

Third Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Pivniuk): 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 in only which is in accordance with Thy will, that we seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated. Good morning, everyone.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable and acting House leader. *[interjection]* Oh, the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development (Mr. Pedersen).

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Acting Government House Leader): Good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would you please call—continue second reading debate on Bill 230, the labour relations amendment act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has has been brought by the—forward by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development that debate on second reading of Bill 230, the labour relations amendment act, and it's in standing name of the honourable member for Tyndall Park has seven minutes remaining.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 230—The Labour Relations
Amendment Act (2)**

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Glad I get a bit of an opportunity to just share a few more thoughts towards this bill. And, you know, last week when I first started to talk about it, I think I was talking a little bit about how just the common practice we hold in

these Chambers and the importance of that consultation. You know, it is our job as legislators to bring forward what we are hearing from our constituents, from what we are hearing from Manitobans.

And I think that's why there was so much concern around this legislation because, when asked, the member could not share with us—the member bringing forward Bill 230—could not share with us who she had, in fact, consulted with. We asked about community members, we asked about unions, and they were—and the member was not able to share with us anyone that had been consulted. So it is a little bit worrisome. It doesn't add credibility to the bill and, hopefully, as we continue on with debate, we'll be able to learn a little bit more about it.

Now, to start off today, we do know how charitable Manitobans are. This is something that the member who brought forward the bill, too, talked about quite a bit. We strongly agree with this. Manitobans donate and we try our best to take care of one another, and, you know, we have the reputation of friendly Manitoba for a reason. But the idea behind this bill of strongholding people to donate, I don't think that this is the direction where we want to go. It's not going to help. I think it might actually do the opposite and deter.

And this bill actually feels like the government is sort of passing the buck. The member talked lots about wanting to help our vulnerable. Well, why doesn't the government just help? No one is preventing the government from stepping in and helping people who are in need and—people who are in need more than ever right now because of the pandemic. There are businesses who need this government's help. The government should be stepping up and doing more for all businesses.

There are individuals. I think about people who have had to leave their jobs because they do not have child care right now, people who have had to leave their jobs because children are no longer in schools, and we need people at home to be able to take care of their children.

And more directly to this bill, we have charities here in Manitoba desperately needing resources, desperately needing donations right now. And this

government could step up and do this, but instead, they're asking union members to have to do this.

And, you know, I want to take both sides here of the bill. And there is part—a part of this bill that I think has some merit, and it's the opportunity to open up more dialogue with employees and union members. We definitely want this. We want to have open communication, safe communication, routes of communication where people can go and ask the big questions.

But the big question is at what cost, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's hard not to think about what the problem is, and we have so many more questions about this bill that have been unanswered, even in the question portion of the member bringing forward this legislation. And, like, what is this government trying to fix? Where did this legislation come from?

The member said that this is about COVID relief, but then reverts to previous legislation. So what exactly is the message with this bill? What is the rational—rationale behind this bill? And, most importantly, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where is it coming from?

I think that many members of this House would feel a lot better not only debating this bill but being able to come to a strong conclusion if we knew where this bill was coming from and what its true interest was.

And so, ultimately, we don't want to interfere with unions being able to express themselves. Unions are supposed to be democratic, and this is what we want to support.

So we're looking forward to further debate on the bill, looking forward to committee on the bill. But at this point, we can't support it moving forward. I'll leave my remarks there.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I hope this bill doesn't go to committee. This bill should be stopped in its tracks. This bill is shameful.

We are all in this together. How many times have you heard that during the pandemic? We're all in this together. It's funny how there's these memes that kind of take off in the society, they take off in the culture. One politician mentions it, you know, maybe it's a Justin Trudeau: we're all in this together. And then another politician will repeat it: we're all in this together. And then eventually, that game of telephone reaches the PC Party of Manitoba and you have them

with a straight face stand up and say, we're all in this together.

It's this—yet this bill does precisely the opposite. It divides and it weakens solidarity. It weakens unity. It weakens the ability who want to put—of those who want to put action behind those words we're all in this together. We could spend my full 10 minutes just talking about all the examples of the PC Party of Manitoba jumping on the catchphrase train when, in fact, their actions contradict that entirely: reconciliation, fighting climate change, we're all in this together. The list goes on.

Time and time again we see the members opposite repeat these phrases because they see other politicians using them. And they try and jump onto that bandwagon. But we know PC Party doesn't believe in working together, doesn't believe in solidarity, doesn't believe in unity among the people. Why else would they clap for a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who blames Manitobans instead of his own failures for the rise of the third wave? It's not just a rhetorical question. There's substance behind that question.

* (10:10)

Why else would they stand and applaud their government's shameful dealing of the electricians who work at Manitoba Hydro? How do they defend, at a time when Manitoba Hydro is making \$110 million in profit this year, projects to make \$190 million in profit next year, that those workers not only are being told they should accept a wage freeze, while the publicly owned Crown corporation is super profitable, but how do they endorse their party not even sharing those facts with the people, the workers that they're negotiating with? There's no legitimate way you could answer that question, so that's why they never do. That's why any time we ask a question like that, they always change the subject, right.

And this bill is the legislative manifestation of that sort of negative politics. We are at a time where we are still grappling with the terrible effects of the third wave of the pandemic. And even as nurses go to work each and every day doing a heroic job of helping our loved ones, our friends, our families, to be able to survive that third wave, how does this government treat them? Well, they jump on the catchphrase train again: health-care heroes; let's go outside and bang our pots and pans for those health-care heroes. Let's put out a social media graphic on my staff-managed Twitter account to celebrate National Nursing Week. That's the rhetoric, but what is the action?

The action is to deny a new contract to those very nurses. And it's not like that's an issue that emerged overnight. We're talking about those same nurses, who we all recognize are heroes—some of us actually mean it when we say so—for years and years and years having been denied contracts. Those nurses are showing up for work because they love caring for others. They love our communities. They love our province. And this government, in a very sinister way, takes advantage of that commitment because they know that even if they don't give a new deal to the nurses, the nurses will keep showing up. And so this is a situation of imbalance.

Now what helps to rectify that imbalance? The nurses' union. The nurses' union allows the nurses to stand together, to have solidarity with one another, to look at each other and say, you know what, fellow nurse? We're all in this together. And so let's pool our resources, let's pool our time and energy and let's pool our shared effort to demand better from this government.

And so, even as the PCs want to bang pots and pans and design new social media graphics and call nurses heroes, they support this bill that we're debating here this morning that would undermine that one venue, the nurses' union, that nurses have to try and demand better treatment from this government.

How do you square that circle? The only way you can square that circle is if you are very cynically using the language of I love nurses to try and win support in the public sector so that you could be rewarded at the ballot box, only to then take power and, in a complete one-eighty, go against the very nurses you claim to support in the first place.

The same is true of the Hydro workers. We were all in the Chamber—all the new members were elected—in 2019 when we were hit with that terrible winter storm. Hydro workers slept in gyms. Hydro workers slept in their trucks. Hydro workers spent days and days away from their families to repair the downed power lines in the areas around Portage, in the Interlake, in other hard-hit regions of the province.

And then we all gathered here in the Chamber and we heard, you now, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) pretending to cry and the Cabinet, you now, getting all worked up: our Hydro workers are heroes. We love Hydro workers.

That's the rhetoric. What was the action? Hide the truth from those Hydro workers? Demand that they take a pay cut during the worst part of the pandemic-

caused recession, and then completely stonewall and ignore them after they went on strike so that the only recourse they had was to have their union trigger arbitration?

As opposition, you wonder what you're doing here sometimes, but one thing I know that we'd accomplish this year is we delayed Bill 16. And if we hadn't delayed Bill 16—if we hadn't delayed Bill 16—arbitration wouldn't have been an option for the electricians. That Manitoba Hydro strike would have lasted forever if there wasn't that provision to allow for arbitration after a 60-day strike.

And so this type of legislation, to me, particularly coming forward at the time that it is, shows you everything you need to know about the PC Party. They don't care about the average Manitoban with dirt under their fingernails. They don't care about the average Manitoban who has to wake up and go to work early in the morning. They don't care about the average Manitoban that's working hard, cheque to cheque. They don't care about the average Manitoban who's feeling anxiety and insecurity because of the situation with their jobs right now.

