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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 21, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to go directly to Bill 212.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave for us to go directly to Bill 212? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 212—The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We will go to Bill 212, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 212, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to ban the use of single-use, plastic checkout bags made from petroleum products in grocery stores and retail outlets around Manitoba. There are clearly many, many alternatives. Cloth bags, which are what I use in a standard way, recyclable, usable again and again and again, are probably the optimum, but there are also biodegradable bags made from agriculture products which are an option and which certainly can be used instead.

Mr. Speaker, it's time that we in Manitoba move on this initiative. We've introduced this bill several times in the House so far, but it has not been supported. The government has brought forward some half measures, but so far they've been remarkably ineffective. One only has to go down to the local grocery store, supermarket, SuperValu, and see the large number of people who are still using plastic, single-use bags and the huge numbers of these which are therefore added to the landfill sites in our province, several hundred million each year, adding to the problems of the landfill site, blowing

around, as we can see now that the snow is clearing away, lots of plastic bags here, there and everywhere that are littering the sidewalks, the lawns, the parks. You know, our communities, we don't need this. We need to move forward into recognizing that Manitoba should be a green province. We don't want to have articles like that which appeared recently in the *Free Press*, talking about how backward Manitoba is with respect to the environment and how we're not performing up to anywhere near what we should be. That, of course, is the result of the NDP leadership, but what we need is to move forward on environmental issues.

We are pleased that the NDP have seen to follow our initiative to ban phosphorus from automatic dishwashing detergents. We know that they've come a little way on plastic bags, but there is a long way to go. I suggest to members opposite that they support this bill to ban plastic bags in our province. It is time to do this. It is time to show some leadership when it comes to environmental issues. Many other areas have banned plastic bags. We only have to look to leadership from Ed Charrier in Leaf Rapids and others in that community. Ed is here today. He's here because he's concerned. He's shown leadership and his community has shown leadership in banning plastic bags. It has worked very quickly. People changed their pattern, and the result was an immediate decrease in the number of plastic bags appearing in the landfill site.

Of course, then there was a problem with people bringing plastic bags from Thompson. So hopefully Thompson will be banning plastic bags in the near future. Let's get some provincial leadership on this issue. Let's get some support for our Liberal bill here and get a full ban of plastic bags in this province.

Yesterday, we saw another problem with this government when it comes to the environment. Greenhouse gas emissions have gone up, mostly due to agricultural emissions of methane and nitrous oxide. I've been telling the government, the NDP, for years that they needed to have a plan for agricultural emissions. They've been completely ineffective and greenhouse gas emissions have gone up again.

A friend of mine, Don Woodstock, who's here, was talking about the importance of, you know, when he buys a house he needs to be able to make

sure that he's got a home which is going to have dual-flush toilets, but, at the moment, when he goes to buy a home they still have standard toilets. It's time to change. It's time to move forward on environmental issues instead of trying to pretend, which is what the NDP are doing, that they are doing some good things but not really coming up to the plate and getting rather black marks from writers in the *Free Press* and elsewhere because they are not producing, they are not delivering when it comes to the green economy.

I should add, making these changes is good for the economy because, instead of using petroleum-based plastic bags from Alberta, we should be making Manitoba-produced agricultural, recyclable, biodegradable bags here in Manitoba and increase our Manitoba economy.

So I say to the MLA for Assiniboia that he should be promoting the Manitoba economy instead of the Alberta economy and ban plastic bags in this province. Let's get with it. Let's promote Manitoba. Let's make it a win-win for this province, for the people of this province, and let's show some environmental leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member for River Heights for bringing forward this bill again. I think it allows us a good opportunity to talk about some real solutions that could work in this province, that could continue the good record that we have in terms of making this province green. I think the Leader of the Liberal Party should at least give some credit where credit is due. I know that's unheard of sometimes in this Chamber.

*(10:10)

I don't mind saying there are good aspects to the bill that the member brings forward. I think he should understand that there are many, many green options, green alternatives, green approaches that this government has very much supported, initiated, and moved forward, not the least of which—when he talks about doing real things to help the Lake Winnipeg and our waters, yet they couldn't bring themselves to supporting a ban on expansion of hog barns in very sensitive areas of this province, a very fundamental, I would suggest, very fundamental step in making the right choices for Lake Winnipeg. The Leader of the Liberal Party simply failed Manitobans on that particular issue, Mr. Speaker.

You know, a ban on plastic bags in a bill of this sort sounds pretty good and, Mr. Speaker, sometimes it's difficult to disagree with some of the things the Member for River Heights brings forward. He talked, I think, quite rightly about how the economy and the environment can work together. It wasn't so long ago that it was the economy versus the environment, and I'm really glad that paradigm is melting away. I'm really glad it's no longer the dominant way people view these issues.

I think we can support many good policies that bring the two together. For example, Manitobans—and I'm willing to say Manitobans, not even be partisan and say this government's policies, but Manitobans themselves—are opting to turn from natural gas and other forms of heating to geothermal, something that really makes good sense. It makes a lot of sense for Manitobans who can afford to put the money into a geothermal system to do that. What we have been doing is working with Manitoba Hydro to make sure that we can put in place a loan program that helps people get into this technology and make those good environmental and economic decisions. That's good.

Mr. Speaker, in our Throne Speech, I think we set a very ambitious target when it comes to plastic bags. If that's as narrow a view as the Member for River Heights has in terms of the environment, let's just deal with plastic bags just for a moment because we know that has to be not just an approach on plastic bags but we have to have a wider, broader approach because we need to help Manitobans in terms of improving our recycling, improving our reducing, improving the reusing of things we have that usually end up in our landfills. It's about diverting stuff from our landfills away.

It also, Mr. Speaker, I think very clearly needs to be about reducing, in the first place, the amount of plastic we use in Manitoba. Not just plastic bags, but the amount we use. If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times in the five and a half years I've been minister. I get real frustrated when I sit, at Christmastime, or at my seven-year-old's birthday, when I have to, as his dad, wade through his gifts. In those gifts, there are pounds after pounds of cardboard, Styrofoam, plastic. Those frustrating little tin ties they put in. You get a package about this big for a toy about that big, and I say—[interjection]—yeah, you've got to use wire cutters and a blowtorch to get to a little toy truck that my seven-year-old wants.

Meantime, dad's fumbling away with all this, and he's next to me saying, hurry up, dad—of course. But I get real frustrated with that. We've got to get to those manufacturers—[interjection] Yeah, more so than being a minister in those days, I must admit. But we've got to reverse, set this whole chain of events back to the people who put that stuff there in the first place so we, as policymakers, and we as Manitobans then, we don't have to be dealing with recycling their stuff. We don't have to deal with their stuff being in our landfills. We've got to get to them before they start packaging all this stuff and making it frustrating for moms and dads around but also making it frustrating for municipalities who have to try to deal with this once it's in our systems.

That's how we need to see plastic bags as well, Mr. Speaker. We have set, I think, some ambitious targets of reducing plastic bag use by 50 percent over the next five years. We have turned to the industry and we have said: those are your plastic bags, you have to deal with these; you have to come back to us with a plan for these bags, these bags that don't conform to composting or recycling standards; we have to include it in our blue box programs; we have to strengthen that blue box program so it can handle these plastic bags.

I get just as frustrated as anybody else around here when the snow melts and I have to pick up these plastic bags from our lawn or from the fences or from the trees. We need to be able to have a system in place that, in a comprehensive way, deals with plastic bags and all of this other stuff that we produce in society. Mr. Speaker, we have to have a comprehensive plan to move forward on that.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, our government, back in December, registered a regulation, the Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship regulation. That regulation has put the onus on industry to come back to us with a business plan that says: here is how we're going to deal with, not just plastic bags, but all that other stuff that we've created that has become a problem for Manitobans. I think that that's a responsible thing for a government to do. That is a very responsible thing for us to do, to say to them: you produce this; you make profit off of this; you have to come to us and show us exactly how it is that you're going to reduce these.

