

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
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FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
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GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
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LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
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LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
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MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
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SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
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SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
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STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 1, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, yesterday, I believe, there was agreement to pursue with Bill 209 this morning—*[interjection]* Oh, okay. I'd like to call out—to resume debate of Bill 209, please.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask for leave to call Bill 209 to resume debate.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to proceed directly to Bill 209 this morning? *[Agreed]*

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 209—The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act

Madam Speaker: To resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), second reading of Bill 209, The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), who has one minute remaining.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I already spoke and therefore I will give time to my other friends and let them speak.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I'd first like to acknowledge and thank the member from Lac du Bonnet who brought this bill forward. It—I'm certainly—a lot of times we stand in

the House and we say we're pleased to speak to a bill. Well, honestly, today, I'm really honoured to speak to this one.

We have a situation in our country, in our communities, that is unacceptable. We know that 6,900 folks across Manitoba will be diagnosed with cancer in 2016. On a sad note, 2,000–2,800 people will die in 2016. Of course, one death is way too many.

We have an average of 943 new cases of childhood cancer diagnosed every year in Canada. Leukemia is one of the most progressive, one of the most common, unfortunately, when we look at situations involving children. It is something that suffers not only through the child, but through the families, through their friends, through their loved ones.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

There has been some progress. And we're certainly glad to see that. However, there's a lot more work that needs to be done. We've seen an incidence—a rates increase somewhat over the last few decades. And while that progress has been there, we still have a long way to go.

As an example for everyone here, the survival rates of childhood cancer was only 10 per cent 40 years ago. But today, because of awareness, because of doctors working hard and looking outside the borders, outside the box, it is almost at 90 per cent.

We have some good things, but we need to continue to fight the fight. And to do that we need to create awareness so that people are aware.

We have some folks in the gallery today that have shared numerous stories with us. We all have stories. I'm sure every one of us have been touched somewhere in our families, with our friends, with this deadly disease.

So, again, while the statistics are encouraging, we still have, as I've said, we still have lots of work to do.

Average of one third of young family incomes are redirected to costs associated with childhood cancer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A lot of families, it's, again, as I said earlier, it's not just the suffering of

the child. A lot of the families need to take time off work to—in order to spend time with their child.

We look at a lot of places where, in Brandon, for example, in my constituency, we have a cancer-care clinic. We have Murray House for patients but when we look at children and youth, they must come to Winnipeg. So, again, that takes the families right out of the community and changes their livelihoods.

We need this awareness in this bill to get people to look at the reality of this horrid disease. We need to unite families as we go along. We need to ensure that this issue is looked at. And we need to look at the fact that it's a fight among fights that's never been fought as hard before.

I lost a brother two years ago to cancer and I know what it did to his family, to his children, to our family. And I can only imagine, though, what he went through, knowing—unsure of what he was facing, but having an understanding of what he was going through.

We look at children, when they go through this, they don't have an understanding. It's what they're being told. They don't have the ability to have the life knowledge to go ahead and look at what happened.

If I may, I would like to just take some time and talk about a brief story from a friend of mine. Cheryl Mauthe is a lady I worked with at the Brandon Regional Health Centre and she still works there. Her son, Colin, when he was six years old, was diagnosed with leukemia. At six years old, he went for his treatments, he followed the protocols, he had the stents put in and he went through rigorous treatments. And it's tough on someone who's six years old. You know, at the end of his treatments, he's going home and resting because he can't go out and play. He can't go back to school to see his fellow students in grade 1. His life was turned upside down.

Six months after Colin was diagnosed, his mother, being a single parent with two children, was diagnosed with breast cancer. So here we have a family that's really struggled. And I remember the—talking to Cheryl, obviously I asked if I could mention them today, and her story is out there. The local Brandon Sun did a complete article. They did a six-week series on her, and they picked it up over in Europe, as well, so I encourage everybody to look up Cheryl Mauthe and read the story. It's inspiring.

Here we have a little guy who, you know, he's—he was excited, in the wrong way, that his mother had cancer, because now they could share something.