Because if they did, they would be doing everything in their power to strengthen labour laws. If they did, they would be doing everything in their power to ensure that people who put in a hard day's work get paid a decent wage that keeps up with the cost of living. And if they did, they would have a fair deal for nurses, they would have a fair deal for Hydro workers and they would have a fair deal for teachers.

And yet we don't see any of that from this PC Party. Instead, we see these sorry excuses taking up valuable private members' time when we should be dealing with real issues, like how are you going to staff the ICUs during the third wave? How are you going to protect jobs during the recovery? And which among the PC Cabinet will finally stand up to that Premier and demand better?

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

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): We all know COVID-19 has been hard on everyone, and our government has managed to support many different sectors during these trying times. In fact, last week our Premier announced the Bridge Grant is once again available for all Manitoba businesses and charities who qualify. Payments already have been starting to go out. However, no one has been hurt more than charities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I am delighted and excited to be talking about Bill 230, the labour relations amendment act. This bill, brought forward by my colleague from Seine River, is going to significantly help charities across Manitoba.

Before I get into how great this bill is, I would like to first put—mention the ridiculous cost of union advertising, as I know advertising expenses as a former small-business owner. It took up a lot of my expenses. As someone who once owned a small business, I know this. But union advertising's always aimed at attacking this government.

Instead of using union members' hard-earned money to attack the government, why not try and work with us? Looking at some of these costs, a radio ad in Manitoba will cost a minimum of \$600 a week. That's over \$30,000 a year. Now, that's just one radio ad.

* (10:20)

The minimum cost of one medium-sized billboard is \$3,600 a year, and how many of these type of billboards do you see around this city and province? And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are not medium-sized billboards. They're larger, there's a lot and a larger dent of the pockets of hard-working Manitobans who are part of these unions.

Some television networks charge a minimum fee of \$500 per 20-second TV commercial. At two 20-second commercials a week for a year, that cost will be just over \$52,000 a year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're already at an astonishing over \$80,000-plus spent directly on union advertising that attacks the government and these are just singular ads. So I guess unions—even the unions are smart shoppers by purchasing multiple ads. Now, this is \$80,000-plus worth of money that I believe many union members would like to have back in their pockets.

We haven't even talked about newspaper, social media and bus bench ads that are also extremely popular amongst unions. It saddens me to know that unions are using fees from their members to create hateful messages to attack the government instead of trying to work with them.

Now let's talk about charities. Charities are the pillar of our community. They have been there for thousands of people in Manitoba and Canada. Charities have helped Manitobans during the last 15 months with many different obstacles like health,

mental health and clothing concerns, to name a few. The thing is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they did this even before the pandemic took over our lives. Their hard work is not often recognized as much as it should be. They have managed to maintain and start new programs, despite having less resources than before the pandemic started.

That is why Bill 230 is so important. Not only will it shine a light on charities, but it will alleviate some of the financial difficulties charities have faced throughout the pandemic. A dollar is significantly stretched every single day for these charities. They've had to stretch this dollar even further during this pandemic. Any extra support that anyone can provide to our Manitoba charities will significantly help them.

These charities help the most vulnerable populations in Manitoba. By allowing union members in Manitoba to allocate a portion of their dues towards charities, it is representing an opportunity to help support these charities and the work they do across our province.

They have a choice. Instead of union members paying to support charities out of their own pocket, something I know many Manitobans have not been able to do during this pandemic, they will feel good knowing a portion of their union dues are going directly towards a charity of their choice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said previously, Bill 230 will allow union members in Manitoba to allocate a portion of their dues towards charity. That is why this bill is fantastic. This means that union members can directly help a charity that they support or they believe in.

People wonder where all of their union dues are going to. Now they will have a say into where some of those dues are going. They'll have the benefit of knowing that their contributions are making a difference to a charity that means something to them.

Of course, if a union member would rather see their entire union dues go to the union they belong to, that will still be acceptable. Throughout the consideration of this bill and during stakeholder outreach, it was clear not every union employee would choose to participate in a program like this.

However, our government believes that giving employees a choice is important, and this bill does just that. It does so while bringing a vast benefit to charities in our province, charities that help vulnerable people or animal shelters, to name a few—whatever these hard-working Manitobans would like to choose.

This bill just gives good people the chance to give back to a charity.

Asking to have a portion of dues allocated to a charity will not affect the day-to-day operation of a union, such as collective bargaining. The bill has minimal impact on unions. The portion of dues allocated to charities will only be the portion that are earmarked for political purposes. This includes activities such as election communication expenses that are subject to The Election Financing Act, third party partisan activity expenses or election survey expenses subject to the Canada Elections Act.

That's right; currently, a portion of all union dues are going towards political purposes, and I personally find that a bit irrational. Why would a government/political party ever want to collect union dues? It must be somehow a party, in one way or another, helping them. In fact, all members share the same views. All members of the union do not share the same views as their leaders at the top. Their voices should be respected and not overshadowed by these union leaders.

That is probably why this bill had once been enacted before. At some point in Manitoba's history, a previous government noticed how thoughtless it was that part of the union dues were going directly towards political purposes.

In the 1990s, the Progressive Conservative government, under former premier Gary Filmon, brought this exact legislation to the table and it was, of course, passed and became part of legislation. It is sad to see that, once again, we have to bring this act forward, that we have to bring this act forward because (1) it's very important to help pillars in Manitoba like charities, and (2) the former NDP government that was in place for 17 years repealed this act, this act that was in place to directly help charities in this province.

And it is sad that we have to repeat history and bring back this bill into place. It should have always been in place. It shows how the NDP government was out of touch under former premier Gary Doer's leadership and how the NDP continues to be out of touch today, even more so.

Will the NDP party disagree with this bill and vote bill-against Bill 230? I think you know where they stand here. A bill that is there to help charities—if they decide to vote against Bill 230, please remember just how out of touch this NDP party really is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am honoured and pleased to talk about this bill, the labour relations amendment

act, a bill that simply allows members of a union to have the option to give some of their dues to charity. They have a choice. That way their dues do not have to go to political purposes that they do not believe in, while at the same time provide support for charities in our province. So I encourage my colleagues to vote yes on Bill 230.

And one more thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As this month is Asian Heritage Month, and that I am proudly of Asian descent, I want to recognize and acknowledge those of Asian descent who are working in our front lines in the health-care industry, serving the public at the grocery stores, the local tailor shops, at the many establishments that they are involved in.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues here at the Manitoba Legislature, thank you for all you do. Happy Asian Heritage Month.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Well, the member from Waverley West just, and I'll quote, use—money should be used for—or, the money is being used for attacking this government; not—why not work with this government?

Well, Deputy Speaker, it's clear that this government doesn't know how to work with anyone. He can't work with the mayor. He can't work with the premier. He can't work with the Manitoba Metis Federation. He's not collaborating with First Nations. He's certainly not working with unions. This government's been meddling in all kinds of collective agreements.

Well, there you go, Waverley West member. There's your answer. You can't—your government does not know how to work with others in this province. Your government likes to bulldoze over and tell people what to do instead of giving them choice.

It's time for a new government, and if there was an election called today, I'm sorry, but a lot of your members would be on the other side or gone. We'd be having a goodbye party to all of you and we'd be back in government.

This bill is nothing more than more union-busting from this government, plain and simple. It's another bill and another attempt on behalf of the government to give themselves and their rich union-busting friends an opportunity to once again attack Manitoba workers.

Organized labour has always been political. And, you know, the member from Waverley West was

talking about these great big billboards, about these commercials. Unions and their members have a right to do this. When they're unhappy with what is going on with the government, that's their voice, and this government is trying to be undemocratic and take away that right.

What, simply, they want to do is get unions to backfill all of their undercuts, everything that they've underspent in these organizations, the non-profits that they are starving out because they are underfunding them and forcing them to have to ask different people to, you know, support them.

* (10:30)

And myself, I've been a part of many unions throughout my career and I always had a choice whether I wanted to donate to charities. In fact, when I worked at Marymount, I would always donate through the United Way back to Marymount because I saw the value in the money that was being given to Marymount. And that was my choice, but I also paid into union dues to make sure that government was accountable. And when I was not happy with something, I was able to go to my union and say, you know, I'm not happy with what this government is doing.

