mandelas that are bringing a new change in the world.

But here in Manitoba, we should really go back and look at where Maples—the member from The Maples stated the story of his son being called a name. That's a very common thing—was a very common thing at one time, but we have come a long way. But I think passing such a kind of act, amending things that we do, make it a little more legal, to get a complaint lodged and get that person who's responsible be punished is going to be improving the society. Particularly in the education system, I think it's very important for us to think how we are going to educate our children to be a better human being.

I must experience my own stories, Mr. Speaker, which is very—at times, I get very saddened when I look back. I would not really have enough time to display all those stories, but I would like to share with the House that, yes, I had experience there. But I was tremendously influenced by Mahatma's influence of saying no—non-violence—don't fight back.

And I recalled a story that I shared with my children when Mahatma Gandhi was walking on a protest in South Africa. He was a western-educated barrister—London-educated—suit.

But then he changed his clothes to an ordinary attire and he was walking, and from the second floor some people who thought that he is a dirty man threw a pail of human waste on his head. And everyone started laughing, ha, ha, ha. And Mahatma looked up and he said, let God forgive you, and he kept walking. With a tremendous amount of strength and very powerful personality, he kept on doing, and we all know what that meant. Tolerance is not a defeat; tolerance is the victory.

But, again, having said all that, Mr. Speaker, we have to see how we get our young ones—the children who go in the schools—how we protect them, how we make them understand that others are similar or equal. I remember, at one time, when my children

were going to school, they would come and share some stories, disheartening stories. I always give them the example of Gandhi, and I said that, no, don't surrender—don't surrender. But don't be physical. Try to educate them that you are equal.

So, I don't know if—many of you may remember, at one time there was a serial called Roots by Alex Haley, who wrote a fantastic novel a—the journey of Kunta Kinte who went to Africa and find out his roots. And in that story, my, you know, daughter, Reena, was here. She was, I think, three years old when this serial was going on and she asked me, Dad, what does that mean: a—the—a white girl and a black boy sitting together and she said to him, listen, God has created me—why your skin is white?—she says, God created me a little bit better. Oh, and he goes home. He says, Mom, are we not equal? Mom said, no, we are all equal. God has created you tall—boy and girl different. One is tall, one is short; we're all different—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) will have four minutes remaining.

The hour being 11 a.m., it's the time for private member's resolution. And the resolution, as previously announced, will be the resolution entitled "Manitoba Hydro Rate Hikes," sponsored by the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk, who has five minutes remaining.

DEBATE ON RESOLUTIONS

Res. 6—Manitoba Hydro Rate Hikes

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's indeed an honour to rise today to speak about this important issue. And it draws members in the Legislature, it gives an opportunity to draw out the contrast between our vision of Manitoba Hydro, our vision of Manitoba versus the vision of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

We know that we believe in building Hydro. We believe in building it; it's part of our economic present and part of our economic future. We know the members opposite, they oppose that; we know the members opposite, if they had their way, they would mothball many of the projects that are necessary. We know that hydro, in many ways, is our future. Like I said, it's our oil, you know, they need

it—Manitoba families and businesses need it. It's obviously a clean, reliable, affordable energy source. We know that the world of energy is changing across the world but we know that hydro—clean, reliable hydro—will always be a part of our future, and not only that, but our ability to export into a growing US market. And not only that, but we need it for our own domestic use, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the member for—well, as I said, we're running out of power. We need to invest in new projects so we can be sure we have the power when we need it. And that's why we have to make in—critical investments in infrastructure like Keeyask, Conawapa and Bipole III.

Mr. Speaker, I was a member in the Legislature when the Filmon government signed the deal with the Ontario government to build Conawapa. I remember with great fanfare was—the event was held, I believe, in room 200 with great fanfare. They are now said they're going to proceed with Conawapa with only a few days—a few years later, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) will agree, that they cancel it. They cancelled the project, and that's what they believe. We are believe—we believe in the—in building Conawapa; we believe in building Bipole III; we believe in building Keeyask. It'll take seven years for Keeyask to come; it'll take seven years to build it. So we need to start now. We cannot continuously put these investments off. We know that Bipole III was necessary years ago. We know—and I remember quite clearly the—viewing the damage of Bipole I and Bipole II, as it was in the Interlake, when they had the wind damage which caused considerable damage to Bipole I and to Bipole II. So we need Bipole III for reliability.

Also, we know that there's a growing split across the way in the Conservative caucus when it comes to the routing of Bipole III. We know that the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), he opposed a—and he wanted us to politically manipulate the routing of a hydro line in his own constituency. He brought in petition after petition. He claimed that the hydro line would cause cancer, and that's what the petition said. I'm not saying it's true or not, but that is what he presented every single day in this Chamber. So he tried to—he wanted us, as a government, to politically manipulate the routing of this transmission line through his constituency.

And we know that the member for St. Paul, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), they're more

than happy to have the line go down the west side because, apparently, they claim—and again these are claims put forward by individuals fueled by members of the opposition—that the Bipole III will affect livestock; it will impact the value of property in the area; it'll affect the operations of GPS on certain equipment. If that is the case in western Manitoba, what about in eastern Manitoba? Don't they care about the cattle in eastern Manitoba? Don't they care about the GPS equipment in eastern Manitoba? But these members, they're more than happy to sit down, they're more than happy to, you know, let the members on the west side have to deal with it. They're more than happy to not raise this as a concern because they know that they're more than happy to, I guess, allow the other members to deal with this, Mr. Speaker.