I think the other thing that we all need to recognize is that Manitobans, as in most issues I've learned when it comes to politics, Manitobans are

ahead of everyone else. We want to have—
[interjection]

Well, maybe the Leader of the Liberal Party doesn't have the confidence in Manitobans, but what I'm about to say expresses confidence in Manitobans' ability and willingness to make good green decisions. I think that needs to be said. Manitobans expect all of us in this Legislature to make those kinds of good, green, comprehensive decisions that involve more than just plastic bags. It involves all of the decisions we make, in terms of recycling and reducing and reusing, and design our programs that way. That's what this government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at what Manitobans are doing, just on a day-to-day basis, the number of cloth bags that I see being used when my wife and I and our son go to the grocery store and see the number of people choosing to use cloth bags rather than plastic. When you see what's happening at Liquor Marts in Manitoba, where they've moved to better options than plastic bags.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue. I invite the Leader of the Liberal Party to continue to make positive suggestions, and we will listen. But I encourage him to not just focus simply on one aspect, i.e., plastic bags, but to broaden his horizons a little bit, look at the entire recycling, reducing and reusing spectrum, and continue to make suggestions that we could possibly act on, and continue to green Manitoba. Thank you.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to also put some words on the record for Bill 212, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to compliment the Member for River Heights to actually talking about making a green economy and talking about making sure that green, which means the environment, actually creates economic benefits and economic growth. So I think that what we have to do is continue to work in those directions. I actually agree with the member because I think that it's our goal to make sure that we have a sustainable economy, a growing economy, a green economy and a smaller environmental footprint on the world.

* (10:20)

I think that we can be leaders. We have been leaders in many, many areas and we need to continue to do that. But what we have to do is we have to look

at the three Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle. We have to actually have an economic plan. I, again, would recommend that the member take me up on my offer to look at the climate change reduction act plan that we had made public about a year ago and actually are moving forward on. It involves changing the building permits and making the building standards include things like energy efficiency, water efficiency, furnace efficiency, et cetera. That was introduced, the act was introduced and voted on last year. It's actually moving forward. Consultations have happened around the province. Consultations have happened with the builders and the architects and the engineers and, by the way, we're moving forward on that very expeditiously, and I'm pleased to see that that's going forward by our government. I know it's national building codes that we're amending. I know we're working with all different groups, but that, again, shows how we can be leaders.

I look at the member opposite and I say, okay, on geothermal. I know we have only about 6,000 installations here in Manitoba, which represents about 3.7 percent of Canada's population, but what we have is 25 percent of all of Canada's installations. We have a certification program, we have a loan program and grant program.

I just look at our own government, where we have the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) who has a geothermal installation that was put in his existing home. We have the member from Dauphin, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) has a geothermal system. We have the Finance Minister and of course, myself, I have a geothermal heat—and the Ag Minister also has a geothermal heat pump in their house. I understand that the newest geothermal heat pump comes from a newer member, the Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), who just installed it and, I understand, is going to be fixing up their yard this spring.

But the interesting part is that we, in this government, not only talk the talk, we walk the walk. In other words, we have people who are being green, putting their money where their mouth is and moving forward. And I'm pleased that we now have two manufacturing plants that are manufacturing geothermal and actually shipping it to U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, China, India and now Singapore. We're manufacturing goods in Manitoba and shipping them to China and India as an export. I think that's a

positive where green, the environmental green, is creating green. I think that's important.

So whether it's the building of windows, the new building standards, the geothermal heat pumps, those all are examples of where we have to go. I'm also very pleased that just this last week Samborski, we've met with them, they actually have a compost pickup where, if you look at the waste, one of the biggest wastes that can be actually turned into a good, usable product is leaves and compostable stuff. They actually have a curbside recycle pickup and I think that's a very, very positive thing in Winnipeg. I know that I have four composters in my backyard which I compost all my leaves and I think that's a good waste diversion technique.

I'd also like to say thank you to Leaf Rapids. I met mayor Ed a number of times. He's pushing the envelope as far as green, and I appreciate that. Why I appreciate that is because I think we often need people who push the envelope and I always appreciate that.

But when the member over there is talking about bans what I'd like to say is that we do care about the workers in Manitoba, and there are Manitoba workers who are currently producing plastic bags. So what we want to do is do a transition from that economy to the new economy. So it's not a question of shutting down and closing factories and shops. What we want to do is transition into a greener, better environment.

So what we want to do is look at making potato starch, which we actually have a lot of potato starch in this province. We have two potato plants that produce a lot of starch. Well, maybe what we want to work with these industries to transition off the petrochemical and onto the starch so they can start making plastic bags out of cornstarch. That, then, creates a new industry, a green industry and doesn't just close down. What you do is you work with businesses to transition from past practice to greener, current practice. That's what we're trying to do and I'm pleased I'm working with my friend, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) on moving some of those transitions forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, that helps the potato industry, the manufacturing in the potato industry and the current plastic bag industry and the industries that are making utensils, et cetera, because you're transitioning from their old non-renewable resource

base to a new renewable resource base and further economic opportunities. That's where we want to go.

The other thing is when you do a strict ban without working with the industry, working with the retailers, et cetera, what you do is you close down some small companies. One of the companies in Manitoba currently taking recycled bags makes children's play structures out of them. That's an opportunity. That's creating real jobs.

Well, what you want to do is make sure that that company stays in business because it's creating real jobs, it's creating real opportunities. By the way, I believe, my nephews and nieces actually played on one of those structures. We want to keep those opportunities happening so that is something that's being done now if you go to any recycler.

Myself and the Minister of Conservation went and talked to the retailers. They agreed to make sure that all major retailers had a bag-return place. If you go to Sobeys or any of these other retailers, IGA, et cetera, you'll see where they can now deposit used bags. Recycle. They are then melted, crated into pallets and made into this children's lawn furniture which is a very positive thing and which is creating jobs and that's a new idea.

So it's not just ban. It's the transition industry. It's creating jobs. It's reduce, reuse and recycle. So we want to make sure that people do this.

There are other issues that I was not aware of when a simple ban came out. One of those was—and I'm surprised that the Member for River Heights didn't talk about it because as a doctor he should be aware of food poisoning issues. Plastic bags serve a very valuable use because if you take meat and put it in with the vegetables or something like this, you could get contamination.

So when you're talking about a strict ban, you have to take into account that some people might not wash their reusable bags appropriately. They might be used inappropriately and thus you might get contamination from meat or hamburger that you put in your bag which also has had vegetables in it, et cetera, and you might get cross contamination which would cause illness.

So that's one of the small considerations we need to do on looking at the ban because I don't want to be the minister responsible for an E. coli injury because someone took a reusable bag, put meat in it along with vegetables and fruit, ate the fruit and then got ill. So it's a small issue but it's an important issue and

it's one that we have to bring up with the food industry, with the retailers, et cetera, to make sure we have a legitimate answer on that.

So what we need is we need to make sure that there's some sort of barrier to prevent the cross contamination of these reusable bags. We also have to use education because an example is when I was talking about all these bags with my constituents and actually my mother, she said, oh, you wash bags, and I said, yes, you have to wash these on a regular basis. She was not aware of that, and so we talked about how to wash them.

The other thing is we want to make sure that we have a good legitimate recycling program. I'm very pleased that on the electronic recycling program this year we had about a million kilograms of e-waste that was diverted from landfills. That's a million kilograms which also have mercury, lead, zinc and other chemicals. I'm pleased that it has gone up to a million kilograms. We had about 30 sites for e-waste recycling around the province.

We also had about 600,000 kilograms—

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, want to put a few words on the record in regard to the ban for plastic bags. I listened to both ministers and I found it interesting. Quite frankly, I don't buy the arguments that are being presented.