And you see these billboards, you know, nurses so unhappy in this province. And so they should be. You have a government here that is meddling in their collective bargaining. Their—they've had no contract for how long and then—yet this government gets up and applauds them, day after day, while leaving them without a contract.

These nurses are dead on their feet and, you know, you have a government that's bringing forward a bill, Bill 230, that's saying, oh, let's take away their right to have a voice and to be political and put up those billboards if we so choose to.

So, they've always been political and that's not going to change. This is because organized labour has always been under attack from rich people like this Premier (Mr. Pallister), these Cabinet ministers and all of their friends, who are pushing a regressive labour law that will hurt Manitoba workers.

Now, instead of working with organized labour to rework their agenda to be fair to—for everyone, they're scapegoating and gaslighting unions and workers. The Premier would have Manitobans believe that unions are hiding around every corner, throwing money to every election. The historical fact is that unions accomplish things, win their rights, their influence—

they—and influence politics because they offer workers better conditions and they actually follow through.

Grassroots organizations, organizing and legal—organizing is legal in Manitoba and this government is afraid of that. Deputy Speaker, if the Premier wants an example of lawbreakers when it comes to spending and politics, he needs to look no further than the list of his major donors. In 2020, the president of Merit contracting, Yvette Milner, donated \$1,125 to the Conservative government. And, you know, within three years—in more—three more years of government, they've received \$5,316. Merit's former chair, Ray Bisson, gave the Conservative government \$3,292 from 2016 to 2019.

Everyone in the Chamber and on this Zoom call should know that—who the Merit Contractors are, but since this government clearly hasn't taken action against the illegal and immoral ways they spent money in politics, I can only assume that they've forgotten.

Well, it's okay. I'm happy to give all the members a refresher. The Merit Contractors Association is blatantly anti-union, anti-worker construction group. Because of the labour laws around construction in Manitoba, this often means that workers who are employed by Merit Contractors Association have to work in dangerous conditions for long hours.

I've spoken with my own constituents who have been fired by non-union and even Merit firms for no greater reason than having to take a day off to care for a sick loved one. There's an old saying, Deputy Speaker, tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are. While that's not true in all cases, it certainly says a lot about the Merit Contractors Association when they were found to have breached the Manitoba election financing law when they spent seven—more than \$17,000 on advertising without registering with Elections Manitoba.

These people—these very people—are the friends of the Premier. They're hand-picked—they're—are the friends of the Premier's hand-picked Cabinet and they're clearly friends of this government.

So it seems clear that this government's intent to use any means they can to hamstring unions, tie their hands and prevent any kind of defence from these vicarious ad hominem and abjectly untrue claims. At the same time, the government is expanding their abilities and the abilities of their friends like Merit Contractors Association in attacking workers and

their unions. It's clear that this government doesn't want a fair fight.

When elections commissioner Bill Bowles ruled on the \$17,000 the Merit Contractors Association illegally spent, he wrote, and I quote: I note that the number of the progressive—I note that the number of Merit's advertising did contain direct references to the Progressive Conservative Party. Several of Merit's advertisements and other communications points that the PC government had introduced bill 4, now bill 13, which would allow non-union contractors to build on government—or to bid on government projects.

Well, Deputy Speaker, I'll tell you, Merit didn't run those ads and they were most definitely not—or did run those ads and they most definitely were not run in the interest of non-partisan public education. Commissioner Bill Bowles himself found Merit guilty of breaking election laws in the case but, instead of punishing them, he let Merit Contractors Association off with a warning.

Since the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is suddenly so interested in ensuring transparency in political actors, let's talk about the donations the Progressive Conservative government gets from political actors every year. According to Elections Manitoba, the Pallister government has received tens of thousands of dollars from top executives at anti-union groups and firms that push them for open-tender contracts.

Why do these firms—who do these firms report to? They have no accountability to anyone except themselves. They aren't interested in what's best for the workers that they or their association members employ, let alone the political opinions of these workers.

So this bill needs to be scrapped—shouldn't be backfilling the undercuts from this government. This government needs to properly resource these non-profits. It's not their responsibility.

And people should have a say in where their money goes. And if I want to donate to a charity, I can so do that on my own. I don't need the government telling me that my union dues have to go there.

So this government needs to stop meddling in bargaining, unions. Teachers need contracts, nurses need contracts and IBEW need contracts. So this government needs to throw this bill out and start focusing on what's here in hand and getting people vaccinated and in making sure that Manitobans are safe and in safe working conditions.

Miigwech.

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): I certainly appreciate the member from Point Douglas's vivid imagination. When she speaks, certainly, she becomes very, very creative to follow her own agenda and I do recognize that ability on behalf of that member.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a few remarks on the record in support of the member from Seine River—St. Norbert's private member's bill, 230. First, I wish to thank the member for bringing forth this bill, which will allow people to determine a fundamental right in democracy. And it is really the right of individuals to choose what political philosophies or political parties they wish to support. That's fundamental in democracy, and Bill 230 addresses that.

What this bill does is it allows an option rather than union direction. This bill does not eliminate union dues, nor does it compromise an individual's support for their union. With individuals having real options to allocate that segment of their own resources, other than directed by the union, they can determine what desirable organizations that they feel could stand to benefit, and I see absolutely nothing wrong with creating that option.

Manitobans have proven time and time again that they are the most generous people in Canada. If given the option of exercising a right to offer resources to a charity versus a political agenda that someone else is laying out for them, they may opt to support the charity instead. It should be their right.

*(10:40)

I've heard people from the NDP indicate that this initiative compromises revenues to unions or is trying to eliminate union ability and that they would financial—suffer. The portion of the Bill 230 addresses a very small amount of the overall dues that wasn't going to union operations anyway.

Again, we are talking about a portion that is not being channeled towards the operation of the union. It's being used at the discretion of the union hierarchy to address their own political ambitions and agenda. Those individuals do not want to designate a portion of their dues have every right to opt out of not directing that portion outside the union and can maintain status quo. There's nothing saying that that can't happen, but it's the option that we're presenting that is fundamental.

Mr. Speaker, that's fundamentally the difference between our government and the NDP opposition. We believe that—in freedom of choice. We believe that the

individual has the ability to make a decision. We are not beholding, as the member from Point Douglas exaggerates—we are not beholding to any special lobby group or any special interest group. We seek to allow people to make their own decisions.

And, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is not something new. The legislation was enacted in the '90s by the Filmon government and was an accepted practice, and served Manitobans well. Then came the Doer government, who were influenced by the union hierarchy and, alas, fulfilled their debt to the unions and repealed it.

We now have this bill in front of us to correct this lack of judgment and allow people to make their own choices. I appreciate the NDP's lack of objectivity on this bill. I have heard speaker after speaker continue to indicate that, in some way, the unions are being undermined; totally false. I understand the NDP's need to satisfy the special interests of the union hierarchy.

The unions, if you want to talk about bias, the unions play a significant role in contributing to the NDP. As a matter of fact, the unions basically determine who leads the NDP party. So it really comes as no surprise that the opposition would be opposed to anything that would compromise the unions' hierarchies' ability to channel portions of their dues to follow their own agendas.

Mr. Speaker, some of the NDP members that speak so loudly opposed to this bill, such as the member from Point Douglas, may have leadership ambitions of their own. Certainly, attracting union support would be an asset to that quest.

Bill 230 offers the opportunity to create some transparency. Union transparency should be a fundamental right for all union members. Mr. Speaker, our government has historically ensured the rights of individuals and this Bill 230 represents that goal.

Mr. Speaker, I would reach out to the opposition members to support this bill. Do not fall into the same trap of following blindly on 230, the way that you have opposing Bill 71. Allow people to reap the benefits of their own resources.

And, the member of Point Douglas has, again, a very vivid imagination. She talks about what's going to happen in the next election. Well, she talked about and other members of her party talked about what was going to happen during the 2019 election, and the people of Manitoba spoke very, very loudly, giving our government the second strongest majority that—

one of the second strongest majorities that Manitoba governments have ever seen, on top of the victory that we had in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, only NDP mathematics—only NDP mathematics could determine that they actually won in 2019 when they only got half the seats we did.