They also know that the Conservatives voted against equalization of hydro rates. This is the government that realized that there was two sets of rates for hydro when it—when we came into government: urban were paying a certain amount and the rural Manitobans were paying more. Mr. Speaker, we equalized rates. We set up a system where there's one rate for whether you live in Winnipeg or one rate whether you live in Thompson or Selkirk or the The Pas. Members opposite opposed it. They should be ashamed of themselves and yet they profess to stand up for rural Manitoba. Nothing can be further from the truth.

And we know that when it comes to dealing with Crown corporations they have a poor history, Mr. Speaker. They sold a money-making telephone company and they bought a money-losing gas company.

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

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): It's certainly interesting to listen to the member from Selkirk. The vision of the NDP for Manitoba Hydro is—the new vision now is the Americanization of Hydro. And it is all about supplying the American market with power at a loss and that Manitoba ratepayers will have to make up the difference for that. And we're seeing it right now.

The Wuskwatim Generating Station, budgeted at something like \$900 million—about \$800 million, pardon me, and it came in at \$1.6 billion, so not quite on budget, only double its budget. And now what we're seeing is that on—right from the Wuskwatim's website it says power produced by the dam is

designated for export. So why are we selling power at—to the US right now at a loss? It's because they've built this dam and they have to sell it at a loss. The current—that's why our hydro rates are going up. Wuskwatim dam currently is losing \$117 million per year. And that is expected to continue.

And I know the Minister for—responsible for Manitoba Hydro is not agreeing with that, but show us the numbers, then, where it's not. It's losing money. You're producing power at—tell us what the power is being produced at, then, in Wuskwatim. And the estimates are—because the minister won't release this, the estimates are that it's over 10 cents per kilowatt. You're selling power on the cash market in the US at under 3 cents and so you're losing money.

So tell us how Manitoba Hydro—and look at Manitoba Hydro's financial statements. They're—they almost lost money last year. That's gone down. They don't have a pot to raid anymore, so now—and I really don't understand—they want to build dams to sell power at a loss. They want to sell power at a loss. They're—Manitoba Hydro is not going to have a pot of—a reserve left to—for them to raid like they did back a number of years ago. So they're going to be in a difficult position to—because Manitoba Hydro is not in a financial position to show any substantial profits these days. And the only profit that's going to come out of them is from raising domestic rates. And that is what's totally wrong about this entire plan.

They're—they need to put Manitoba Hydro's—*[interjection]* Well, I understand that the NDP are sensitive about this issue, you know, because they want to—they think they own Manitoba Hydro. The NDP party really feel it's their company. It's not—they don't feel it's Manitoba's company. We believe that Manitoba Hydro belongs to Manitobans, and yet this—the NDP does not agree with that. They want to continue to put Manitoba Hydro in a really precarious financial position.

Previous NDP members—a premier, Ed Schreyer; Tim Sale, a former minister—they're all—both of them are saying that this is the wrong approach that this current government is taking towards Manitoba Hydro. They—we need to have a complete and thorough needs-for-and-analysis-to study, an NFAT study, including Bipole III, because it doesn't make sense what they're doing with Bipole III.

You want a line for reliability. Why do you build a line 500 kilometres longer? Why do you build it through tornado alley? Why does it cost at least—at

least—a billion dollars more? And they haven't started the project yet, so we know what their record is on financial management, given Wuskwatim dam.

* (11:10)

So this Bipole III is going to cost just unfathomable amount of money more than what it should, and it's not going to be as reliable. There are technical issues with it that former Hydro engineers have outlined, and yet this government turns a blind eye and a deaf ear to any amount of reasoned response to this, to the concerns.

So we have a company, Manitoba Hydro, a publicly owned company that's now has to raise rates. They've raised them 8 and a half per cent over just in the past year alone. This is hurting all Manitobans and, you know, it hurts everyone, but particularly the lower income people. Hydro quite often is—they have electric heat and it's their main heat source within their homes and this hurts them bad. And this is on top of the tax increases that this government continues to put on Manitoba families. We know that with the fee and tax increases from a year ago, the sales tax increase from this year, that it's—there's less money in the households, in every household, and in, when—it becomes even more acute in lower income households that these people will have to—and you can't just not pay your hydro bill. The hydro bill needs to be paid if you want to keep the lights on and your house warm.

So, Mr. Speaker, this government needs to step back and reassess what they're doing. The energy market has changed considerably in the last few years. And I understand, the NDP likes to talk about the '90s and I understand that. That's their talking points these days, but we're not in the 1990 energy markets, and this is where this government just fails to see that the energy market has changed substantially in the last—just in the last few years. The wind generation into the—in the US has increased by 520 per cent. Granted, wind energy is not as reliable, but you—when you get enough of the capacity out there, it does become reliable and that's—this is what the Americans have done with theirs. And, of course, they've subsidized their wind energy in the south. That's not something that is any secret, but the fact is it's there.