* (10:30)

It's a fairly simple, straightforward bill. It doesn't have to be made to be that complicated, as the minister just tried to express, why it is we need to take our time and slowly go, in some sort of methodical process that would allow for the government to not have to come up with a ban.

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, you know, in particular, the Member for Dauphin, when he commented, well, in five years, we'll have a 50 percent reduction. You're still talking about hundreds of millions of plastic bags that would be all over the city of Winnipeg. How often do you drive around and you see these plastic bags in mesh fences or in trees, all over the landfill, on our streets and on our lawns, virtually all over the place.

It doesn't take a scientist to recognize the problems this poses to society. In fact, you might recall, there was a group of children from Cecil Rhodes School that joined with Leaf Rapids and said

we should be having an outright ban of the plastic bags, Mr. Speaker. This is a group of children that have actually gone and given more thought to the whole process than the ministry.

There is a great deal of merit, in a very environmentally friendly way, it's a bill—you know, I must admit, to the Leader of the Liberal Party, no, this bill will not cure all the environmental problems that Manitoba faces today. I'll admit to that. Having said that, it is a positive step that will make a significant difference in the province of Manitoba, and the government has a choice. It can stand by and allow the bill to die on the order paper once again and continue to allow the problem of plastic bags throughout all of our communities. I make reference to Winnipeg. The same principle applies to other cities in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, they have a choice. They can either stand by and let the problem continue or they can see this for what it is and that is a progressive piece of legislation that will have a real impact on protecting the environment in the province of Manitoba.

Well, there are arguments to be made that if the bill passes, what will be the outcome? Yes, we want to be able to promote growth in other industries. One minister makes reference to starch in potatoes. We can talk about cloth bags. I would suggest to you, if anything, accepting and adopting this particular bill will, in fact, speed up the process. You know, if we leave it up to the government of the day, the New Democrats, they've clearly shown they are more of a take the ship, put it on course, and just don't deviate; don't show any leadership because if you show leadership, that means you're going to have to take some form of action, and by taking some sort of an action, there might be a reaction that you might not like. So we'll just close our eyes and move forward and hope we're going, generally speaking, in the right direction.

Well, if they demonstrated a little bit of leadership, just a little bit of leadership, they could actually make a difference, Mr. Speaker, and that's what I would ask the government to do. Imagine, if you will, if Manitoba was, in fact, to allow this bill to be voted upon, and if they want to move some amendments, they can talk about proclamation dates, put in dates that would allow for the types of things the minister that spoke before me to, in fact, take place.

What it will do, Mr. Speaker, is it will speed up the process, and by speeding up the process, I would

suggest to you that Manitoba could be at the forefront, in part, and when we're at the forefront, we have the possibility of creating even more jobs because then Manitoba will be providing some of our products to other jurisdictions in Canada.

We don't have to re-invent the wheel. We have seen other communities, and I give full credit for Leaf Rapids and the leadership in Leaf Rapids in bringing forward such a wonderful idea. I give credit to the young people of our province who are more and more asking politicians to be pro-active on doing things that are better for our environment, in particular, for the children in Cecil Rhodes School, Mr. Speaker, who came up with a wonderful—and there was a video production. We even had a group of them come down to the Manitoba Legislature. I believe they even provided DVDs to MLAs talking about the benefits of banning the plastic bags.

So, in short, I would concede that yes, this will not change the world, it will not save the planet by just accepting this particular bill, but it is a step in the right direction. It is a significant step.

If you take a look at this particular bill and the bill that the Leader of the Liberal Party brought forward in regard to banning phosphorus-free dishwasher detergent, one minister says, well, give government credit when it does something positive. Well, they did take parts of that particular bill and bring it in, in terms of government legislation. We give them credit for doing that, but let's recognize that there are other good ideas that are out there that are worthy of not only debate inside this Chamber but worthy of actually getting outside of second reading, going into public hearings through our committee stage, where I'm sure that they will find that outside of this Chamber there's a great amount, a great deal of support, of public support, for initiatives such as this. They have nothing to fear by showing a little bit of leadership on the issue.

I suspect that if you were to check with the Municipality of Leaf Rapids and the type of response that some of the elected officials have received there from not only their constituents, from abroad, you will find that they have likely received far more credit than they have criticism. So, if we look at that, and I suggest that the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his ministers look at that, that it is indeed something that should be happening in the province of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): It gives me great pleasure to be able to put a few words on record regarding Bill 212, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act put forward by the Member for River Heights.

Before I start, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome Ed Charrier, the mayor from Leaf Rapids, who is in the gallery today and who was the sparkplug for initiating the ban on plastic bags in Leaf Rapids. I think Ed's done a great job and I think he's a pioneer in this respect. I'm sure it didn't always go smoothly because I do know I've run into people in Leaf Rapids who complained about it at the beginning, but they seem to be very happy with it right now. Having talked with Mayor Charrier, he also says, you know, although this is certainly a step in the right direction, the problem didn't go away, like people have pointed out that others coming into the community of Leaf Rapids bring their plastic bags, so there are still a lot of plastic bags in the landfill site. It doesn't go away because the surrounding area also uses plastic bags and other provinces use plastic bags. So it's very, very difficult to make it work for everybody at the same time.

Nonetheless, the mayor has shown leadership and I think he's done something that very few communities have done outside of perhaps Los Angeles where they have a partial ban. I think, at the moment also, some major countries such as China and Great Britain are looking at putting a price tag on each plastic bag so that if a shopper goes to a Safeway or whichever store, you don't just get a free plastic bag, you have to put your five pennies down before you can use that plastic bag. So, certainly they're going in that direction in other parts of the worlds as well.

Last fall's Throne Speech set an ambitious target of reducing plastic bags by 50 percent over five years. I know that may be too slow for some people, too small a step, but at least it is a step in the right direction, and I think it's a very achievable step.

The critic of a total ban of plastic bags who's saying it's a little bit too narrow and it's a little bit too soon, we need a sort of a gradual incremental approach, it's very difficult to implement it all at once, boom, let's do it now and everybody start with the same brush. It could cause a fair bit of upheaval, I would think.

We are also leaders already in this issue. If you're aware, and I'm sure you are, that in the Manitoba Liquor Mart stores, they no longer use

plastic bags. They were effectively banned in those stores about a year ago.

What I think the Minister of Conservation has said and others as well is that what we need is a wider strategy, a strategy of recycling and reducing waste in general as much as possible and not focussing on just one narrow trend. Although plastic bags are a nuisance, I agree with you. I see them wafting in the wind up north as I see them down south, and particularly once the snow goes, you see a lot of plastic bags lying about and they're not esthetically pleasing, I assure you.

*(10:40)

What we do need of course, and the Minister of Conservation has alluded to this as well, is education. It's not going to happen overnight. We also have to be aware that there aren't, perhaps, panaceas immediately. I was interested in listening to the Member for Assiniboia when he pointed out using cloth bags also have problems associated with them, particularly cross contamination. Those bags have to be kept clean, whereas a plastic bag, well, you use it once and you throw it away usually.

We could argue, I suppose, that if you went with a total ban on plastic bags, it's a bit of a thin edge of the wedge. It may be a positive thin edge of the wedge, but I'm wondering how that would apply to other plastic bags. Just thinking out loud really, is when I see the thousands and thousands of plastic bags being used in flood control and sandbagging. What happens to those bags? Are they subject to the same ban and, if they are, what happens if there's a flood next year? Do we go back to importing jute or hemp or whatever we use to make the bags from years ago?

An Honourable Member: Cloth sandbags.

Mr. Jennissen: Cloth sandbags, I'm not sure. It's just a question that pops up because, certainly, there must be tens of thousands of those bags that are kicking around, or will be kicking around, and how are we going to dispose of them?

We do have a very ambitious and, I think, a very successful blue box recycling program. It's extremely effective. We'd like to widen it even more to other areas in other parts of the province.