And I'm sure that when people recognize the middle income—middle-class earners recognize what the NDP are doing on Bill 71, preventing them from reaping the benefits of rebates and putting more money on their kitchen table—I'm talking about the middle class, the middle-income people who are property owners right now that the NDP continue to ignore.

Well, this party doesn't ignore the middle class, this party stands up for them, and the middle class has shown that support by electing us with the majorities that have been elected. The NDP turn around and they say, well, they're arguing about what's going to happen with Bill 64 and the initiatives that the government's taken.

Well, I've got to tell you, we were elected on an agenda to go through and address education needs, and we intend to do that. The NDP will probably put taxes back on property, but our government is not going to do that.

And those are the discussions that we'll have during the next election, and I look forward to having those discussions on the doorsteps because I know what the Manitoba people are thinking about that right now, and the NDP are blowing smoke.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate this opportunity to speak to this bill and look forward to the Legislature adopting it. Thank you.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Pleased to speak on this bill this morning. I want to begin by just addressing some of the words that I think were spoke by a few previous speakers. The member from Waverley mentioned—talked a little bit about, you know, the inability—his apparent understanding of the inability of unions to come and work together with the government and instead seemed so curious and so bewildered that unions would attack the government and their policies.

You know, I think that shows a lot of misunderstanding about what unions are doing and also misunderstandings about what his government is also doing to jeopardize the work—the strong work that our

unions are doing to protect and to show support for the works in our province.

But beyond that, when it comes to working together—unions and governments—he seems to put the entire blame on the union, that they seem to be incapable of working with this government. Well, it takes two to tango. It sure seems that this government is incapable with consulting and with talking with unions and actually listening to unions, listening to workers and respecting workers' rights.

It's been a pattern with this government that time and again, and again and again, they bring forward legislation that undermines unions' strong work on behalf of their members, on behalf of workers in our province.

We can list bill after bill, action after action, where this government has put in jeopardy the rights of union workers, whether it's electrical workers in IBEW and Hydro; whether it's our nurses working day in and day out to keep Manitobans safe and as healthy as possible during our pandemic; whether it's teachers, who, through the government's inability to properly fund our divisions, three of our largest school divisions in our province are in—are struggling with negotiations with their teachers. Again, during a year where teachers have had some of the largest changes in this pandemic, the most difficult working conditions, the most upheaval, this government refuses to help and work with and consult and listen to unions and their workers.

And the member for Waverley (Mr. Reyes) says that unions are to blame for this? Think about that imbalance. This is the government of Manitoba who is the one who should be responsible for solving these problems. And they're trying to pass the buck. They're trying to pass the buck onto unions, onto union workers.

That's simply irresponsible, and I think it's—this right now, this debate is showing the level that this government and all its members are incapable of doing their job to work and actually help Manitobans.

* (10:50)

Now I'll move on to another point that I'd to make in regards to Bill 230, and that is the area of charities. And again, the member from Waverley, you know, calls the charities or non-profit sectors the pillars of our community, and again, this goes to echo the point that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) was making earlier, is about the rhetoric from this government, talking about one game, about how

groups are so important, but yet their actions take such a different meaning and have such a different impact.

A pillar—if non-profits and charities are the pillars of our community and we ought to support them, then why doesn't this government take more direct action to properly fund our non-profits and our charities? You have, as the government, so many opportunities through your departments to find charities and non-profits that are doing good work in our communities across the province, in a variety of fields. And you have the opportunity to give them the financial support that they are looking for, that the member from Waverley says is difficult to find this year because of the pandemic.

Well, the government of Manitoba has an opportunity to help them with—help these organizations with some funding, but have they done so? No. And instead, they're bringing forward Bill 230, put charities in the middle of it as a way to frame this about charities when it's really not, when it's really an opportunity for them to attack unions.

And it's clear that this isn't about charities. If this was really about charities, Bill 230 would have given—would have provided more opportunities for everyone to contribute to charities. Does Bill 230 give any more further opportunities or more opportunities to contribute to charities from people who are not in unions, from employees and workers who are not in unions? No, it doesn't address that. Does it give people who—employers—employers, does it give employers more opportunities to donate to charities or further increase their—incentivize them to donate to charities? No, not employers, not non-unionized employees. And, furthermore, it doesn't give—this bill doesn't direct the government to give directly to charities.

So this government clearly doesn't care about contributing to charities, and it's demonstrating that with Bill 230. But, instead, it's using charities in a pawn in this game to attack unions, because in Bill 230, the only group that is targeting for this supposed additional contributions to charities are unionized workers.

And so the government is, again, looking at a way to take away, to pass the buck away from their responsibility to support Manitoban and our organizations and put it on the backs of workers. And not just put it on the backs of workers through their own money and taking it out of the pockets of money, which we have seen them do, but they're also at the same trying to take it away from the unionized group

that is going to be advocating on their best—on their behalf, advocating for their best interests.

And so I would encourage the member for Waverley (Mr. Reyes), who mentioned this, and the member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), who introduced this bill, that if they are serious about having more money flow to our non-profits and charities in our province, why don't they talk to one of their colleagues in the Cabinet table, who can use their department to properly fund a charity or a non-profit, to do some of the good work that they do in our province instead of trying to use Bill 230 to, at the same time, take money out of the pockets of workers in our province and weaken the voice that they have to stand up for their own rights and their own benefit and their own supports through our unions, who do such good work.

And I do want to also just address the comments made by the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Johnston), speaking about that their party supposedly is the one that respects the choice of individuals. And I say to that, well, will this government, this PC government, respect the choice and the actions by a group of people? And so what if a group of teachers or, for example, professors, university professors, say that, you know, we want—as a group our choice is to work with our employer and try to negotiate higher wages or better working conditions? Would the government respect that?

Obviously not, because we had the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) write a letter to the University of Manitoba saying that wages had to be frozen by faculty members and cuts had to be made, completely overstepping his bounds and interfering with the negotiations between the faculty and the institution. Is that respecting the individual choice of that group? No.

Will it respect the individual choices, the choices made by the group of electrical workers who are, again, trying to work on behalf of Manitobans and supply essential power and consistent power and electricity to our province? Will it respect that negotiation or will it step in and interfere?

What did this government choose to do? Interfere.

So the arguments made on the opposite side in favour of this bill are completely off base and I gladly object to Bill 230.

Thank you.

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

The honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala). The honourable member for St. James? Sorry, if the honourable member for St. James could actually turn his video on. *[interjection]* Okay.

The honourable member for Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know technology, we're still having some glitches from time to time, so I'm sure the member for St. James will be eager to speak to this bill if it does come back.

But I am hoping that, you know, based on the debate here today, that the government is reconsidering bringing this piece of legislation forward. And I say the government because, you know, while I certainly respect the member for Seine River and, you know, I've had some good conversations with her in the past, I would suggest to the House that it wasn't her that dreamed up this piece of legislation, despite what she may now say, you know.

And this is based on her, you know, her answers in question period as well as her initial statement on this bill. It's incredibly clear that she did none of the work to actually go out and talk to individuals, talk to labour leaders, talk to businesses, did none of the work to do any of the ground work to actually bring this legislation forward.

So, you know, it begs the question, where did this come from?

Well, we know very clearly that this was dreamt up, you know, behind closed doors at the political tables of the PC Party and it's being brought forward here in a way that's designed completely to attack unions and try to divide people against each other.

Now, as the member—the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) said earlier in his comments this morning—which I just want to add, you know, really helped set the tone for today and the rest of the week and the end of this session—I think it's clear that this government has that agenda of dividing people. And to do so during a pandemic, I think, is especially deplorable, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, we as an opposition have always tried to be constructive in our criticism and in the work that we do to push this government to do the right thing and, you know, there was a lot of that good will at the beginning of this pandemic, and throughout, I think, at every point where there's been an opportunity

for us to stand with the government to encourage Manitobans to be safe and to get vaccinated, we've done that.