And then there's the natural gas industry and the natural gas production, the technology now that's coming out there and the price of natural gas has dropped. They're now using combined cycle combustion turbine generation from natural gas, and

there is plentiful supplies of natural gas both in Canada and the US to the point where the US is talking about becoming energy self-sufficient. And they're going to use this power, this fuel source, to generate more power because energy, hydroelectricity is—or electricity is part of the energy component that they're looking to become self-sufficient in.

So we need to re-evaluate. We need to stand back, do an NFAT study on this entire capital project that the NDP is forcing on Manitoba Hydro. There is time to do this. We do have time. We should never say that there isn't time to take a thorough second look at something and reassessment. There are so many factors that have changed in the last—just in the last few years on the energy market that the—that this government is failing, failing to take into account, and this is a \$21-billion gamble that the NDP is forcing on Manitoba Hydro, they're forcing on Manitobans. We as Manitobans will pay the price for this if it doesn't, and if it doesn't work out and if it really does work, if this really—then put it to the NFAT. If they really have a strong argument for this then put it to a complete and comprehensive NFAT study so that we can see how it will actually pay. The—we should not be depending on 192 NDP spin doctors to sell us on the—on a \$21-billion capital program, and yet that's what this government is doing and that's shameful. They should—Manitobans will pay the price on this. Our hydro bills are going to double over the next 10 to 20 years, and it's—you know, this is something that's going to affect all Manitobans. We need to have this complete review of Manitoba Hydro, and that's really what the resolution says: Put all the capital programs that the NDP is forcing on Manitoba Hydro, including Bipole III, put it under an NFAT study, and let's have a complete, thorough and honest evaluation of Manitoba Hydro's future plans and let's—let all Manitobans decide what their company should be doing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): I'm very pleased that this came back up, this PMR. I was a little bit worried that I wasn't going to get a chance to speak to it. And although I don't know if I can be as passionate as the member from Kildonan is able to be, I do feel equally passionate about hydro and what we're doing with it.

The member from Midland mentioned us trying to sell this, what we're doing, to the people. If he wants somebody outside of Manitoba who is selling it for us, he might want to listen to the gentleman

from Minnesota, vice-president, I believe, of Minnesota Power, who was recently in Winnipeg, and he gave quite a speech about why it's so important that we be doing what we're doing in building hydro.

I'm also interested—I'm not going to speak a lot about what the opposite member—member opposite was saying, but I did want to mention that the rates and the fact that they were calling for market rates. So I'm kind of mystified by this whole idea that they would now want, like—

An Honourable Member: Quadruple the rates.

Ms. Wight: Yes. They wanted to quadruple the rates, so I'm confused by their current dilemma over our rates, which is very, very low in comparison.

The mandate, Mr. Speaker, of Hydro, my understanding, is to provide reliable, clean, low costing energy to the people of Manitoba. That's what I believe the mandate is. And I can't understand how members opposite don't see that that's exactly what Hydro has been doing and will continue to do for many hundreds of years, hopefully, into the future. We are doing exactly that.

Now, I believe that the—I could be wrong about this number, but I believe that the member from Kildonan mentioned to me at one point that, overall, in Canada, different provinces would be spending around \$350 billion in the next coming years in order to try and find a power supply that they need for their people. And so I think the cost that we are spending now is more than reasonable and will certainly only go up if we again mothball it the way the past government did.

We—we're just—Manitoba's growing and maybe that's the piece they can't grasp. Manitoba's population is increasing. Now—our government—companies want to be here, Mr. Speaker. People want to be investing in this province, and we need to have the power to make that possible for them to do. We ourselves will need that energy. If we don't build we will have to import power, and I just can't understand why they think that that would be a good idea. It's sort of—it's beyond me. It's our oil, except it's cleaner, it's greener.

I know the member from St. Norbert was just mentioning to me about the doctors of Alberta coming out and begging them to get rid of the coal-generated power in Alberta, which is at, I think, still something like 41 per cent of their power in coal. And they went on about the, you know, the

health damage to their children and to the people of Alberta caused by this coal plant. Well, we don't have these kinds of problems.

We hear in other places things like rolling blackouts. Well, you know what? In Manitoba, I bet there's a lot of people who don't even know what rolling blackouts are because we don't have them in Manitoba. Why don't we have them? We don't have them because Hydro is reliable. We have a reliable source of power here in Manitoba and we should be proud of it.

* (11:20)

I know I looked at the history, as I see them, you know, coming out against Hydro over and over and over again. It absolutely takes me back to MTS. I hate to say I was even old enough to remember the sale of MTS, but, like, I was. I was, I admit it. And that's what happened then. They, you know, put down MTS. They made it sound like it was losing money when that was not all the case, and then they sold it off at below market rates, Mr. Speaker.

And what are our rates like now for our telephones? Have the Manitoba people gained because of this? No. No, they have not gained. We lose money on our telephone rates. We're now the third highest, I believe, in the country. So, really, do we want that happening with our hydro? I know I don't, because it's not something you can reverse; you can't take it back once it's gone, and we don't want it gone.

I'm also interested in the fact that they don't seem to be able to understand opportunity sales. You know, when they talk about the lower rates as if we were, you know, sort of subsidizing the Americans or something, it's just such a lack of knowledge, Mr. Speaker, about what's going on.