The little girl, who was just a couple years older, was a little upset because she didn't have cancer and she couldn't share.

Those are hard things, you know, so we need to look beyond that. We need to look—this little boy, he was a hero. I don't look at him as a—yes, he was a cancer survivor, he survived and he's driving, but he was the force in that family to keep them going. So, again, when I talk about him being a cancer survivor, to me he was more of a cancer hero. And to this day he is a hero that we can all look up to, even at his young age, and the fight and determination that he went through—*[interjection]* And we hear crying in the gallery, which is fantastic. You know, we need the voices of the young ones to push us forward on bills like this that are so important.

* (10:10)

So, again, this young man, he fought hard. And, again, today we're very supportive of this bill because it will help make Colin's story of his fight and his survival an important legacy for families, and even families like Dana Wood, who lost her daughter. I mean, let's keep those stories in the forefront and, again, I thank you all for sharing those with us. It's important that we not lose the fact, that we not lose what the intention is of this bill, which is, again, education, information.

Again, just yesterday, Madam Speaker, we received these pins from your office, and I think we're all wearing them today; those of us that have them are wearing them. And, again, it was presented to us by the honourable Cliff Collins *[phonetic]*, the Speaker of the Assembly for New Brunswick. Some may remember that Chris had cycled from Winnipeg to Halifax in September in remembrance of his son Sean. These pins were designed in memory of a little girl named Maggie Jenkins who passed away only two weeks after being diagnosed. So where we have stories of some people who fight and fight for months and years, we have others that find out and, unfortunately, their fight is short. We don't want to forget any of them. A bill like this allows us to really look back and see who it affects and how we can all work together.

Again, you know, Maggie's parents donated these pins in hopes of making people aware of childhood cancer, and I think with this bill in September of next year we can only add on to it, and we can build on the legacy of these children, the ones who have passed and the ones who are fighting this deadly disease, and build up and show them the

courage that we can provide to them so that they can continue to fight, so that they know there is hope, that there are people out there who care other than just their families.

Anything we can do to support them, to acknowledge them, to really see that they're heroic, these kids fight the fight every day when they're going through treatments. And I don't know if you've ever been in a place where children have gone through treatment for cancer and, again, I'm sure all of us in this House have some connection somewhere. But, again, when I walked through the various cancer facilities that I was touring when we were building the cancer centre, it's devastating to go in and talk to, again, not just the patient, but talk to the families, to the support units. It's not just a health situation where you go in to the hospital for three weeks and then you're home again. You know, you're—it's an ongoing process and it is one that no one should have to bear. And at 90 per cent it seems like a great number, but we still have a long way to go. We need to make that 100 per cent curable. We need to 'radicate' this terrible disease. But in the meantime, let's not forget about the fight that the kids are going through right now.

So, if we want to support the suffering that—and the heroics that these children are going through, that's why we need to all stand together, put our political stripes aside and stand together and support this bill. It's supportive of the children. It's the way we do things today in our way as politicians and we need to pass this bill. We need to show our support for families like this, for the children who are our future.

We all went through a process; we didn't just all grow up as adults. We grew up through childhood. I know what my childhood was like; I played hockey, I played soccer, I played football in high school. Some of these kids won't get that opportunity. And, again, it's not about who we are; it's who they are. And taking September aside and honouring them, I really believe is the right thing to do.

So let's bring out our gold ribbons on September the 1st, 2017, and fight the fight; let's celebrate those victories and remember those loved ones who were taken away from us far too early.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity again to stand here and to honour these families and understand the fight that they went through and some of our colleagues, maybe we went through the same things and I feel for you all and we love each other for that.