I think, as Manitobans, we've done relatively well depending—some of our critics say we've done poorly and, of course, our proponents say we've done very well. But I think, overall, I think we've done a

very good job. The recovery of eligible materials is rising. Mr. Speaker, in 1999-2000 Manitobans recycled 32,610 metric tonnes. In 2007-08 Manitobans recycled twice that amount, almost 69,000 tonnes. So we're certainly going in the right direction. Again, it may be too slow for some people.

Also, over the past two years, we have diverted one million kilograms of e-waste away from landfills and, budget 2009 provides increased funding for e-waste recycling throughout the province on top of the \$876,000 in funding in 2008.

Sometimes we have to look at whether things are practical or not, and whether they're immediately achievable or not. I'm not sure if the narrow ban on plastic bags all at once would really be workable in this province. I'm not saying it's a bad idea. I think the Member for River Heights had brought forth a good idea, but sometimes a good idea may be just too hard to handle right at once and implemented totally. I think it's a direction we will have to go—and not just this province, but, I think, globally, it's a direction we certainly will have to go.

I would point out that we have some very successful programs as well. In 2006 we started our Tire Stewardship program, and we've recycled the equivalent of 1.8 million passenger tires annually. That's an enormous amount of tires, 1.8 million.

Of course, our phosphorus reduction strategy will help lakes and rivers as well. I think that's very important.

The other thing we need to point out, I guess, is that decreasing plastic bags is certainly desirable, but we wouldn't want to minimize the impact of paper bags either, because paper bags have a significant impact on our environment as well. For example, paper bags use four times more energy to produce than plastic bags. So that's a point, I think, we need to look at. Paper bags use 84 times more energy to recycle than plastic bags. Depending on landfill conditions, paper may take nearly as long to decompose as plastic, not in all conditions, but in some conditions paper, particularly if you jam it together, it doesn't decompose that easily either. Also, paper takes up 80 percent more space in landfills. Paper produces 70 percent more air and 50 more water pollutants than plastic bags do.

Now, I'm not arguing for plastic bags. I'm saying getting rid of them there's still a problem with the other side as well.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that many stores are already offering other options, and I mentioned that before. They are offering cloth bags, although there are health issues with them as well. I welcome, particularly in Leaf Rapids, in the Fields Store, people get, I believe, a free cloth bag. So that's very helpful.

Also, I think, we're going towards organic and compostable plastic bags that will disintegrate a lot more quickly than the ones that we have traditionally used.

One point I want to make, and others have made as well, is that not every plastic bag is just thrown away right away. Sometimes they are recycled in the sense of being used as kitchen catchers. I know that in my house we always use the Safeway bags, or whatever the plastic bags are to put in the garbage cans and we use them as kitchen catchers. If we were to ban plastic bags entirely, then, of course, we would have to buy the regular Kitchen Catchers, which are a thicker plastic and probably more damaging than the bags we're already using.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make the point that I like what the Member for River Heights is proposing. I think it's a direction we have to go globally eventually. I think it's somewhat premature to implement this ban right now. That's not saying it's a bad idea, I just don't think the time is right, right now. I think it's a time for education. It's a time for transition. I think we have to get our people ready for this. Now, this doesn't have take years and years and years, but I do think we need a transition period. I think that's absolutely essential. Eventually, I do believe we will ban plastic bags right across the globe, but the time, right here, at this point, it can't be done immediately at the speed that the Member for River Heights wants.

So I'll leave it with that, Mr. Speaker, and hope that the members from the official opposition will also put their view on record because I don't think I've heard their view yet. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): As opposition, we would certainly welcome the opportunity to enter into debate on the member's bill that he's brought forward, I guess for the second year in a row. We certainly commend him for bringing forward these initiatives.

In my view, it's something the government of the day would be quite willing to pick up. The honourable member is proposing to ban the bag, if

you will. We know that the current government of the day has been really excited about bringing in bans of all sorts over the last few years. I know we're going to be debating some legislation about banning car phones and all those other types of things. Last year we debated the Bill 17, dealing with the ban on the expansion of hog farms in Manitoba. So I think it's something that the government of the day would be, when they saw the word "ban" in terms of this legislation, they'd be quite interested to support it. But it was received this morning again, on debate on this particular piece of legislation, we see the government skating around the issue and not making any decisions. *[interjection]* Well, it is playoff times. But I think what Manitobans are looking for is a government with some vision, a vision and some plans to bring things forward.

We just went through a number of days of debate on the provincial budget. The unfortunate part about the provincial budget was there was no forward thinking. There was no long-term plan. There was nothing that Manitobans can come and hang their hat on it and say, okay, this is where we're going as a province. You look at a province like New Brunswick. They've laid out a medium-term financial plan for their province. They've laid out a long-term financial plan for their province, how they're going to get themselves off dependency from the federal government. This particular government has brought forward a one-trick pony in terms of the provincial budget, and there's no forward thinking. And that's what we see when we talk about the environment. We talk about waste disposal. We talk about recycling. This particular government has not put forward a vision of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I was involved in a recycling program in Manitoba a number of years ago with the Association for a Clean Rural Environment. This is all part about thinking outside the box. There are opportunities there where industry can be involved and they can look after their own waste. It was a very successful program where we recycled empty and old pesticide containers, both metal and plastic. We saw different types of packaging come forward, and we were able to deal with different types of packaging and effectively divert that particular waste out of the waste stream, out of the garbage. So it was effectively those types of packaging that were recycled. So it was a very positive program. But it takes a little bit of thinking outside of the box to get that done.

Now, talking about blue boxes, last weekend in the paper we see that Manitoba's doing a very poor job of recycling. And I guess that's the facts. We do have some pretty good recycling programs around the province that seem to be working but, in broad terms, the recycling program isn't working very well. So, instead of the Province coming up with some kind of an idea of, maybe other provinces are doing something with their waste stream to divert that kind of waste out of the landfills. The Province should take the initiative to look around and see what other jurisdictions are doing. But instead of doing that, we hear, last week, that the government has proposed, at the AMM district meeting—or the trade show—that they are proposing to tax municipalities for putting garbage in their own landfills. Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly if you can't ban it entirely under legislation, well, then you'll have to tax it. There doesn't seem to be anything in between. You know, there's no forward thinking, there's no thinking outside the box in how we can deal with this. It's either ban or tax.

*(10:50)

So, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have to wait and see how this whole tax regime on garbage unfolds and whether it's actually going to be proactive and positive, in terms of diverting waste out of the landfill, or else this waste is going to show up in places where we certainly don't want to have it show up.

Now, I know the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) was going on this morning about the starch industry here in Manitoba, and we do have a very interesting and growing industry there. Manitoba Starch Products with the McLarens out of Carberry are doing some really interesting work around the world on recycling their product from the potato industry. They're also working with a company, Baker Colony out of MacGregor, Mr. Speaker, who actually manufacture plastic material and they're using some of that starch material in their recycling program and designing and making plastic material.

So it's a very interesting concept and I think that's the type of ingenuity that the government should be helping industry come up with to divert these kinds of waste streams, but we don't see that from this government. So what we're seeing is other communities, like Leaf Rapids, are going up and having to resort to coming up with their own programs to divert this type of waste.

So, Mr. Speaker, all, I think, Manitobans are looking for is a little vision, a little initiative and a little proactive work on behalf of this government, on behalf of all Manitobans.

Something else we're going to see coming up here in the near future, too, Mr. Speaker, is the whole idea of carbon credits, carbon trading and I think there could be real potential opportunities for Manitobans on that field. But we'll have to watch out what current legislation has done, what kind of handcuffs current legislation has put on, in terms of developing carbon credit trading so we can do things like methane capture, just to give you one example of what can be done in Manitoba on the environment.