It's about short-term surpluses of electricity. And we have short-term surpluses of electricity, Mr. Speaker, usually because of good water conditions. And since the amount of energy available for these sales can change in a relatively short period of time, it cannot be sold as firm or guaranteed energy. So short-term export market fluctuates, of course. That water would just be spilled for zero dollars if we didn't get what we could for it. It's extra money coming to Manitoba to help us pay for the cost of what we need in hydro now and in the future. It's just makes sense.

So wholesale electricity sold to US customers under firm contracts at fixed rates is currently priced

at 50 per cent higher than what large Manitoba industrial customers in Manitoba have to pay. So export prices are not subsidized by the Manitoba ratepayer at all. So, I mean, that's just putting out false information when we hear that kind of thing.

And here we get rates—I've got some of the examples: In Saskatchewan, families pay \$631 a year more and Ontario families pay \$753 a year more than Manitobans. Minnesota families pay as much as \$515 more. Wisconsin families, Mr. Speaker, pay up \$947 more than families in Manitoba pay.

Obviously, you know, this is something that we need to keep—we need to continue. We need to keep building Manitoba. We want Manitoba to continue to grow and to continue to prosper the way it has under our government, over the past number of years. We want to see that keep going.

In less than 10 years, Mr. Speaker, we will need more power in Manitoba than we currently produce—in less than 10 years. And I know, as we've said in the House many times before, these things cannot be built in the snap of a finger. You have to have vision. You have to be able to look into the future and not mothball Manitoba. You need to be able to see this is what we're going to need. We want our province to continue to grow.

What has our economy increased by? I think it's doubled. It's up to over a \$60-billion economy now. What does it cost us if we don't have the reliability that these builds are going to give us? I don't know. A billion dollars in a week, I think—I could be wrong—I could be wrong. Somebody give me an answer. Is it a billion dollars in a week? It's a huge amount of money that Manitoba people would lose, Manitoba businesses would lose, if our reliable power were not to be there. So I just can't stress enough how much and how important I believe this is, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Manitoba. I think it completely changes our future.

The Leader of the Opposition called our builds that we're doing dumb—dumb, Mr. Speaker. That was—wow. I don't—it just—it kind of boggles the mind that that would be the response from an opposition leader about something so important to the people of Manitoba, in order to keep our future growing the way it has been over the last 12, 13 years.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to speak to this resolution, and it's interesting to

hear some of the things the government has to say on this.

And Manitoba hydro rates are important to Manitobans and this government pretends that they are low and then we see these constant increases time and time again that are coming along and, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think of a year or so ago I saw a press release about Manitoba Hydro consulting in Nigeria. And I'm sure you receive emails, much like I do, from—purported to be from Nigeria that are trying to get you to invest in something or give them their bank account and often these—well, not often they, are as far as I know, fraudulent emails, so when I saw an announcement that Manitoba Hydro was doing business in Nigeria, I thought this must be a joke.

But, no, indeed Manitoba Hydro is consulting in Nigeria to privatize the national energy company in Nigeria. So a practice run for this government that we are afraid and Manitobans are afraid and Manitoba Hydro employees are afraid that this government plans to sell off Manitoba Hydro, and indeed the increasing hydro rates are part—possibly part of that plan because you want better returns in a company to get a better return to—in order to sell it. So it's all coming together, they're practising in Nigeria how to privatize an electricity monopoly and they're increasing rates to make the company more attractive and then they're going to sell it off, and that is the fear of Hydro employees.

I think back, Mr. Speaker, to—let me think now—it was called MTX and it was doing business in Saudi Arabia under Premier Pawley and the number—I'm trying to think of the amount of money that that NDP government lost in Saudi Arabia and drove MTS into the ground. Isn't that interesting, and here they are again operating in another country but, you know, they are, I understand, getting paid for this so that they can get paid to learn how to privatize Hydro.

So, Mr. Speaker, obviously Manitoba Hydro is important to Manitobans and we want to make sure that it is run efficiently. They want to make sure—Manitobans want to make sure that it makes sense what Manitoba Hydro is doing. But the question is has somebody looked at the whole picture, and there is a belief there that this government has not, and the Public Utilities Board has said much the same that the whole big picture has not been looked at because the events that happened five years ago, 10 years

ago, are considerably different than where we are today.

Today, natural gas prices are at some of the lowest rates they have been in history, and I follow natural gas, Mr. Speaker, because the price of fertilizer is often coupled to the price of natural gas and it has an impact on businesses that I am involved in. So we do make sure that we track natural gas, see where it is and indeed it is amongst the lowest prices we have ever seen. That has implications for electricity generation throughout North America. So it is a different world that Hydro is operating in today than it was five years ago, than it was 10 years ago, and that whole big picture needs to be looked at to make sure that what Hydro is planning, what they're doing today still makes sense five years, 10 years, 20 years out down the road because at this point we see electrical sales to the US are questionable. You know, the demand is not great there right now. Now obviously Hydro does have some long-term contracts that have not been disclosed to the public or even the Public Utilities Board, so we don't know if Hydro makes any money on those contracts or not and we just have to believe the government that they might be.