And with just a couple of seconds here left, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to ask for leave to include the names of all our attendees in the gallery into Hansard, if I may.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for—has there been—is there leave from the House to include the names in the Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Denis Foidart; Naomi Fehr; Kim Tardiff; Doug Schatz; Ben Geller; Gordon Challes; Suzanne Suzio; Mark Cambly; Michelle Brussé; Sara Omeri Idaeho; Tony Dicks; Mandy Kashton; Rachel Kashton; Dana Wood; Val DeRocco; Mary Horbas; Mekena Horbas; Mia Magnayi; Kristin Stam; Lois Blake; Stuart Blake; Alex Blake; Alli Minarik; Tammy Crockett; Ryann Crockett; Teri Turbovsky; Tyra Turbovsky; Shannon St. Cyr; Kelly St. Cyr; Mikaela St. Cyr; Ashley Stewart; Abigail Stewart; Luwalhati (Ning) Upton; Amy Millette; Paisley Millette; Imelda Horbas; Susan Ann Bagnall; Jessica Black; Erin Crawford; Jill Sommers; Marj Poirier; Chloe Poirier; Jordan Priscilla [phonetic]; Alisa Kay; Benjamin Kay; Sheena Grohn; Tori Grohn; Troy Walls; Trevor Schellenberg; Jordan Birrell; Priscilla Wiebe; Lawrence Prout

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I just want to thank the member from Lac du Bonnet for bringing forward this important bill. I also want to thank the House for actually bringing back the discussion this morning.

I want to, first and foremost, acknowledge every single person that is in the gallery today that has been affected by this.

I really wanted to have the opportunity to speak on this bill because it is something that, like everybody in the gallery, I've lived through myself. When I was 12 my father and my stepmother had a baby and she was and is my only sibling, and her name was Katerina, and I loved her more than anything. It was the first time—jeez, I'm always crying—it was the first time in my life that I had actually, genuinely felt love and actually implicitly understood what love was and how profoundly that sense of love changes your life.

And so Katerina and I spent almost all the time that I could with her. My dad and my stepmom worked at nights, so I would come home from school and I would take care of Katerina. I would take her to the mall; I would take her for, like, these crazy, long walks in her little pram, so much so that I

remember being at the park and just watching her and talking to people. I was only 12 years old, and I didn't realize how long I had been gone, and my stepmother and my dad had been driving around and, needless to say, when they finally found me I was in a little bit of trouble.

But when Katerina was three, she got sick. There was this weekend that she—she was just very lethargic and she didn't want to be put down and so she was taken to a doctor and then she was given a series of tests and bloodwork. And when she was three, I was 15. I was already living on my own, and I remember getting a call from my aunt and my aunt said to me, Nahanni, I have to tell you that Katerina has just been diagnosed with leukemia. And I remember thinking, well, no, they must have mixed up her tests—they must have mixed up her tests with somebody else, because she can't have leukemia, that's just wrong, which is, of course, one of the first reactions that people have, is that it simply can't be.

Katerina indeed did have leukemia. I remember that we had to start getting her ready to go into the hospital. At the time this all took place in Montreal, so we were in Ste. Justine's hospital, which is well-known across the country in respect of their care for children with cancer. And I remember that we spent the first, I believe, four months there and it's quite something to emotionally and physically and spiritually go through seeing, you know, the person that you love the most in your life start to get sick, and I remember I was holding her and her hair started to come out in clumps, and you're trying to explain to a three-year-old why is she here and why is she losing her hair and why is she so sick.

We spent, on and off, about three years in the hospital, and through those three years, like I'm sure many of the families can attest, you build relationships with other families, and Katerina had built relationships with other little children. And in those, you know, through those years you would see children who would leave the hospital because they were in full remission, or you would see children that would actually pass from their cancer, which all of it has an impact on all of the families.

I think some of the worst things that families go through, and I know that even all these years later I never forget one time Katerina waiting in this room and she knew that she was about to go get a spinal tap and was absolutely screaming and terrified, and the sense of hopelessness that you have, that you

can't protect your little sister and you have to just watch her go through all of this pain.