But when they attack workers, Mr. Deputy—

* (11:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) will have seven minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 24—Commending the Provincial Government for Investments into Fish and Wildlife Enhancement

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 11 o'clock, we're discontinuing debating on the bill and we're going on to private members' resolutions, in the honourable name of—the honourable member of—the honourable member for Dauphin.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): I move, seconded by the honourable member from La Vérendrye,

WHEREAS Manitoba is a province with vast wilderness and is home to a diversity of fish and wildlife species; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government recognizes the importance of bio-diversity; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has made investments across the province to support fish and wildlife enhancement initiatives; and

WHEREAS the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund will also support government fish hatcheries and provide conservation and education opportunities; and

WHEREAS the preservation of fish and wildlife species is vital, especially during a time when Manitobans are encouraged to explore the province's vast natural landscape and outdoor recreation during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS investments such as this Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund are important measures taken to protect, enhance and study fish and wildlife populations for future generations; and

WHEREAS the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund will allow communities and organizations across the province to promote and advocate for fish and wildlife enhancement and preservation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the provincial government for investing in the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund and for an overall commitment to protecting the province's vast landscape and the diverse species that call the province home.

Motion presented.

Mr. Michaleski: It's quite, again, a privilege to represent the Dauphin constituency. I thank you for the opportunity to raise this, what is really a good news story, good news issue I think all of us can support. And this resolution calls on this Legislature to commend the provincial government for their investments in the wildlife—fish and wildlife enhancements. And these investments are important, of course, to all Manitobans.

Manitobans' fish and wildlife are an important part of Manitoba's diverse ecosystems, and it's great to see the government both recognizing the importance of diversity and continuing to invest in fish and wildlife enhancement efforts being done across the province.

Manitoba is fortunate to have a diverse ecosystem that meet and service and broad range of needs, benefits and life-sustaining dividends. So I commend this PC government for their overall commitment and approach towards positive growth and development and for their continued support towards conservation efforts and the significant steps taken to modernize Manitoba's Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund.

Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's been a lot and it has—continues to be a lot of great people working towards improving and enhancing fish and wildlife habitats, and Manitoba and the Dauphin region have benefited from the fish enhancement work and efforts of the Intermountain Sport Fishing Enhancement Group for over 30 years. This group has led, volunteered and worked to enhance and improve fish habitat throughout the Parklands and has done incredible work to increase sport fishing opportunities for the community, the region and our province.

Manitoba's Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund has enabled a lot of groups, like the Intermountain Sport Fishing Enhancement Group to help protect, study and enhance Manitoba's fish and wildlife populations. This fund also supports government fish hatcheries and can provide conservation and edu-

cation opportunities to assist with the long-term sustainability of fish and wildlife population for generations to come.

And I would also say that these investments, in a lot of cases, we have people that are doing the work and they're bringing their kids along and they're getting to see the work that's being done, and it's a positive inspiration for a lot of kids.

Funding for all our future projects will come from the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund trust, created by the government of Manitoba's initial endowment of \$20 million, and it will be administered by The Winnipeg Foundation. The annual income for the investment will be used for proponent-led fish and wildlife enhancement projects across Manitoba, in perpetuity.

These provincial investments in fish and wildlife enhancements pay broad and enormous dividends, and the modernization efforts of the PC governments helps with the transparency, accountability and marketability of these sustainable development investments. Manitobans live in one of the most beautiful and diverse ecological areas on the planet and we need to make sure we're working smartly to preserve this beauty for years to come.

The more we invest in our environment, the more it will return back to Manitobans, and that is certainly the case when investments on-towards fish and wildlife enhancements are concerned. Intermountain sport fish enhancement group, for example, has definitely enhanced sport fishing, has benefited fish, fish habitat, our economy, and it's positively educating and inspiring others to work towards conservation and, of course, everyone gets to enjoy more opportunities in our great outdoors.

In the parklands and through Manitoba's extremely diverse and complex ecosystems, fish and wildlife enhancement opportunities exist everywhere and are appreciated by all and important to everyone. Across Manitoba's different resource regions, there has been and continues to be significant investments and progress towards emission reductions and improved land use and stewardship.

These indirect but significant actions contribute a lot towards Manitoba's fish and wildlife environment, and I commend this PC government's approach towards modernization and realizing the great conservation efforts and investment being made by all Manitobans.

Fish and wildlife enhancement is most certainly a very complex issue—might not seem that way but it is—and it deals with a wide range of competing influences and interests. In the past five years, our government is proud to support numerous projects that contribute to protect and promote the environment and fish and wildlife species, and I can give a few examples, one being our \$1.2 million to help implement the Climate and Green Plan, and a key part of this plan is our first-in-North-America carbon savings account for greenhouse reductions over a five-year period.

Now, these efforts and initiatives that are in the Manitoba Climate and Green Plan is very much a plan that works for all Manitobans, and taking those in—those investments and measuring them and measuring the investments are an important part of the strategy to—that will help Manitoba grow and diversify its economy in very, very positive ways.

I'd also cite the increase—the government increase to watershed district programming to nearly \$6 million. And I know in Manitoba and across Manitoba, watersheds are an important part of the landscape right across the province. And it doesn't matter if you're in—you know, if you're in Flin Flon or if you're in Ashern or Brandon or Dauphin or Winnipeg, watersheds are all the way around us and they're an important part of the story when we're talking about fish and wildlife enhancement.

And I would say there's a real co-ordinated effort between numerous stakeholders, whether they're the conservation districts or Agriculture or the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund and groups, a real co-ordinated effort to be environmentally sensitive and to work on—collaboratively on the conservation efforts that help Manitoba and help Manitobans for years to come.

So I would say again, Manitoba's Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan is another way—again, it's a very broad plan but it is a way to support Manitoba's fish and wildlife enhancement efforts and our economy while balancing the needs and consideration for sustainability, our environment and the maintenance of our beautiful province for years to come.

I do commend the efforts of this government for their smart modernization efforts and for the important investments and commitment being made towards fish and wildlife enhancement and our environment, especially during these changing, challenging times.

It's great to see that commitment, it remains, and it recommends that this government—commends this government, as it is the right thing to do. And I ask for support of this legislator—Legislature to support the government in their efforts and investments towards fish enhancement and conservation.

*(11:10)

I do also want to recognize, again, there's a number of groups that really worked to help in this regard—and, again, the intermountain sport fish enhancement, Swan Valley fish enhancement, the FLIPPR group in and around Roblin, Rossburn area that are doing some incredible work on some still-water lakes and really developing quite an amazing fly-fishing environment where I think they have their Bug Chucker Cup, which is getting a lot of attention in the fly-fishing world.

And the work that's being done and—in these lakes and the alternative use, to turn them into a world-class freshwater fish—fly-fishing sector, is valuable to the region. It's valuable to Manitoba. So there's a lot of great people doing a lot of great work here.

Thank you.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party, any subsequent questions must follow rotation between parties, each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I thank the member from Dauphin for his presentation this morning. I would like to ask a few questions.

My first question is, could the member explain why this resolution is one of his government's top priorities right now, as we fight through the third wave of the pandemic?

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): I want to thank the member for that question because give—we are, without a doubt, in the middle of a public health pandemic but we're also very concerned and working towards moving the province forward beyond the pandemic and, again, our resource sector and our fish resources and the issues around watersheds and environmental habitats are important issues and are tremendous opportunities for the province, I think, in terms of—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Member's time has expired.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): I want to thank the member for Dauphin for bringing forward this important resolution.

Can the member point out some measures our government has taken to protect our environment since taking office in 2016?

Mr. Michaleski: I thank the member for that question.

There's been a number of really smart and meaningful investments that this government has made towards—to protect the environment and most—one of the most important ones, I think, is the commitment of funding towards the Watershed Districts Program.

Again, this is something that affects all of Manitoba. They're important parts of our ecosystem and they're infrastructure, really, that crosses lots of boundaries. So I think that commitment is large.

Also, the \$20-million endowment fund towards our provincial parks—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Member's time has expired.

Mr. Brar: Can the member kindly explain whether this is enough investment, keeping in mind what our fishers are going through right now?

Mr. Michaleski: I thank the member for the question, and it's—I guess the answer to that is, you know, it's never enough but there's only so much to go around. And I know the government is doing their part by directing funds towards trusts and towards—that can be flowed through to a number of groups that are across the province working on, again, fish and and wildlife habitat.