And, you know, there is a problem there in the belief, Mr. government, because—let me think now—in the last election this government, the NDP government, went out there and said something to Manitobans, oh, yes, they said they weren't going to raise the sales tax, and what's happened? Well, they have. So it would seem to be that there's a belief problem here, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:30)

The public no longer believes in what the government says. You can't believe what they said about the sales tax because the government went out and lied to Manitobans about that. So, the question, Mr. Speaker, are they telling the whole story on Hydro? And are they telling the whole story on hydro rates and on the contracts that they have there?

So, I think it's—it behooves Hydro to step back from it, take a solid look at the business plan. Obviously, you can't 'predict' the business cycle, Mr. Speaker, and that is something that this government has tried to do and tried to say, the rates are going to come back, they'll be good. But we don't know that. It's really a fool's game to 'predict'—predict the business cycle.

So Hydro needs to step back and look at the entire plan and say, these are the things that make sense for Manitoba Hydro, and if it say—makes sense for Manitoba Hydro, that's the difference—not make sense for the government of Manitoba, not necessarily make sense for the public of Manitoba, although that is the owner of Manitoba Hydro. Does it make sense for Manitoba Hydro, without any political interference? And those are the things that need to be looked at, Mr. Speaker.

And, indeed, we've heard that from the 'pelb'—Public Utilities Board. But this government has chosen not to listen to that. Hydro has chosen not to listen to that, and there's a suspicion among the public that this government intervenes and interferes in Hydro decisions and that the decisions are made on a political basis, not on a sound economic basis.

So we want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that it's sound economics and planning that is in place for their planning, and that, indeed, the Manitoba public would be well served by Manitoba Hydro for years to come. Those are the things that the public wants to hear. They want to be assured of that.

And that is something that I think is missing in the entire plan here. But it is something that could easily be done if the entire planning process was looked at and rates were dependable, as opposed to being increased time and time again by this government and another tax on Manitobans is what it all comes down to.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there are several others that wish to speak to this, and I have said my piece and I'm sure we'll want to listen to what the government has in terms of this resolution.

Thank you.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just put on the record that—and I'm very happy to talk to my colleagues in here about Manitoba Hydro, and you—we've heard both sides of the story, had a very passionate speech from the member from Burrows, putting on record the truth about Hydro and where we're going with Hydro. And I think we have to differentiate us from them. In fact, when the honourable member from Burrows was talking, she was talking about we're going to do this, we're going to do that, we're going to make sure that our rates are the lowest in North America, we're going to make sure that the rates throughout Manitoba are the same.

Well, when you look at the other side, it's all about me. You know, what are you going to do for me? What, you know, I want the rates in Brandon to be lower than the rates in Thompson. I want the rates in Steinbach to be lower in Flin Flon. I want the rates in Emerson to be lower than Churchill. Mr. Speaker, are we not one province? *[interjection]* Yes, thank you. I'm glad we're alive and well with people that want to make Manitoban the best for all Manitobans. We talk about we; they talk about me. And there's a big difference. We are the party of we.

And again, I'm flustered, Mr. Speaker, but I'll try and stay on topic, here. I just have to thank the honourable minister of Hydro for moving ahead in—on the projects that we have going and looking at the possibilities of generating even more power, because in 10 years, we're going to be running out of power. So, we got to think ahead. We're not going to think back.

And, again, when we look back at past investments of the opposition, of course, they have tunnel vision; I mentioned that before, with the train coming down the tunnel. And it's going to hit them. It's going to hit them with a blast because the only thing they talk about as an investment in their past history is the selling of MTS. Now, I—you know, they sold it, let's move on. But we're still paying for it. We're still paying for it with the higher rates that we have. The honourable—or the member from Emerson, you know, like, I'd like to say, one ringy dingy, two ringy dingy—hello, we don't own the utility anymore. Your rates—if you want to talk, you have to talk to MTS, not to us, not to the government.

So we gave up a lot and I'm scared, Mr. Speaker. I'm scared because if the me party gets in it looks like, you know, they would box up and redivision Hydro and it would be gone. And that, believe me, that's scary because it is our oil and gas; it is our future not just for the people of the south, not for just the people of the west or the east, but for the people of the north with the jobs and that. So it gives us an economic advantage.

And that Brad Wall has come out and stated that by the end of this summer we are—there is going to be an agreement with Saskatchewan. By the end of next two years—and, you know, you might say I'm going to predict that maybe Alberta—and I am. I'm going to say Alberta will look at our clean energy, because if you resort to coal—I mean, there was just in yesterday's Free Press. There was an article about

what happens when you use coal power in Alberta, the amount of people that go to emergencies, the amount of people that are sick—[interjection] Thousand a year. Thank you.

An Honourable Member: Ten thousand.

Mr. Pettersen: Ten thousand a year; I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, wipe that off the record and put another zero behind there. It's 10,000 people a year go to the hospital because of the coal power they use in Alberta. So it's very important that we recognize that and stick to hydro.

I think we have a vision. We have a vision that's going to not only provide power for Manitoba, but provide safe power. We need to make sure that Bipole III is running and going so that we don't have a shutdown that we did before that could cost us \$1 billion a year. Did you hear that? One billion dollars—not a year, a week, and that could bank rob us in no time.

I think it's important that we also recognize that the possibilities for our Aboriginal people in the north for jobs with the Hydro and the opportunities for mines and other, you know, economic activity out there. So I'm really pleased to see that Hydro is moving forward. I'm pleased to see that we—our party—is looking at increasing it, building dams. We have a vision to sell more power to the States. We have a vision to sell more power to the West in Saskatchewan and Alberta and, you never know, Ontario will come onboard.