We have to be careful that the government hasn't excluded some of the opportunities that might be available by the existing legislation they have in place, Mr. Speaker. So there are opportunities there. We just think we need a government with a bit of vision and some forward thinking in how to deal with these different types of waste streams. Thank you very much.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, in waiting patiently for my turn, and I want to thank all of the other honourable colleagues for their comments here today, and certainly also want to add my thanks to the mayor and community of Leaf Rapids. I think we all recognize that their initiative on banning plastic bags in their own local community really brought this whole issue to a whole other political level, raised enormous profile and I think we are seeing some very good discussion and some very good progress.

I don't think we disagree on the goal. All of us, you know, react negatively when we see plastic bags in places where we don't want them. They are completely unnecessary in some settings. Reusing cloth bags, for instance, is a very viable alternative, has been for a long time.

The question is: What's the best way to actually get to a reduced number of plastic bags in Manitoba? I think the Liberal proposal—I mean it's the second time they've brought this forward. In the time in between, our government's already announced a plan which I think will make a—well, I mean there are a couple of plans. There's one directly related to plastic bags and that is that any bag which can't be recycled or can't be composted is going to be banned from Manitoba.

So in a way—I mean I appreciate the intent or the spirit, the spirited energy shall we say, of the Liberal proposal but I think we're not all that disconnected in what we're trying to achieve.

I will also take a few moments to express my confusion. I have a little bit of background in waste-reduction efforts, spent about a decade at the University of Manitoba. Despite the fact that my tuition fees doubled in that time and the minimum wage was frozen, I did manage to graduate with a degree in natural resource management.

I'll share some of those pearls of wisdom with my honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), who just finished speaking. In terms of options between banning and thinking outside of the box, it already exists. The new approach to reducing waste in an effective way is well documented. It's already been mentioned in previous speeches. Both of the ministers who just spoke on this particular bill, spoke of this new approach. It's called extended producer responsibility.

Now, those are longer words, so I'll break it down and explain what that means. But when you're looking at trying to reduce a type of waste, when the Conservatives were in power they had two options that were presented in front of them. One was a deposit system for materials that we now all put into our blue boxes, a deposit system for pop bottles and aluminum cans and the rest of it. My understanding is, at the time in the 1990s, the beverage container industry didn't like that idea, even though most other provinces had gone that route. So the government of the day instead set up the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation, and they assigned a 2-cent levy for each pop bottle and milk carton and juice box that would be sold in the province, and that money went to MPSC over many, many years and was then distributed to municipalities to help offset the cost of recycling.

It's not a perfect system. It's not imperfect. Clearly, it has not produced the results in Manitoba that other provinces have seen. In that time what has emerged is, rather than outright banning lots of different materials or trying to set up different types of deposit amounts on lots of different items, I think we can all appreciate it might be a little confusing if we got a nickel back for our newspapers and a dime for our pop bottles and, you know, a penny for our Styrofoam trays, and we had to take all those items to 14 different locations in our local communities. That can be a little bit cumbersome. They would

also, of course, when you ban something or when you set up that type of system, you would need someone to enforce it, sometimes a lot of people to enforce it. In fact, when you look at the numbers, a deposit-based system is exceptionally expensive to administer. It can be very effective in making sure that a certain type of material is recycled, that a large percentage of it gets recycled. But it does have a very narrow perspective, and that is one of the limitations of the system we're stuck with now.

With extended producer responsibility we actually get to the core problems that lie at the heart of waste management, and those core problems are that the people who are producing the waste are not made responsible for dealing with it. Well—*[interjection]*

I have no idea what you guys are talking about, but you did remind me—

An Honourable Member: Marijuana.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, there were a few constituents on the front lawn yesterday from Wolseley, just a couple. It was a very good day for outreach. But just to pick up on one of the wayward comments made from my colleagues here on the question of methane gas emissions, which the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) had just spoken so eloquently about—in fact, if he reads the climate change legislation that we have now passed, we are of course the only province in the entire country which is not only committed to meeting our Kyoto requirements but have enshrined those in law. Part of that is that we are requiring landfills to capture the methane gas that they are generating and at a minimum flaring, which will reduce the emissions by over twentyfold. So, once again, the Conservatives not quite connecting the green dots, but that's not news in this Chamber.

To go back—before I was interrupted by the scintillating conversation from members opposite—to go back to the question of how best to accomplish waste reduction, when you get to a point where the people producing the waste see themselves as—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) will have three minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 2—100th Anniversary of Chinese Settlement in Manitoba

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., we will now move on to resolutions, and we'll deal with Resolution 2, 100th Anniversary of Chinese Settlement in Manitoba.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick),

WHEREAS 2009 marks 100 years of Chinese settlement in Manitoba and Winnipeg's Chinatown will celebrate this anniversary throughout the year; and

WHEREAS Winifred Paktong, the first Chinese female born in Manitoba, who was named after her hometown of Winnipeg, is still alive and will be celebrating her 97th birthday on May 30, 2009; and

WHEREAS nearly 18,000 people of Chinese descent currently reside in the province; and

WHEREAS China is the third-largest source of recent immigrants to Manitoba at 5.6 percent of the new immigrant population in 2007; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba recognizes that immigration contributes significantly to sustaining economic development and strengthens respect for cultural diversity; and

WHEREAS the Manitoban Chinese community is a diverse and vibrant population that contributes to the province's rich multicultural mosaic;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba congratulate the Chinese community on the 100th anniversary of its settlement in Manitoba and recognize the vital role it plays in the province; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba thank the community for its contributions to the Manitoba mosaic.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Wellington, seconded by the honourable Member for St. Norbert,

WHEREAS 2009—Dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Ms. Marcelino: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to stand here today to move a private member's bill recognizing the 100th anniversary of Chinese settlement in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I have long been a fan of many things Chinese, foremost of which is their rich culture and history, which predates thousands of years before Christ. As a young child in the Philippines, I had tried Chinese herbs and ointments. They were cheap but effective remedies for all sorts of aches and pains. Of course, in the old country, there was no chance to get away from Chinese food and cuisine. A lot of Filipino dishes bear the strong influence of Chinese cooking and rightly so due to the huge Chinese population who have been in the Philippines long before the Spanish and the Americans came to colonize the islands.

Mr. Speaker, months before leaving the Philippines for Canada, I was preoccupied with salivating thoughts and the firm resolve to learn to cook and eat Canadian food. I had visions of myself with apron on, periodically checking the oven for my roast beef or baked pastry and being a master at it. But, lo and behold, if I'm setting foot at my brother-in-law's house in Winnipeg, a grand feast of Filipino and Chinese dishes greeted me and my family, and with the abundance and availability of oriental food items here, it was very hard to resist the allure of tried and tested Filipino and Chinese cuisine.

Mr. Speaker, I have to admit I still have not learned to be a decent cook of Canadian or North American dishes.

It's not only those delicious Chinese foods that I thank the Chinese for. Among many others besides art, culture, sport, it is their admirable characteristics as hard-working, enterprising, adventurous, long-suffering and deep intelligence. Truly, Canada, in general, and Manitoba, in particular, have so much to thank the Chinese for.

This private member's resolution congratulates the Chinese community on their 100th anniversary of settlement in Manitoba. This resolution also recognizes the valuable contributions of the Chinese community to our province.

Mr. Speaker, in the latter part of the 19th century, a ribbon of steel united Canada from coast to coast, linking the then unpopulated west with Canada's populated cities in the east. Truly, the railway opened up the area's vast potential which has now since materialized and we enjoy.

Last night, I checked the Internet and saw several photos showing the daunting task before the railway workers. Construction through the rock and boggy land of the Canadian Shield equalled in difficulty the engineering feats of construction through the rugged mountains of British Columbia. Only long-suffering, able-bodied men would have withstood those gruelling, long hours of hard work in laying those steel railroad tracks. Acute labour shortage, which will have made the project unachievable but by importing thousands of Chinese workers, the impossible task was completed.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to cite excerpts from a historical note on Canadian Pacific Railway Web site: "At the height of the building activity on the Yale-to-Kamloops Lake section, more than two-thirds, or approximately 9,000 workers were Chinese. The line through the Pacific coast was completed with the driving of the last spike at Craigellachie in Eagle Pass, British Columbia on 7 November, 1885."