There's a number of issues, again, through the Climate and Green Fund that, again, local groups, businesses—there's a lot of people that are contributing towards this and I think government is doing—is really smart with their focus on investment—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Member's time is expired.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Eco-certification is a really important marker of how well a fishery is sustainable. The government had committed to eco-certification, and so I ask the member why has the government not, in five years,

eco-certified the four biggest lake fisheries that we have had historically? That is Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipegosis and Southern Indian Lake.

Mr. Michaleski: I thank the member for the question and for him raising an important issue that I don't have the answer for, but I do know eco-certification is something that is—something that's becoming more and more prevalent, especially when we're looking at food and food products. And people are wanting—and the market is changing towards eco-certification, and they're wanting to know how things are produced and where they're buying their products from.

So the—it is an important issue. I don't have the answer for it, but it is an emerging issue, that's for sure.

Mr. Brar: This government's gap program—the so-called gap program—had many gaps in it.

Can I ask the member why did this government not include fishers in COVID-19 gap funding, despite the massive impacts the pandemic had on their livelihoods?

Mr. Michaleski: I thank the member for that question and, again, I'm not sure that I have the correct answer for that, but I know, you know, fishers and agriculture producers, they weren't necessarily targeted in those gap programs. Those gap programs were designed to help some more, I guess, streetwise business interruptions, and—but I know the government of the day is—they're really concerned and wanting to help the fisheries industry and—in their efforts that are going towards the fish enhancement fund—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Member's time is expired.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I thank the member from Dauphin for bringing this very, very important issue forth.

And, you know, just following up on the eco-certification, our government's working aggressively. It's a work-in-progress. We know Waterhen was one of the first lakes to become eco-certified, and we know down the way here that our—that there is going to be a time when you cannot market fish unless we have eco-certification.

But, going on, can the member explain how FWEF will also benefit programs from hunters, trappers and anglers, because we know that the hunters, trappers and anglers, they're the ones that get

right in, care about the resources, and our government is so proud to work with these different user groups.

Mr. Michaleski: I want to thank the member for the question and the reminder.

I know there's a lot of work being done at the Skownan and there's some real good work in terms of eco-certification going on with the Skownan First Nation, but our hunters and trappers and anglers are very active supporters in enhancement efforts and conservation efforts.

I would say that 10 per cent of the revenue from the sale of licences will be invested in the trust fund each year that will grow—help to grow and sustain the endowment and ensure that the resources available for fish and wildlife enhancement activities—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Member's time is expired.

Mr. Brar: This is a rule. This is a—everybody knows that there's a rule if somebody does a great job and we appreciate it. So I'm just wondering why this government is having to ask for commendment if they really did a great job for fisheries.

* (11:20)

Mr. Michaleski: I thank the member for the question and, again, I think this is—the efforts that are going towards fish and wildlife enhancement have been going on for years.

And this is something that the government has supported over many years, but the modernization efforts of this current government towards the accountability and, in fact, improving the marketability and enhancing that program is something that I think that is important to all Manitobans and it's something that helps build a strong, again, resource sector across the province. This is something that should be—it should be uniformly—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I was hoping the member could explain why funds like this are so critical to protect the diversity and—of fish and wildlife species across the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Michaleski: I thank the member for that question.

And it—of course, Manitoba's fish and wildlife habitat is a—is really a Manitoba treasure and it's something that, I think, affects everybody across the

province. And we do have a very diverse resource-based economy that benefits everyone. And these funds ensure fish and wildlife is not forgotten. We have a very robust economy and diverse economy and, again, these funds ensure that our fish and wildlife are not forgotten.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Thanks for the opportunity to speak to this resolution.

A few days back I was reading the news entitled, Province makes new investments to help sustain local fisheries, and I was expecting something great under this title. And when I saw the figure, it was eight with a few zeroes, and I was illusioned: Is it \$8 million? Then I carefully saw that it's \$800,000—just \$800,000. That's not a very good amount. That's nothing to support this industry, which is in need of a great support from this government.

I know Manitobans are great. We have great lakes. Our biodiversity is great. Our population diversity is great. Our fishers are great. Our hunters and trappers are great. But, unfortunately, we don't have a great government that we deserve.

When I was reading that news, I saw a beautiful picture under the title with our Ag Minister with a wide, big smile in front of the truck that is gifted to the department and its value is \$250,000, and that is a new fish hatchery stocking truck.

And the picture—as we all know that a picture says a thousand words—the sense of accomplishment, the big smile on the face of our Ag Minister, it tries to convey that he did everything that was needed to be done for our fishers, for our hunters, for our trappers and other people in this department, in this field.

It's nothing to be bragged about. It's nothing, actually. It does nothing to help our fishers, who sacrificed a lot during this pandemic. They were asking this government for support again and again, but this government failed to extend that support to these hard-working Manitobans.

I wish our Ag Minister and our Premier (Mr. Pallister) had the same big heart matching the big smile on that picture but, unfortunately, they doesn't have one. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the government had

done the right thing, if the government had offered solid support to our fishers, they would have commended the government already. Why do they need to ask for commendment?

And do you know what I fear right now? That in the middle of the pandemic, there would be another—there could be another resolution that asks for commending this government for offering a four hundred—\$4,011 tax credit to our Premier. This is the direction this government is going towards. They're not making any solid efforts but they're asking for appreciation. It's very clear that if Manitobans are not appreciating what this government is doing, then this government does not deserve any appreciation.

I know that Manitobans, especially fishers, hunters and trappers, they care about our biodiversity. They already know the importance of maintaining fish and wildlife populations. They have the knowledge, skills and experience to manage these populations. All they need is good policy, good financial support, good investment from the government. And when I say support, I mean real, solid support that our fishers have been demanding, especially during the pandemic.

Let me tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund has existed for decades in Manitoba, and this fund was formally enshrined in statute by the previous NDP government in 2014. Under The Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund Act, fishers, hunters, trappers pay their licence fee and a portion of this fee goes to this fund. This act also establishes Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Committee, and the purpose of the committee is to involve fishing, hunting and trapping organizations and listen to the local voices for making recommendations for fish and wildlife activities.

The NDP believes in collaboration and collective approach, while this government always ignores local voices. They either do not consult at all or consult in a way that is just a formality. I'm saying that because I know. I have experienced attending those meetings in the Dauphin area, which this member represents, with the Crown land leaseholders.

In 2019 and 2020, I had the opportunity to attend a few meetings, and what I witnessed in the meetings, that those ranchers, they've been clearly saying that we were not consulted. And this statement is contrary to the government's claim that they did. So I'm not sure who did they consult with.

* (11:30)

And presently, through EngageMB, they're getting public opinion consultations, so-called consultations on various issues, and I'm getting calls from Manitoba producers that they have designed this in a way which is not transparent.

Everybody has to register. It's not as open as a town hall, that what everybody says is visible to others. So these consultations are just for the sake of filling their duty, just pretending to be consulting, not the real, intended consultations. And I fail to understand why this government likes to self-praise their insufficient and insignificant efforts to support Manitobans.

Everyone knows that this PC government failed to support fishers during the pandemic. They failed to include them in their gap program in spite of the fact that they were not supported, they continued sacrificing.

And, in conclusion, I want to say thanks to our fishers, hunters and trappers for their sacrifices, and we stand against this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): It is an honour to be able to put some words on the record in regards to the private member's resolution brought forward by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), commending the provincial government for investments into fish and wildlife enhancement.

Our provincial government has made a number of important investments to protect and enhance Manitoba's fish and wildlife populations since coming into government in 2016. Manitobans live in one of the most beautiful and diverse ecological areas on the planet and we need to make sure we preserve this beauty for years to come.

We all need to do our part to make sure that the fish and wildlife we have in this province today are here for many generations to come. I consider myself lucky to have elk and deer in my backyard. I have fished all over this province and want to make sure that does not change for our children, grandchildren and their children.

The outdoors is a very important part of my family's life and also to many, many more Manitobans who enjoy the outdoors. I hope we can continue to have a province that provides us with the opportunities to hunt, fish or just observe the beauties of Manitoba.