We have the lowest rates in North America. I mean, hello. I'm going to say it again. We got the lowest rates in North America and the—[interjection]—thank you, thank you—and they're saying, well, the rates are going up a little bit. They're going up a little bit. You know, like if they—if we went to market rates our rates would double. And then, you know, of course, then if you went to market rates they're thinking oh no, oh no, it would be cheaper in Brandon and it would be cheaper in Steinbach. But up in Flin Flon and Thompson it wouldn't be cheaper if we went to market rates because of the population. It's just the natural shift of people in Manitoba. So I—you know, that scares me to go to market rates.

We have affordable bundle with Hydro, we have heating and car insurance, and that bundle makes our province economically viable to live in. It has many advantages over other provinces. I know they talk about moving to Saskatchewan or moving to North

Dakota and, you know, there's always some things that are a little bit better wherever you go. But the thing is in Manitoba is that we look after the people of Manitoba. We are the party of we. We make sure that you have good health care. We make sure that you have the lowest high rate—hydro rates in Canada. We make sure that our car insurance is low, and I think as a Manitoban it really means that we have a great place to live.

So, yes, I'm going to bring it up again; let's get on the love train. Let's get on the Manitoba love train and, you know, circle this province and look how great it is. Look how great it is in the south. Look at how great it is in the north. Look how great it is, of course, in central Manitoba, in the Interlake. It's a great province to live. It has great possibilities and in—with Churchill being the only port in the Prairies the possibilities are great for it to have an economic boom there and be shipping different things. I know we're looking at oil, but we have to be careful there—and which we are—and we want to make sure of that.

* (11:40)

Now what is the alternative? The alternative is the Leader of the Opposition would cut everything. He would cut Hydro.

An Honourable Member: And sell it.

Mr. Pettersen: Okay. Sell it? Okay, yes. I wasn't even going to go there, but, yes, he would sell it. I mean, that's on his past record.

But not only would he cut Hydro, he would not invest in our future. He would be buying coal, and that's the scary part. He'd be buying the alternative that we don't want—dirty power. You know, the Conservative Party has gone on record saying that there's—the money that's being spent on Hydro—or if we sold Hydro, and that could help to pay off the deficit that we have.

But you know what? You have to think about the people. You have to think about—you know what? We want people to have jobs. If you're going to lay off or cut off 50 per cent of your workforce, that means they're not going to be working. That means they're not going to be buying vehicles, houses, whatever. And I think on this side of the House, we think about Manitobans. We think about—we—what would it be like—what would it be like if you didn't have a job? And that's the thing that you have to realize is that we have to look at all Manitobans. How is it going to affect all Manitobans? Not the ones that buy stock in MTS—yes, they're doing pretty

well. One of them's up there in—you know, they're doing darn well, okay? And then—[interjection] Well, I don't know—I don't know if she is or not. Maybe it's not the time.

But the point is what I'm trying to make is we've got to realize that we represent all Manitobans. We can't worry about having the cheapest hydro in Emerson and forget about the people in Churchill. We've got to think about all people in Manitoba. And we, the NDP, recognize that all Manitobans should be treated equally and fairly. And standing here as the member from Flin Flon, that is very important to me, because I know they said no to Lynn Lake. They said no to Snow Lake. They said no to Leaf Rapids. They said no to all the northern communities, because they wanted me; they wanted them; they wanted I; they wanted—

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

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I'm pleased to rise today and put a few words on the record with respect to this private member's resolution on Manitoba Hydro rate hikes from this NDP government. And I want to thank the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) for bringing this forward for debate in the Manitoba Legislature.

I think it's a good debate that we're having, and, you know, I listened to member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) and his comments, and, you know, he's talked about bankruptcy, Mr. Speaker. Well, the only people that are bankrupting and potentially bankrupting Manitoba Hydro in the province of Manitoba are this NDP government and their policies. And so I find it amusing that he brings up and talks about bankruptcy when this—when the NDP is putting Manitoba Hydro at risk, sending it down that path.

These—this \$21 billion worth of hydro projects, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP is bringing forward, the member for Flin Flon again said he had a vision for those new projects, that they would sell more power to the USA, he said. Well, does he not understand that he has sent—that he is selling the hydro power to the US at a loss? Does he not understand that selling it at a loss to citizens in the United States and states in the United States at a loss, which it is—members opposite may not—may disagree with that, but the facts speak for themselves and perhaps if they understood what the facts are, if they understood how to read the financial statements of Manitoba Hydro, they would understand that they are selling

power to the US at a loss. And the problem with that is that someone has to pick up the tab for that loss, and, unfortunately, it is the citizens of Manitoba through their hydro rate increase that are being forced to pay for this NDP government's mismanagement of Manitoba Hydro.

So the only people that the NDP are hurting are the citizens in this great province of ours because they—because of their tax-and-spend policies and the fact that they are selling Manitoba hydro power to the US at a loss, forcing Manitobans to pick up the tab for that.

And so I think it's unfortunate this NDP government is obviously going in the wrong direction. We know that they've more than doubled the debt of this province since they came into power, Mr. Speaker. And I'd say that they've pretty much doubled the debt of Manitoba Hydro since they came into power. Now they want to add \$21 billion worth of debt to Manitoba Hydro, in the way of these new projects.