The first through passenger train left Montreal 28 June, 1886, and arrived at Port Moody, B.C., July 4.

The project manager, Mr. Van Horne, boasted he would build 800 kilometres of main line railway in his first year. Floods delayed the start of the 1882 construction season, but at season's end, 673 kilometres of main line and 177 kilometres of branch line track laying made the vision of a transcontinental link much more of a reality.

Mr. Speaker, in reading the history of the railway construction, I was introduced to so many pioneering Chinese men who have played key roles in the success of the Chinese community in Manitoba. Chinese immigrants to Manitoba came in the beginning as manual labourers. Recent arrivals tend to come with education and human capital as skilled workers. According to the 1881 census, only four people of Chinese origin resided in Manitoba. This number was up to 31 who were born in China living in Manitoba by 1891. In 1901, Manitoba had 167 residents of Chinese nationality. The 1911 census recorded 885 people. By 1941, there were 1,248 with the largest Chinese community living in Winnipeg.

The first wave of Chinese immigrants arrived in Manitoba in 1877. In the early 1900s, Chinatown area of the city was bordered by Main and Princess streets to the east and west and Logan and Rupert avenues to the north and south. In 1909, the first

Chinese immigrants settled in Chinatown. They were most likely laid-off railroad workers who moved east looking for work. In 1901, 209 Chinese lived in Manitoba. By 1921, this number had increased to 1,331, but only 52 of them were women. By 1961, there were 1,136 Chinese in Manitoba, of whom 641 were women.

Mr. Speaker, there is a sad part to the abundance of success stories in the Chinese community. In 1885, the Dominion government at that time passed the first anti-Chinese bill after the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed. The act stipulated that all Chinese entering Canada had to pay a \$50 fee. This became known as the head tax. By 1903, the tax was raised to \$500, which was equal to two year's salary at that time. At that time, the Chinese residents in Canada were denied the right to vote, obtain citizenship and work in certain occupations. The exclusionary legislation also delayed the growth of the Chinese second generation and led to an imbalanced sex ratio of 28 Chinese men for every woman because it was practically impossible to sponsor wives or family members to Canada.

The Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 brought the head tax on, ending of Chinese immigration in Manitoba. The Chinese population in Canada fell from 46,500 in 1931 to 32,500 in 1951. Thankfully, in 1947, Chinese Canadians regained the right to vote in Canadian federal elections.

*(11:10)

Mr. Speaker, this year marks 100 years of Chinese settlement in Manitoba. Winnipeg's Chinatown will be celebrating this anniversary throughout the year. The Winnipeg Chinese Cultural and Community Centre will be hosting celebrations throughout the year. This year, centennial celebrations began with Chinese New Year celebrations and the Chinatown Centennial Lantern Parade display in Portage Place. On May 2, this year Manitoba Great Wall Performing Arts Inc. will sponsor a series of culture and arts lectures. Opening ceremonies for the 2009 Chinese Arts and Culture Workshop will take place on May 2 before the lecture series begins. The event will be held in Winnipeg's Chinatown. The City Council of Winnipeg has officially adopted a motion which recognizes the significant contributions of Chinese Canadians to the community for the past 100 years.

Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day on March 8, three women were recognized for their contributions to the Chinese community: Anita Lee,

Maria Lip and Lan Doan. Also there'll be photographic exhibits at the Millennium Library, a book project celebrating Winnipeg's Chinatown: *Remembering the Past, Embracing the Future*, and many other celebrations throughout the year.

Mr. Speaker, Chinese immigrants and family presence in Manitoba have bridged and strengthened the cultural and economic ties between the province and China. This bond has reinforced Winnipeg's relations to other Asian nations like Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Manitobans love Chinese culture, history and food. If you Google Chinese food in Winnipeg, you get over 400 hits for restaurants. The Chinese community has come a long way since the first settlers landed on the continent. Chinese Canadians are now the largest visible minority group. The Chinese population has undergone tremendous transformation in Canada since the first settlers arrived over 150 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, 1909 is known as the year of the birth of Chinatown in Winnipeg. This was the year that there was an expansion of businesses and residents in the area. One-fourth to one-third of Winnipeg's Chinese community lived and worked in the area.

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

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak to the resolution today on the 100th Anniversary of Chinese Settlement in Manitoba and thank the member for the resolution.

A hundred years. That's a long time when you think back. It's 2009; if you think back to 1909, it would be a very different time here in Manitoba and in the city of Winnipeg. We know that, prior to that time, there would have been a lot of Chinese people here, as the member mentioned, coming to work on the construction of the railway across Canada and after that. We know that a lot of Chinese people did settle in Manitoba and in Winnipeg, as well as in other smaller towns across the province.

I think that when you talk about immigration, at the time, Manitoba was based on immigration. We had a lot of immigration from a variety of countries around the world, people coming to Manitoba and Canada and Winnipeg and other towns in Manitoba to settle here looking for another life. When you think about what a profound effect and an influence this has had on the Canadian cultural mosaic, when

you think about, taken together, the immigrants from both British and Chinese descent represented one-quarter of all immigrants, both on the prairies and nationally, Mr. Speaker.

We do know that many of the new immigrants that came from China did go to bigger centres like Toronto and Vancouver, but also there was a significant number in Manitoba, and that number grew, of course, as time went on.

But I just want to relate an experience of my own because I was raised in a very small community in Manitoba. *[interjection]* I'm asked where. It was Austin, Manitoba. One of my friends, when I was a very young girl, was Chinese. Her father was from China, her mother was from Ireland. It's very interesting because, although I played with her regularly and went to school with her regularly, I didn't know that she was Chinese because I didn't know what Chinese was.

So, one day, in school, we were talking about different cultures and the teacher pointed out to the class that my friend was Chinese, and that was the first time I recognized that—what Chinese was, or that there was something else other than what we were here in Manitoba, I guess. It just never occurred to me. They were the only Chinese people that I am aware of that were in the community and they did have a restaurant which my family used to go and have dinner at almost every Sunday, and it wasn't what you would call a Chinese restaurant because there were all kinds of food available, but particularly the decoration of the establishment, with a lot of origami, which my friend taught me, or attempted to teach me how to make those origami flowers and whatnot. But I was quite fascinated by that, Mr. Speaker.

But, thinking back, of the trials and of the situation of the Chinese when they did come to Canada, their contribution to the building of the railway and opening up of the West is very significant, Mr. Speaker. When you think about, again, the contributions that immigrants have made to our province and our city, we do have a significant number of Chinese people or Chinese-Canadian people within Winnipeg. In fact, we have a large section of Winnipeg which is, I think, still referred to as Chinatown, where there is a number of Chinese cultural centres and eating establishments and a place where people from those communities would congregate and, certainly, they've had a good influence on some of the cultures, some of the other

related cultures, not only Chinese, but Taiwanese and the eastern countries.

There are nearly 18,000 Manitobans of Chinese descent here in Manitoba who've chosen to live here over the last 100 years, and I do know that the member has noted that Winifred Paktong was the first Chinese female born in Manitoba who was named after her home town of Winnipeg, and she is still alive and will be celebrating her 97th birthday on May 3 of this year, so we certainly would like to wish her a very, very happy birthday and many more, Mr. Speaker.