During this pandemic, we have encouraged Manitobans to explore this beautiful province, and they are. Manitobans are finding out that Manitoba has a lot to offer in the great outdoors. With the added interest in Manitoba's outdoors comes the need to recognize the importance of protecting and enhancing our fish and wildlife species that call Manitoba home so they will thrive well into the future. The Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund was established to expand the successful fisheries model to include wildlife funding opportunities.

The government of Manitoba has taken significant steps to modernize the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund and secure this important conservation resource for future generations. The purpose of the fund is to support fish and wildlife enhancement initiatives, including projects, programs and studies designed to protect and increase fish and wildlife habitat and populations in Manitoba.

Manitoba is home to many active local wildlife associations that do a great job in maintaining our fish and wildlife populations. They work at educating our future generations as to the importance of respecting our great outdoors and the fish and wildlife that call it home. They're full of ideas for projects to enhance Manitoba's fish and wildlife here in Manitoba.

The Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund is one of the special funds that our government committed to remediate. Our government entered into an agreement with The Winnipeg Foundation to administer a trust fund that will provide more stable and long-term funding for fish and wildlife initiatives than what the previous system did. Funding for all project-future projects will come from the fish and wildlife enhancement trust—or fund trust created by the government of Manitoba with an initial endowment of \$20 million in March of 2020 and administered by The Winnipeg Foundation.

The annual income from this investment will be used to pay for 'propoment'—proponent-led fish and wildlife enhancement projects across Manitoba in perpetuity. Going forward, 10 per cent of revenue from the sale of angling, hunting and trapping licences will continue to be invested into the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund trust each year, growing and sustaining the endowment, ensuring that the resources available to fish and wildlife enhancement activities will continue to grow well into the future.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, there are a number of fish enhancement initiatives that would qualify for funding. Some of them are a project or program to

conserve or increase fish populations; a project or program to protect, manage or restore fish habitat; a study of fish populations or habitat; angler education programs which are extremely important; the acquisition of property to protect the critical fish habitat.

Here are some examples of wildlife enhancements that would qualify for funding: a project or a program to conserve or increase wildlife populations; a project or program to protect, manage or restore wildlife habitats; hunter and trapper education programs; the acquisition of property to protect the critical wildlife habitat.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, Manitoba has a very successful fish hatchery program. Over the years, it has been stocking a lot of lakes in our province. This fund will also be used to support government fish hatcheries. Each year, Manitoba's stocks close to 100 water bodies with tens of millions of walleye fry and almost 500,000 trout from its hatcheries. Our fish hatcheries play an important role in maintaining a healthy fish stock for our world-class fisheries.

The Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund is not the only initiative our government has taken to protect our fish and wildlife. Just last week, the Minister for Agriculture and Resource Development committed an additional \$600,000 for wildlife and fisheries management, which will be dedicated in 2021 and 2022 to Manitoba fisheries to support enhanced monitoring and data collection. The enhanced data collection will be targeted towards high-use recreational angling lakes and mixed-use fisheries that support domestic fishing, recreational angling and the commercial harvest.

In addition, \$250,000 investment has also been made for a new fish hatcheries stocking truck. The new truck features an improved tank configuration that will allow for more efficient stocking operations. And I know I've seen pictures of the old truck and it's time that truck got replaced because it was just not doing its job anymore.

Our fish hatcheries have played an important role in maintaining our fish stock and in the future will play an even more important role as more and more Manitobans take to our rivers, lakes and streams to fish.

There's also the economic benefit to the province. There is an increasing demand for Manitoba's commercially harvested fish. Hunting and fishing is an

important part of Manitoba's tourist industry and contributes millions of dollars to our economy. Our government recognizes the importance of protecting, enhancing our fish and wildlife species here in Manitoba.

I would also like to disagree with the member from Burrows in some of his comments when he was saying that why would the member choose to do a resolution right now when COVID is so important. COVID is extremely important, but the province cannot stop—I mean, it is our—the Manitobans, because of COVID, have been taking more to our outdoors and are using our outdoors lots, so we must stay on top of everything that needs to be done in the outdoors to make it a more successful adventure and—for Manitobans.

* (11:40)

Once again, I would like to commend our provincial government for the investments that have been made into fish and wildlife enhancement here in Manitoba. I would like to ask all members to stand with me in support of this resolution. And obviously, the member from Burrows has different thoughts on this, but I guess it's the people of Manitoba who will decide what should be done.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member from Wolseley.

The member from Wolseley?

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Sorry, I just had to get that open. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My colleague, the honourable member from Burrows, has already spoken fairly succinctly to this PMR, so I do risk just parroting him here a bit today, but I think it's important to put some words on the record in response to this private member's resolution.

Manitobans care about protecting our province's biodiversity and ensuring that fish and wildlife populations are sustainable for future generations.

The Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund has existed for decades in Manitoba. The fund was formally enshrined in statute by the previous NDP government in 2014, under The Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund Act. A portion of fishing, hunting and trapping licence fees and royalties go into the fund.

The bill also established the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Committee, a subcommittee that includes members of fishing organizations is to make recommendations on the funding of fish enhancement initiatives, and a subcommittee that includes members of hunting and trapping organizations is to make recommendations on the funding of wildlife enhancement initiatives.

The fund was created to support fish and wildlife initiatives, including projects, programs and studies designed to protect and increase fish and wildlife habitats and populations of Manitoba, and the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund is overseen by two subcommittees: the Fish Enhancement Subcommittee and the Wildlife Enhancement Subcommittee.

These are responsible for reviewing all applications and for making recommendations on all fisheries and wildlife initiatives that seek funding for fish and wildlife enhancement initiatives. A fish enhancement initiative means projects or programs that conserve or increase fish populations; projects or programs that protect, manage or restore fish habitats; studies of fish populations or habitats; angler education programs; and the acquisition by purchase, lease or other means of property or an interest in property in order to protect a critical fish habitat.

And a wildlife enhancement initiative means projects or programs that conserve or increase wildlife populations; projects or programs that protect, manage or restore wildlife habitats, including the construction or maintenance of infrastructure in wildlife management areas; studies of wildlife populations or habitats; hunter and trapper education programs; and the acquisition by purchase, lease or other means of property or an interest in property in order to protect a critical wildlife habitat.

We believe in collaboration with fishers in a meaningful consultation on new projects and rule changes, as demonstrated by these earlier committees brought in by the NDP government. The Pallister government has consistently disrespected Manitoban fishers, ignored them when they needed help and made changes without consulting them.

Our fish and wildlife populations are being jeopardized by climate change, which the PCs refuse to take meaningful action on. The amount of money invested in the fund won't matter if we don't have a suitable environment for fish and wildlife species to limit. The government's priorities just are not in line with what Manitobans need right now and we will continue to fight for meaningful climate action, real

emissions targets and strong consultation with fishers, communities and wildlife experts.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government have not shown respect to Manitoban fishers and have consistently not been there for fishers when they needed help. This government continued to make decisions without proper consultation with those most affected by rule changes, and they misled Manitobans when they say that they consult with Métis and First Nation fishers, when we know from fishers themselves that they have not.

During the pandemic, the Pallister government did not provide support to Manitoba fishers when they needed it most. The Premier's so-called gap program was supposed to fill the gap in federal programs. Instead, he explicitly excluded unincorporated businesses, which included many Manitoban fishers. Manitoban fishers are facing a huge disruption to their livelihoods, and the Premier and his government have just been silent on this issue, rather than standing up for them.

Fishers said they wanted the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation to get better, but they didn't want the corporation gutted. However, the Premier clearly does not have the best interests of Manitoba fishers in mind.

In 2018, the Premier and his government rushed to exit the FFMC by using phony consultations with fishers. They hired a fisheries envoy for \$50,000, but the Pallister government had already made up their mind about the future of the FFMC. They ignored the advice of the fisheries envoy to ensure fish buyers are bonded. Within weeks of their new system being put in place, a fish buyer walked away with fish worth over \$1 million without fishers being paid.

The Premier's rush to exit the FFMC was a comprehensive and unmitigated disaster, according to ecologist Scott Forbes. The Pallister government must be held accountable for this mess.

In 2019, this government politically interfered with the fishing licence process and then misled Manitobans by denying that this happened. They bypassed the Norway House Fisherman's Cooperative and granted a licence to a candidate running for their party in the last election.