We need an NFAT review, Mr. Speaker, of these projects. And in those—in that review, the Bipole III should be in as part of that review. It is a major project here in the province of Manitoba, and it should be included in that NFAT review. But the NDP are refusing to allow all aspects of—or all potential routes for the bipole project in as part of that review.

And I think the NDP, again, when they want their own way, Mr. Speaker, and they believe that they know what's best for Manitobans, when we believe, on our side of the House, that Manitobans know what's in the best interest of—for themselves.

But because the NDP feels they know best, they are dictating to Manitoba Hydro that they have to put this Bipole III line down the west side of our province, which makes no sense from an economic standpoint, from a reliability standpoint, for the energy reliability and the transportation of the energy. It makes no sense from an environmental standpoint. It just makes no sense at all.

And so I think it's extremely unfortunate that the NDP is trying to dictate to Manitobans, and to Manitoba Hydro, what direction and what route that bipole line should take. If they could include all of the potential routes in as part of a NFAT review, Mr. Speaker, then perhaps someone will come up with what would be the most reliable and the most beneficial route for such a bipole line in Manitoba.

But, again, unfortunately, the NDP, they believe that they know best and they are dictating this to Manitoba Hydro and it's extremely unfortunate.

So, Mr. Speaker, we do know that there has been some changes in the energy markets in North America. We do know that in the US they are becoming much more self-reliant on their—in their energy needs, and that's why Manitoba Hydro is being forced to sell to the US at a loss. And it's unfortunate, but, you know, at the same time as, you know, as they're selling it as a loss to the US, they're now saying, well, we need these \$21 billion worth of projects because we need to sell to the US. Well, you need to sell more to the US at a loss, forcing Manitobans to pick up the tab for that. And again, it just doesn't make sense.

And it is—there is a need to ensure that these projects are a part of a comprehensive needs-for-and-alternatives-to review and study.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all members of this House to think twice about supporting this. I believe this resolution should be supported; it should be passed. And I encourage all members of this House to join together and ensure that Manitoba Hydro is the vibrant company that it can be in our province.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): It's a pleasure to rise in the Chamber to speak to this.

And I always wonder when members opposite bring forward resolutions about Manitoba Hydro; clearly they don't understand how Manitoba Hydro operates, Mr. Speaker.

And the member from Tuxedo stood up and talked about selling power at a loss. Well, let's talk about what she's talking about here. She's talking about spot-market rates. We know that when we have excess amounts of energy being generated, that it can be sold on spot-market rates and recover some of the costs of that excess energy that has been generated, rather than letting the water spill over the dam, and not sell it all for any cost to be recovered. So it's rather fascinating the member opposite would rather that we not sell that energy, not get any money from the spot market prices, from excess energy that we happen to be producing, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:50)

And the member opposite should know that the contracts that we have for power with our neighbours to the United States are guarantees for profits for Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker. And so it's really fascinating to hear the titans of industry talk over there about their understanding of Hydro which clearly is a misunderstanding of Hydro.

And the members opposite are talking about changes in energy markets. Well, one of the changes that's really important that they seem to forget about is changes in legislation in many of the states of the United States that are importing our power that are actually setting aside a requirement for a certain percentage of energy that is to be recognized as clean, green, renewable energy. And our friends in the United States are recognizing Manitoba hydro as clean, green renewable energy, so that is why it is so desirable for them to purchase that power, and that is the future of this province.

Manitoba Hydro is the future of this province, and the members opposite—it's fascinating—it's absolutely fascinating that they would malign the good work that's going on at Manitoba Hydro and consistently run it down, but we saw that before. We saw that before when they were maligning the operations of another public utility called Manitoba Telephone System. We saw them run down the way that was being operated, and what did they do? They sold it. This is the same modus operandi. Badmouth what's happening in the public utility. Say it over and over again and hope that people believe it and then use that as an excuse to sell that public utility.

Well, how does that impact Manitobans, Mr. Speaker? Well, I know that my parents, both retired on fixed income, had seen their hydro—or, pardon me, their telephone bill go up by over 65 per cent—65 per cent. How is that in the best interests of Manitobans?

And what we get in Gimli is rather poor cell service. There's some cell service but it's not consistent. You don't have to drive too far from the community of Gimli to hit dead spots where you're not going to get cell service, and why is that? Because there's no social mandate for a private utility to provide service where they can't make an economic case, but there's a social case for having cell service available to Manitobans throughout the province of Manitoba. But unfortunately they sold the company that had the ability to do so.

But it is Manitoba Hydro as a public utility where we were able to equalize the rates in rural

Manitoba. I remember—I unfortunately couldn't come to the committee hearings to present when I was teaching in Gimli at the time. Something came up where I was unable to come and present, but I had registered to come and speak to the wisdom of that legislation to equalize the rates between hydro customers in Winnipeg and hydro customers in rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, because that's what you can do with a public utility. It makes sense as a utility owned by Manitobans that it would serve all Manitobans and it would serve Manitobans equally.

So it's really hard to understand how members opposite would prefer to go to market rates. And we'd see the prices escalate yet again for people in rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and escalate significantly for all people in Manitoba if that was the choice that they made to do so.