* (10:20)

Katerina had been on a bone marrow transplant donor list, and as she approached six years old, we still didn't have anybody so the doctor had approached the family to see if we wanted to see if any of us were close in a match and, of course, I was the person that was most close to Katerina, and so we were getting Katerina ready for a bone marrow transplant of which I was going to be the recipient to my beloved sister. And in order to have a bone marrow transplant, you have to be in remission, but this is now year 3 of Katerina's leukemia and so, essentially, to put a child into remission, you're pumping poisons into this little body, and Katerina's body couldn't take it anymore. And so within a couple of days her organs started to shut down.

And I remember she was in ICU and only my dad and my stepmom were allowed to go in, but around I think 3 o'clock in the morning, I snuck in and I remember her—I remember that she was—they had her just naked with a little sheet and the room was really cold and she was on a really cold bed or something—I still don't even know why that is—and I remember just singing to her for hours and hours, just singing, and then she died. She died actually that following day. She died in my dad's arms and, quite obviously, it changes you forever. It changes the way you look at sickness. It changes the way you understand death.

And when I had my own children, my first son, as my son was approaching his sixth birthday, I started to really have anxiety. I was waking up with anxiety and his father had said to me, he said—because it was going on for months I was waking up with anxieties, having bad dreams—and my—his dad had said, well, Nahanni do you think this has anything to do with that this is the age that Katerina died? So that it literally does affect every part of your cellular being and your spirit.

I want to just acknowledge how important a bill like this is, and not for us to only recognize the plight of families and the unimaginable hardship it is to watch your child live through a diagnosis of cancer or for families to actually lose their beloved child; it changes you.

And so, of course, I absolutely support this bill, and I want to just lift up all the families in this room, and I just want to lift up all the families across

Canada that go through this on a daily basis, and I also want to lift up the supports to families.

We were very blessed that six months before Katerina died, we were chosen as Make-A-Wish so Katerina and our family got to go to Disneyland and that was what she wanted to do most, and I always remember that we were so blessed that we were able to give her that, you know, six months prior to her dying.

It is literally not a day goes by that I don't think about my little sister who would be I guess 29, 30 years old, and regret that my sons never got to meet their aunt, that I never got to see her have her own children, go to university, explore the world, get married.

And so, again, I just want to lift up everybody up in this House and say that my heart and my spirit goes out to each and every one of you. Miigwech.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I, too, would like to acknowledge the families in the gallery. It's a pleasure and an honour to rise to speak in favour of Bill 209, The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act. I'd like to congratulate the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) for introducing this bill and providing an opportunity for members of this House to comment on the importance of awareness of childhood cancer. I would also like to thank all the members who've spoken to the bill so far. I doubt that there are any members of this Chamber whose family haven't been affected by cancer. I'm certainly one of them myself, having lost both my parents to cancer.

And while we have awareness campaigns on cancer in general—breast cancer, prostate cancer, to name just two—the effectiveness of these awareness campaigns is obvious. I was at the Bomber game on Saturday. Players wore pink accessories, footwear was pink, the taped socks were pink, clearly seen by everyone. It was the Winnipeg Blue Bombers' annual pink game in support of the fight against breast cancer. The team donated a hundred tickets to breast cancer survivors and their families through the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and honoured survivors in the field—on the field before the game.

These important awareness campaigns promoted in our community, including professional sports teams and large public organizations and businesses, have a real benefit insofar as fundraising and ability to raise financial resources for the cause. The pink

ribbon, I dare say, is one of the most recognizable awareness symbols around.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the time has come to do whatever we can to help raise awareness and enable the necessary fundraising needs to be done to fight and help those children and their families who have been struck by cancer. Our role as MLAs is not just to simply pass an important bill like this but also to put our comments on the record and help get the message out to our constituents that we do have a role to play.

I received an email from Mrs. Sandra Melnyk, [*phonetic*] the mother of a 13-year-old daughter, Hannah [*phonetic*], and her family's story is many respects all too familiar to other families fighting childhood cancer.

Mrs. Melnyk [*phonetic*] wrote in her email, she said: On April the 8th, 2011, our lives were forever changed when Hannah [*phonetic*] was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the most common type of childhood cancer. Along with her cancer diagnosis, it was discovered that she also suffered eight compression fractures in her spine, an extremely rare complication with her leukemia. She suffered excruciating pain from these fractures and needed a wheelchair during the initial months of her cancer treatment. She was only seven years old and the oldest of our three young children.