I had the occasion to attend a lion dance ceremony, the first one ever in Manitoba, organized by a young fellow by the name of Ty Tran and others within the community, Mr. Speaker. He had a vision to bring this lion dance to Manitoba and have lion-dance dancers perform at the University of Winnipeg and then he did also have performers at the back of the Legislature here a couple of years ago. It's very interesting, the lion is a very symbolic portion of the Chinese culture, and the lion dance, if no one has seen it, is very, very interesting where two people actually don a lion costume and one is the front end and one is the back end and they dance and they jump on poles which is, when you see them do it, you think how dangerous it is because they sometimes do topple down, but they take a lot of precautions to make sure that they don't get hurt. But it's a very interesting cultural performance and certainly one that I enjoyed seeing the two times that I did see it. I want to congratulate the people that did bring it here to Manitoba for the first time ever and then were able to do it a second time.

* (11:20)

Mr. Speaker, I guess, just looking back over the growth of the Chinese community, it was slow at first. In 1881 the census report said there were only four people of Chinese descent in Manitoba, but by 1891 there were 31. By 1941, there were 1,248. Certainly it's grown now to, as I said, nearly 18,000 people of descent.

Over time, reparations have been made to the Chinese-Canadian community. In 2006 an official apology was issued from the federal government for the head tax and racist legislation against Chinese immigrants. Before he died at age 94, Mr. Speaker, Won Alexander Cumyow, that first Canadian-born Chinese baby born in Port Douglas, B.C., in 1861, got his chance to cast a ballot. Chinese-Canadians

regained the right to vote in federal elections in 1947.

The growth of the Chinese-Canadian population and the emergence of a middle class has led to increased political participation. Douglas Yung of Vancouver became the first Chinese-Canadian member of Parliament in 1957. Bob Wong became the first Chinese-Canadian cabinet minister when he served in the Ontario Liberal government in the late 1890s. David Lam was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia in 1988. Vivienne Poi became the first Chinese-Canadian senator in 1998, and Adrienne Clarkson was appointed the first Governor-General of Canada of Chinese descent in 1999, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly the Chinese community is a diverse and vibrant community, one that has contributed much to the rich multicultural mosaic of our province. I would like to congratulate the Chinese community on the 100th anniversary of its settlement in Manitoba and recognize the vital role that this community plays in the province, Mr. Speaker. With that, I would just like to say that I support this resolution for recognizing the 100th anniversary of Chinese settlement in Manitoba and congratulate all of those of Chinese descent living in Manitoba today. Thank you.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): I want to take this opportunity to thank the Member for Wellington for bringing this resolution forward, and I was really pleased to be given the opportunity to second this resolution which congratulates the Chinese community on the 100th anniversary of its settlement here in Manitoba. This resolution recognizes how very important the Chinese community is here in the province. They are important to our economic development, to our cultural diversity and, as well, they're very important to the success of our province.

Mr. Speaker, 2009 marks the 100th anniversary for the Chinese settlement here in Manitoba and, as has been mentioned by the Member for Wellington, there are going to be many celebrations and have been some already, events that are going to be happening throughout the year. On March 8, we recognized the International Women's Day, and in doing so, three women were recognized for their contribution to the Chinese community, including Anita Lee, Maria Lip and Lan Doan. There will also be a youth arts initiative that's going to be set up between the Great Wall Manitoba and the Winnipeg Chinese Cultural Community Centre. There will be

photograph exhibits at the Millennium Library, and the Great Wall of China arts troupe will be sponsoring a series of culture and arts lectures on May 2, 2009.

Honourable Bill Blaikie, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Opening ceremonies for the 2009 Chinese art and cultural workshops will take place on May 2 before the lecture series begins. These events will be happening at Winnipeg's Chinatown. It's really great to see as well, Mr. Acting Speaker, the City of Winnipeg has officially adopted a motion which recognizes the significant contributions Chinese-Canadians have made to the community for the past 100 years. I know that it's really interesting when we take a look at the Chinese-Manitoban history. When Chinese immigrants first started coming to Canada, they mostly came as manual labourers. Today, we see that many Chinese immigrants come to Canada with education and with human capital as skilled workers. I also see in my community of St. Norbert, which has a very high percentage of Chinese-Manitobans residing, that the University of Manitoba is a great draw to people of Chinese descent.

But that wasn't always the case. In 1881, the census shows that there were only four people of Chinese origin residing here in Manitoba. Ten years later, the number grew to a huge number of 31 people who were born in China, living in Manitoba. By 1901, we saw that there were 209 residents who were living in Manitoba who were of Chinese nationality. That number went up to 885 people in 1911, and by 1921, this number increased to 1,331 people. It's interesting to note, though, that only 52 of these were women. By 1941, there were 1,248 people living in Manitoba, with the largest Chinese community living in Winnipeg. By 1961, there were 1,936 Chinese Manitobans, of whom 641 were women. We see, though, that that number has really climbed. By the 2001 Canadian census, 14,245 people were living in Manitoba of Chinese ethnic origin.

It's really great to see that we do have a really rich Chinese area here in the city of Winnipeg when we look at the Chinatown, and that's been bordered by Main Street and Princess to the east and west, and Logan and Rupert Avenue to the north and south.

When we look at some of the people who are famous here in Winnipeg, I know that I had the opportunity with my grandfather, who used to love going for his birthdays to one of the famous

restaurants here in Winnipeg. He used to always ask to be able to go to the Nanking Restaurant when it was his birthday. He would go in there and he would meet Mr. Lee and he would be very, very happy to say hello to Mr. Lee, who would always say hello back to him: hello Mr. Carter, it's very nice to see you.

Mr. Lee is a famous restaurateur. He was born in Toisan, China. He joined his father in Winnipeg in 1920. He established George's Taxi in 1936. He then joined his family in the Nanking Restaurant in 1940. He was known as the host of Chinatown and he was active in the Chinese caucus. He was one of the first Chinese Canadians in Winnipeg to receive a community service award and he, regrettably, died in 1992.

Also, there's a very famous Chinese flute master, Xiao-Nan Wang, who was born in Beijing in 1949 and began his studies at age 11. He was an instructor at the Department of Music at the Inner Mongolia Normal College. He has over 20 original flute compositions to his credit. Since emigrating to Canada in 1995, Xiao-Nan has re-established his career. In 2003, he joined the movie production of *The Saddest Music in the World* by Guy Maddin, in which he played a talented musician. In March 2004, he performed in a concert sponsored by CBC Radio and the Folk Art Council of Canada. In 2005, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra commissioned local composer Jim Hiscott to write a concerto for Xiao-Nan. *North Wind* was premiered in the 2006 Winnipeg New Musical Festival.

In spring of 2007, Xiao-Nan returned to China to complete the modifications of the Chinese bamboo flute. He called this new instrument the chromatic flute. Xiao-Nan's artistic vision is to explore new musical ideas and create new music for his instrument. He wishes to combine the old and the new, fuse the east and the west, and raise bamboo flute-playing techniques to new heights.

I really want to say that it's great to have composers and musicians such as Xiao-Nan here in Winnipeg. We know how important the Chinese community is and it's great to see that we have a famous Chinese individual here in Winifred Paktong, who is the first woman of Chinese heritage born here in Manitoba. She was named after her home town of Winnipeg and is still alive. It's great to see that she's going to be celebrating her 97th birthday on May 30, 2009. I know everyone here in the Chamber want to wish her happy birthday. Happy birthday, Winifred.

Winnie's family, Joe Mar, emigrated to Canada over 100 years ago. Winnie was born just three years after the first Chinese families had established themselves around King Street and Logan Avenue. This area is now known as Chinatown here in Winnipeg.

* (11:30)

It's really interesting to see, too, that there's a bit of a sad history for the Chinese Canadians. We know that it was the gold rush in the 1800s that originally lured Chinese immigrants to settle here in North America, particularly in California. The first Chinese community in Canada was founded in Barkerville, B.C., and by the 1960s there were an estimated 7,000 people of Chinese origin in Vancouver. The waves of Chinese immigrants to Canada were a result of the gold rush in 1858, immigration for railway in the 1800s and the Indo-Chinese boat people in 1979 and Hong Kong's return to China in 1997.