So the member opposite talked about Manitobans picking up the tab. Well, what's the tab on hydro in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker? It was something; I was going into a Bomber game a couple weeks ago and I heard these young guys talking. One guy said, oh, man, my hydro bill is over 200 bucks this time, and his friend said, why? He says, oh, I forgot to pay it last month. So this young fellow was paying just over a hundred dollars to heat his home, and they were laughing about it. We have the lowest rates in Canada, the lowest rates in North America, and, you know, let's compare.

Saskatchewan, families pay \$631 more every year. In Ontario, families pay \$753 more compared to Manitoba every year for their hydro rates, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, I don't want to bring up the ghosts of Tory leaders past, but, of course, Hugh McFadyen had been the advisor to Mr. Harris on this whole notion of Hydro One deregulation, and I—in Ontario, and I had cousins telling me that their hydro bill, the first month they deregulated, went up to \$1,700 for a very modest side-by-side home that they had purchased in Ontario, and it took a long time for them to fix that mess. It was absolutely ludicrous, but that was Hugh McFadyen, and his plan was to privatize Hydro—I'm sure it was. And he, of course, was the advisor to, as we know, Premier Filmon. And, of course, Premier Filmon's Cabinet included a member who's sitting at the front bench as Leader of the Opposition.

So we know what their motives are, Mr. Speaker. We know what they would do. They would sell Manitoba Hydro, and what do we need to do? We need to keep working the way we have to build

the capacity of the utility. We need to keep working the way we have to save energy here for Manitobans so that we can sell more energy to the United States.

Well, hey, you know what, Mr. Speaker? I discovered that they actually have an energy conservation plan—that the Tories have an energy conservation plan.

An Honourable Member: What is that?

Mr. Bjornson: What is that? Quit building buildings in Manitoba. You're not going to consume energy if you're going to cut schools, if you're going to cut hospitals, if you're going to cut emergency services. You're not going to require energy anymore. And we're going to go back—if they had it their way, we'd go back to the times where we had 3,000 people a year, on average, net, leaving the province.

And that's not what's going to happen in Manitoba. We're going to continue to build Manitoba. We're going to build Manitoba Hydro to meet the growing demands because our province is growing; 135,000 more people call Manitoba home today than they did 10 years ago, and that speaks to our vision for this province. They'd abandon that vision. They'd abandon building Manitoba. They'd abandon building Manitoba Hydro. And they don't understand that if we don't build Keeyask and Conawapa and the bipole, that we're going to run out of energy to meet our own domestic markets. You're going to go back to the old days of burning coal. That is not acceptable. That is not the 21st century for Manitoba. That's not the future of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

So, there are so many things that we're doing to support Manitoba consumers, Mr. Speaker. If you want to talk about hydro rates, as mentioned, they are the lowest in the country, and the—as low energy rates for industry. It was curious because we had a really good announcement a while ago where we had a cloud server announced with Canadian Tire coming to Manitoba. And why are they coming to Manitoba, to have this digital data centre, storage centre? It's because we have very cheap hydro rates, Mr. Speaker.

And what do they do? They badmouthed bringing business to Manitoba. They were badmouthing having the data centre coming for Canadian Tire. So it's really curious to hear these titans of industry—these titans of industry—that our friends on the opposite benches claim to be, not understand that the future of industry in the province

of Manitoba is building our hydro utility. So it's really curious to listen to this—listen to what members opposite have to say, in terms of their lack of understanding of Manitoba Hydro.

Now, what does it mean for the average consumer, Mr. Speaker? Well, I know that we have a lot of programs that include, among other things, energy and water efficiency improvements, where the customers actually pay back the financing with the savings on their water bill.

And I'm one of those that has benefited from that program, having to upgrade my old water tank just recently and having a—that financed through Manitoba Hydro, it's been an excellent, excellent way. I've noticed no difference on my bill, none whatsoever. And I suspect I'll notice a difference on my water bill because it's a much more efficient, energy-saving water tank that we've installed. And I know, looking at my furnace, that's my next expenditure. But these are programs that we've put in place to support the consumers, to support the average families in Manitoba. And these are great initiatives that Manitobans might actually take for granted.

We need to let Manitobans know what's at stake here with members opposite if they were sitting in the driver's seat, Mr. Speaker. We need to let Manitobans know that this is a utility that's very important for the province, and most Manitobans know that, but I'm not sure most Manitobans recognize the risk of members opposite being in the driver's seat.

We need to continue to build Hydro. It's the future of this province. It's the best managed utility. It does incredible work to support consumers, whether they happen to be people in family—small families or whether they happen to be big corporate interests that are looking to Manitoba for the clean, green, renewable energy and the opportunities presented here in Manitoba, where it's a huge advantage of affordability for the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

So we'll keep it public. We'll keep—

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

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, good morning to all.

From the beginning of time, civilizations have settled in areas closest to the water. That is why we have the people of the Tigris and the Euphrates in Iraq settling down near the Mesopotamia. That is why we have the Egyptians settling near the Nile and its rich delta. That is why we have the Bemidji headwaters. And that is why we have The Forks, the settlement where the Red and the Assiniboine have their confluence.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Tyndall Park will have nine 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, September 5, 2013

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