As a parent, it was devastating to hear the words: Your child has cancer. We try and protect our children from the dangers around them. In an instant, the hopes and dreams we had for our child's future became uncertain and completely out of our control.

As Hannah's mother, Hannah's [*phonetic*] cancer diagnosis was the most painful thing I've ever endured in my life. Comforting my daughter when she threw up, watching the nurses and doctors poking her with needles, hoping they could stabilize her to have her bone marrow aspirates to confirm the suspected cancer diagnosis, assuring her that everything would be okay when I didn't know if it would and hearing her scream in fear that she loves me when they were sedating her for her first bone marrow aspiration is something that no child or family should ever have to endure.

After spending two weeks in the Children's Hospital, Hannah [*phonetic*] received her official cancer diagnosis. My daughter then completed two and a half years of treatment for her leukemia. She took multiple chemotherapy pills daily, received

additional monthly chemotherapy treatment at CancerCare Manitoba as well as doses of steroids, chemotherapy injections given at home as her younger brother held and comforted her. Every three months, Hannah [phonetic] also endured a spinal tap where they extracted spinal fluid to check if her cancer spread and then injected her with more chemotherapy, not to mention the morphine she needed to help her cope with the pain from her spinal fractures. She also had countless visits to the emergency room at Children's Hospital due to fevers and low blood counts and multiple stays on the fifth floor oncology ward at Children's Hospital.

Throughout Hannah's [phonetic] cancer battle, the lives of children we knew and children we didn't know were taken from their loving families. As her mother, I often lived in fear that this could be my Hannah [phonetic].

* (10:30)

Mrs. Melnyk [phonetic] further wrote: I don't often share the details with people about how our daughter Hannah's leukemia diagnosis not only affected Hannah but also her brother Brendan [phonetic], sister Grace [phonetic], her father Lee [phonetic] and I, as well as her grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins and extended family and friends. It is difficult for people to comprehend the impact that a cancer diagnosis has on a family, especially when it's the life of an innocent child. Your child's world becomes forever changed and you grieve the loss of a normal childhood for your loved one.

Hannah's [phonetic] childhood became far from normal: missing first days of school, understanding blood counts, naming chemotherapy medications, celebrating her brother's birthday on a cancer ward. The most devastating loss for Hannah [phonetic], however, was the thought that she may never dance again due to complications from her cancer and loss of her beautiful long brown hair.

A child's diagnosis of cancer also impacts the community they live in as well as her school community. I will never forget when the nurse from Children's Hospital came to Hannah's [phonetic] school with puppets to talk to all of the grade 2 students and teachers about Hannah's [phonetic] cancer diagnosis.

As a teacher myself, it was heartbreaking to watch the loss of innocence among seven-year-old children, having to come to the realization that children, too, can get cancer. Although it's painful to

relieve—relive what our family has been through, I feel it's necessary to convey the reality of what happens when a child is diagnosed with cancer.

Thank you, Mrs. Melnyk [phonetic], for letting me share your deeply personal story with the House, and Childhood Cancer Awareness Month will help children like Hannah [phonetic], a childhood cancer survivor, and families involved in the struggle.

Again, I would like to thank the member for Lac du Bonnet for bringing this bill forward and providing members an opportunity to speak in support of childhood cancer awareness. It's time for a gold-ribbon campaign to flourish and bring awareness here in Manitoba, and my colleagues and I will do our best in what we can as individual members to promote this most worthy cause.

Mr. Micklefield: Yes, we'd just like to ask for the question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 209, The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [Agreed]

I declare the motion carried.

Oh, the honourable House leader?

Recorded Vote

Mr. Micklefield: Yes, we would like to call for a recorded vote, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Given that yesterday the House gave leave to waive rule two—twenty-three—dash-five, this morning for the Bill 209, I will now ask that the division bells be turned on to summon the members to the Chamber for a vote on this bill.