In 1885, the Dominion government passed the first anti-Chinese bill after the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed. It was this act that stipulated that all Chinese had to pay a \$50 fee. This fee became known as the head tax. By 1903, the tax was raised to \$500, which was equal to two years' salary at that point.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it's great to see that these kinds of things have recently been changed, and that we don't have those kinds of things, like the head tax or like the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, happening anymore. The Chinese population in Canada fell as a result of those kinds of things that were introduced, but those have been changed, and we're so pleased to have the Chinese community part of our community here in Canada and here in Manitoba. They really help us to strengthen the fibre of our community. They help our economics, they help our culture, they give us fabulous food, and I'm so pleased to be able to have the Chinese people here as part of our broader community of Manitoba.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Mr. Blaikie): Resuming debate, the honourable Member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

It's a pleasure to be able to stand here today in support of this resolution. The contributions from the Chinese community over the last hundred years to the development, not only to our province, but to our country are really—one's not able to imagine because of the way in which they have helped in building the very social economic fabric of our nation. It's with

pleasure that we look at the province of Manitoba celebrating a 100th anniversary here.

In fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, there is the belief that there was a group of Buddhists that actually—Buddhist monks—that came to Canada back in around 458 A.D. It was believed that we had people from the Chinese community on ships back in 1788 along the coast of British Columbia and North America. But it's generally accepted that it was July of 1858 where the Chinese community first established here in Canada.

It was a number of years later that Manitoba was able to get our first Chinese settlers, that we're aware of, and that's what this resolution is actually dealing with. Suffice to say, that the Chinese community has played a critical role in our development for many decades, and some might even suggest well before the 1700s. In Manitoba, it is generally accepted that it is now for a hundred years.

This resolution touches me for two reasons. First and foremost, is just the general acknowledgment of the hundred years here in Manitoba and, second, that very special person, Winifred Paktong, who was the first Chinese female born here in the province of Manitoba, and the fact that she's still alive today.

In fact, I would suggest that, through the Speaker's Chair, what might be an appropriate thing to do is that the Speaker, on behalf of the Legislature, possibly entertain having a lunch down at the Legislative Library or at the very least us sending a birthday cake from this Legislature commemorating the birth of Winifred. We'll have to maybe have some dialogue, as I'm sure that this resolution will, in fact, be passing this morning. I think that it will be very rare that we have situations of this nature that come before this Legislature, and I think it would be a wonderful thing to do. I know myself to be able to participate in the birthday celebration would be a wonderful first-hand experience, as I'm sure many members of this Legislature would appreciate the opportunity.

The second thing is just to recognize the efforts here in the province of Manitoba. The culture and heritage and how Manitoba is what it is today because of the contributions, in good part, of members of the Chinese community needs to be recognized.

We've all participated, I'm sure, in things such as Folklorama, where we had the opportunity to get a bit of a taste of the heritage. We, no doubt, have all,

if not most, have participated in events such as Chinese New Year, where we've experienced first-hand the richness of the Chinese culture and heritage. But it goes far beyond that, Mr. Acting Speaker, in regard to the impact of sharing culture and heritage from the homeland is very important, but also in terms of the way in which we as a province have developed.

The Chinese community is in virtually every component of our economy and, indeed, our social fabric. So I do believe that it is a wonderful resolution that is worthy of unanimous support of this Legislature, as I anticipate that it will receive. I would just like to, on behalf of the Manitoba Liberal Party, extend our very best wishes to all of those, in particular those that are organizing celebrations or participating in celebrations this year that mark the 100th anniversary of Chinese settlement in the province of Manitoba, and recognize that the Chinese community is, indeed, a community that is everywhere in the province of Manitoba and continues to this day to grow and prosper and add to the rich culture and heritage of Canada, in particular, for our purpose today in the province of Manitoba.

With those few words, Mr. Acting Speaker, we would love to see this resolution pass.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Acting Speaker, I feel honoured to speak on this resolution. I congratulate the Manitoba Chinese community on the 100th anniversary of its settlement in Manitoba.

Being born in India and having a common border with China, there are some common traits in both cultures and both countries. One common trait is both countries had been influenced by Buddhism, and their way of life, way of thinking about life, is almost similar. Both cultures are the oldest cultures of the world. Both have their uniquenesses. Both cultures believe in peaceful living. Both countries have experienced different economic systems and both have succeeded at the end. India almost got freedom from Britain in 1947, and China set up its own system around the same time. Both systems, both countries' economies are booming. So we can see how different economic ways can come to the same conclusion if their theories are readjusted. Soviet Union failed, couldn't really adjust their economic needs, and the meltdown in the U.S.A. because there was no control, and we can see how Manitoba is still doing well because of taking the middle road.

* (11:40)

Chinese people have suffered throughout the immigration to Canada. They have suffered through the head tax and, also, I remind you the Kamagata Maru incident; East Indian people also have suffered through those prejudices. They suffered as a group. And also, they tough it out. Also, being non-major-cultural coloured immigrant, you also have struggle every day in the work place. If you are non-major-culture coloured immigrant, you are no good until you prove otherwise. If you are from the major culture, coloured immigrant, then you are good until you prove otherwise.

Throughout all these circumstances, people, in the end, they succeeded. Chinese culture, Chinese immigrants succeeded. I congratulate them on their success. We have done a lot as a country to adjust to different cultural needs, but we have not done enough yet. We are going in that direction. Everywhere we have affirmative action, but how affirmative action is imposed, that's a different story. They have a quota system normally and how the front-line people impose that quota system. Who will benefit at the end? It will be the major cultural group. It will be the major cultural family. Other families from the visible minorities are still being left behind. We have to think about that.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We also have a kind of hiring system where the first jobs will be put on term position, then the person—who will have more chance to come in? From the major cultural group, because people working in the civil service are from the major cultural group. Then they will be hired because somebody told them their job they will come in. Then, after that, that job will be posted—doesn't matter if it's federal or provincial, in any province; I'm not taking partisan side over here. It happens. We have to think about it. How we have to reduce that pain the people of visible minorities are still silently enduring, but because of their cultural background and their long tolerance and they're enduring it, and slowly, slowly, they're succeeding.

Chinese immigration in Manitoba has bridged and strengthened the culture and economic ties between the province and China. Chinese Canadians comprise 15.4 percent of the total visible minorities in Winnipeg. They own and run many of the famous establishments in the country. The Manitoban Chinese community is a diverse and vibrant

population that contributes to the province's rich, multicultural mosaic.

Mr. Speaker, the Chinese community has come a long way since the first settlers landed on the continent. Chinese Canadians are now the largest visible minority group. The Chinese population has undergone a tremendous transformation in Canada since the first settlers arrived over 150 years ago.

The Chinese community that is composed of Canadian-born immigrants is a key player in Canada's multicultural mosaic, and 1909 is known as the year of the birth of Chinatown in Winnipeg. In 1909 there was an expansion of businesses and residents in the area with 25 to 35 percent of Winnipeg's Chinese community living and working in the area. Within this decade, two political organizations with offices in Chinatown were formed: the Chee Kung Tong, Chinese Freemasons, and the Kuomintang, Chinese Nationalist League.

Today, Winnipeg's Chinatown is filled with great restaurants, the cultural centre and beautiful buildings such as the Mandarin Building and the Chinese Heritage Garden events.

In 1947, Chinese Canadians regained the right to vote in Canadian federal elections.

Nearly 18,000 people of Chinese descent currently reside in the province. China is the fourth-largest source of recent immigrants to Manitoba at 5.6 percent of the new immigrant population in 2007.

Again, I congratulate the Chinese community on the 100th anniversary of their settlement. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question for the House is the resolution moved by the honourable Member for Wellington. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, we could call it unanimous, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The vote will be unanimous by the House.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could canvass the House to see if there's leave to call it 12 noon.

Mr. Speaker: Is there a will of the House to call it 12 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 12 noon, we will recess and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 21, 2009

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