Right before Mr. Ron Evans became a candidate for the party, the former minister for Sustainable Development meddled in the licence-granting process to benefit Mr. Evans, and the minister's poor actions

left the community with no other option than to take the government and the minister to court.

In 2019, the provincial government created a rule change that would require fishers to use nets with mesh spaced at least 3.5 inches apart. And when fishers asked for necessary assistance to make this transition, there was none provided by this government. The Pallister government refused to listen to fishers' concerns. Instead, they pushed ahead while fishers faced reduced sales and no provincial support during the pandemic.

We believe in meaningful consultation with Métis and First Nations fishers as well as the fishing co-operatives. That is why we will continue to highlight this government's poor track record on meaningful consultation. We support efforts to meet the needs of fishers, to finance their businesses and to market their catch.

Manitobans take pride in the many lakes and rivers in our province and they want to see them protected for future generations because our waterways are a vital part of our local ecosystems, and if they're not healthy, our fish and wildlife cannot thrive.

For the last 50 years, the region surrounding Lake Winnipeg has been warming at twice the rate per decade for the globe, and the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, along with many Manitobans, are deeply concerned about the growth of blue-green algae and the health of Lake Winnipeg and have endorsed declaring a state of aquatic emergency on Lake Winnipeg. Phosphorus concentrations in the south basin of Lake Winnipeg continue to be high and are actually double the phosphorus objective for the lake.

The North End treatment plant is the largest single-point emitter of phosphorus, yet instead of creating a solid, efficient plan to get this done, the Pallister government just continues to waste time, arguing with the City of Winnipeg about funding.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) withdrew from legal action with North Dakota, allowing waters to flow into Lake Winnipeg without proper assurances about the quality or the possibility of new invasive species, and has not stepped up to the plate to collaborate with other levels of government and create bilateral policy agreements to protect Lake Winnipeg from nutrient and soil pollution.

In 2019, the Pallister government told the City of Winnipeg to redirect \$34 million of funds previously allocated to the City for the North End wastewater

treatment plant to other projects. And then, in September 2020, the Pallister government asked the City to transfer \$321 million of potential Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program funds from a public transit stream to a green infrastructure category, meaning that in order to secure funding, the City had to give up funding for public transit. The Pallister government is now pressuring the City to use a public-private partnership for the final two phases of the sewage plant project, which will further delay this work.

The protection of Lake Winnipeg requires investment from the provincial government, including vast infrastructure plans and co-operation between multiple governments, as the lake spans multiple borders. Furthermore, we need to protect our climate in order to protect our fish and wildlife.

* (11:50)

The Premier continues to waste time arguing with the federal government over our carbon price, and while we continue to see the devastating impact of climate change in our province with wildfires, droughts, degraded ice roads and flooding, right now, Manitoba's greenhouse gas rates are an all-time high and growing faster than ever under the Pallister government.

Instead of working with and for Manitobans to fight climate change, the Pallister government just spends millions of dollars on a federal lawsuit to try and strike down carbon pricing.

Manitobans on this side of the House take climate crisis seriously. We believe in setting ambitious targets and taking real action to reduce emissions, preserve our environment and protect future generations' quality of life.

On this side of the House, we believe that Manitobans deserve a government who understands the interconnectedness of all nature and a government who commits to working hard to ensure the sustainability of Manitoba's natural resources. We also believe in protecting our waterways for all Manitobans and thereby protecting the fish and wildlife species that they—that rely on those.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to say a few words about this resolution.

Protecting fish and fish habitat needs to show results instead of broken promises. The Pallister government promised in the 2016 election that it would

eco-certify Manitoba's three great lakes: Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis. This promise was made in part to address studies which concluded that Manitoba's fisheries have been, and still are, among the worst-managed fisheries in the world.

Achieving eco-certification as promised would have been a result which would demonstrate that all the other measures being taken with respect to the fisheries are working. Until this happens, we are left in the position that we can only guess as to the status of the fish populations in Manitoba's largest fisheries.

To date, in five years, the government has not achieved the promised eco-certification of Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis. This is another broken promise—a broken promise of the Pallister government, an important promise which should have been fulfilled but was not; instead, it was broken.

It is a sad and sorry story when a government breaks such an important promise, a promise which is important to the fish, to the fishers and to all who care about wildlife and nature in our province. It is not enough for the government to say, oh, the NDP didn't do it either. Sadly, in too many areas, the government is following in the footsteps of the failures of the NDP before them.

Fishers on Lake Winnipeg who were not initially supportive of eco-certification have now realized how critical it is for the lake whitefish fishery in Lake Winnipeg. Getting the best prices today depends on eco-certification. We need it. The Pallister government is letting fishers down, is not helping them to get the best prices for their whitefish.

The government also needs to add the eco-certification of the fishery on Manitoba's fourth largest lake, Southern Indian Lake. The government has sadly neglected Southern Indian Lake, as the NDP did before them. Southern Indian Lake and the lower Churchill River need to have much better attention and much better support for their fisheries and for the people of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin and Tataskweyak Cree Nations.

Manitoba Liberals cannot support this resolution until such time as eco-certification of the fisheries on Manitoba's four great lakes has been achieved.

I also want to add here a short mention of the important work which has been done by the Manitoba Liberal leader, the MLA for St. Boniface, in support of fishers—commercial fishers—in Manitoba.

The MLA for St. Boniface worked with Manitoba fishers and with the federal government to address the fact that the freshwater 'fisheries' corporation had full freezers during the COVID pandemic, which were a result of a big drop in the market for pickerel during the pandemic.

The government—as a result of the lobbying, the advocacy of the MLA for St. Boniface—the federal government provided the stored fish to Indigenous people in our province, helping significantly. And at same time, the result of this was that there was now the capacity so that there could be a fishery which was open in 2020 and continues to be open.

This has been a lifesaver for many commercial fishers and has been a really important, positive initiative undertaken by the MLA for St. Boniface to make sure that fishers are doing well. Manitoba Liberals continue to work hard for the fishers in our province and for those who are concerned about nature and about wildlife.

Thank you, merci, miigwech for the opportunity to talk about this resolution. Thank you.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Our fisheries and wildlife belong to all Manitobans. Our government recognizes the importance of protecting and enhancing our fish and wildlife species here in Manitoba.

We have some of the most diverse wildlife habitat, from the northern tundra, through the boreal forest, to the grasslands in the south. These diverse ecosystems are home for a diverse array of wildlife species. Our pristine northern lakes and rivers and mountains and prairie lakes are also home to many fish species. Anglers seek out many of these fish to add to their fishing resume.

As we listened to the member opposite, you know—and he was mocking that our government purchased the truck to move stocks to different lakes. And over their years and their watch, you know, that truck got so beaten into the ground it was probably not even roadworthy and our hatchery was also 'deteriating.' And these are—there was a focus here to go ahead and to get these two very important dimensions of our sustainable fishery up to a caliber where we could deliver those stocks to rural Manitoba and to the lakes.

We have it all in Manitoba, and that's why we have to protect these precious resources. And our government recognizes this and our investments are one our government is committed to. We are—Manitobans

live in one of the most beautiful and diverse ecological areas in—on the planet and we need to make sure to preserve this beauty for years to come.

And that is why we are going to support this resolution and we want to see it move to a vote. Our Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund will afford our province and its species that call it home the protection and enhancement it needs to thrive well into the future.

So with that, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I will sit down so we can move this resolution to a vote. Thank you.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Is my audio fine? Can I get a thumbs-up if I'm good here? All right.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy—Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, for a chance to put a few words on the record for the PMR. I will perhaps, at the very beginning, take reference with the wording of the PMR, and

perhaps it should be more like criticizing the provincial government for lack of investments in fish and wildlife, because that, in fact, is true in this—what is happening here.

They're taking this as another opportunity to pat themselves on the back for a lacklustre effort and lacklustre investments in fish and wildlife. I think my colleague from Burrows said it best when he said: why do you have to ask for appreciation? Why do you have to ask to be commended on work?

If that's something that was happening, you shouldn't have to ask for it. Manitobans should be reaching out with that praise, and there's nothing further than that happening here today—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Order. Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 10 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

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