Call in the members.

* (10:40)

The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 209, The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Chief, Clarke, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fletcher, Fontaine, Friesen, Gerrard, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Kinew, Klassen, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Reyes, Saran, Schuler, Selinger, Smith, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Swan, Teitsma, Wharton, Wiebe, Yakimoski.

Nays

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 48, Nays 0.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

House Business

Mr. Micklefield: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on House business.

I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Private Bills will meet on Thursday, November 3rd, 2016, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 208, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Day Act; and Bill 209, The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that the standing committee for—on private member bills will be—meet on Thursday, November 3rd, 2016, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 208, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Day Act; and Bill 209, The Childhood Cancer Awareness Month Act.

Mr. Micklefield: Mr. Deputy Speaker, pursuant to rule 33(7), I'm announcing that private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt). The title of the resolution is The Potato's Significant Impact on Manitoba's Heritage and Economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that the rule 33(7)—it has been announced, pursuant to the rule thirty-three dash seven, I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Riding Mountain. The title of the

resolution is The Potato's Significant Impact on Manitoba's Heritage and Economy.

Mr. Micklefield: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to ask for leave to call it 11 o'clock.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been asked to give leave to indicate it's 11 o'clock. All agreed? *[Agreed]*

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 11—Supporting Government Amalgamation Decision of East Side Road Authority (ESRA)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m., time for private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on supporting the government amalgamation division on East Side Road Authority, brought forward by the honourable member for Interlake.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): I move, seconded by the honourable member of Morris,

WHEREAS the Office of the Auditor General determined that the East Side Road Authority mismanaged several aspects of its operations including a failure to sufficiently monitor capacity building allowances and respective contracts; and

WHEREAS the Auditor General's report outlined the failure of the East Side Road Authority to properly train their own employees as well as train and mentor recruited employees as per the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy; and

WHEREAS significant lack of compliance monitoring of Community Benefit Agreements and failure to meet the obligations outlined within them were uncovered within the Auditor General's report; and

WHEREAS the Auditor General's report uncovered significant financial mismanagement on the part of the ESRA with respect to the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy and the capacity building allowances and Community Benefit Agreements contained within it; and

WHEREAS the termination of the East Side Road Authority would support the Provincial Government's emphasis on providing better value to Manitobans within available resources; and

WHEREAS the incorporation of the East Side Road Authority into the Department of Infrastructure

would streamline services and reduce administration costs.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge the Auditor General's condemning report of the former provincial government's mismanagement on this file.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for the Interlake, seconded by the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton),

Therefore be that the resolution—resolved that the supporting government amalgamation decision on East Side Road Authority—[interjection] Oh, sorry.

I'll repeat that again.

It has been moved by the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Johnson), seconded by honourable member for Morris (Mr. Martin), therefore be it resolved that the supporting the government amalgamation decision on East Side Road Authority.

* (10:50)

Mr. Johnson: On April 19th, Manitoba's—Manitobans decided rather forcefully that we needed new government going in a new direction. Included in that new direction was an election promise made by this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that promise was to repeal the East Side Road Authority. I wholeheartedly support that decision. The east side road project was intended to provide isolated communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg with an all-season road. This project included a mandate to expand the capacity of the floodway, construct the east side road and maximize benefits of the road and the floodway for communities in the area.

On March of 2014, the floodway expansion aspect of the project was completed and the focus turned to the all-season road. The project was estimated to cost approximately \$3 billion over 30 years. As we all know, the East Side Road Authority, or ESRA as we often call it, has undergone an Auditor General report. Some of the 2016 Auditor General report objectives were to examine the management of the East Side Road Authority's Aboriginal Engagement Strategy, specifically targeting the obligations and accountability requirements of the community benefit agreements within it.

The Auditor General found that the implementation of the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy was not sufficient and should have been strengthened. Measurable objectives for the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy were not apparent. Targets with which to measure the progress are missing, but were essential to the management and identification of weaknesses.

Ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy was a failure. Here is a quote from the Auditor General report: ESRA has not set measurable objectives for its Aboriginal Engagement Strategy, and as a result, it is not able to measure progress against targets. That's from page 2.

It's not possible to list all the Auditor General's findings in my allotted time, however, there's a highlight—here's a highlight reel of sorts. On community benefit agreements and their obligations, the effectiveness of mentoring and training activities was not measured by the East Side Road Authority, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Community benefit agreements within the Aboriginal engagement 'strategy'—strategy requires East Side Road Authority to provide mentoring and training to First Nations community members. The former NDP government did not recognize the importance of training.

I feel it is similar to the age-old saying, give a man a fish, he eats for a day; teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime. I can attest to the value of hands-on training. I was personally involved in such a project not too many years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and when the terms education or hands-on training are thrown around, I would expect to see something substantially better than what the NDP's East Side Road Authority put out. I was employed by Red River College as an instructor for the Aboriginal heavy equipment training course. We, two other instructors and myself, educated 18 students, and by students, I mean people of all ages and gender.

There was classroom training, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with theory, job-site planning, mechanical servicing, basic mathematics for shooting elevations on a construction site, training on how to operate a laser, how to assemble specific type of—types of culverts, road slopes, safe excavating guidelines, workplace health and safety. Each student logged hundreds of hours on packers, dozers, graders, loaders, Cats and scrapers, buggies, hydraulic excavators, picker trucks and much, much more.

In short, the students were taught tricks of the trade, so to speak. And when they graduated, they knew how to safely install culverts, excavate around telephone lines, excavate pipeline ditch, drainage ditch, strip topsoil with a dozer, backfill and excavate basements, create a road with a grader, lay out a survey on a small project. These students were ready to take on a job in their own community after graduation.

Unlike the failed NDP community benefit agreements, these students could actually take on a job anywhere in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is something that I'm extremely proud of.

I'd like to highlight the failed community benefit agreement that the NDP's East Side Road Authority initiated. The NDP told Manitobans they were giving people an opportunity to learn trades and apprenticeship programs in the communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. The residents of the east side tell a whole different story. Here are some of the—here's something from the media in regards to the First Nation comments on the NDP's East Side Road Authority. They accused the authority of not offering meaningful skills training beyond first-aid courses and certification in how to operate a chainsaw.

Here's a quote: All that people were given were shovels to dig holes. We know how to dig holes. We've been doing it all our lives. That quote is from Steve Berens, a band councillor with the Berens First Nation. Here's another one: Dollars were never really given to First Nations to provide proper training.

Let me refer to a quote from page 6 of the Auditor's General report: The Aboriginal Engagement Strategy represents 35 per cent of the overall construction cost of the project. So now let's look at the rough overall costs of the project to date. NDP's East Side Road Authority spent \$400 million and semi-completed 88 kilometres of road—\$400 million and 88 kilometres of road built. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is exactly why Manitoba Infrastructure is taking back control of this debacle.

The NDP ignored red flags and put their political interests ahead of the public interests. Between January 18th, 2016, just one day before the pre-election blackout period, and for a seven-week period following January 18th, the NDP East Side Road Authority pursued additional agreements worth nearly \$160 million. This \$160 million worth of NDP East Side Road Authority vote buying mere weeks before the recent provincial election exceeded

the entire value of agreements that the NDP east road side authority signed between August 2009 and August 2015, which was \$153 million.

So let me say that again, Mr. Deputy Speaker: \$160 million spent on vote-buying agreements mere weeks before the election totalled more than the previous six years combined at \$153 million.

The Auditor General asked about the status of the equipment maintenance programs, and for the five community corporations within their sample, they were provided with 41 equipment assessments. Twenty-one of the 41 assessments indicated that the equipment was either inoperable, unsafe, that parts were needed to be replaced and maintenance was recommended, or that fluids were leaking. Despite the negative assessments, NDP's East Side Road Authority concluded that no maintenance plan help was needed; that's from page 24.

Manitoba Infrastructure builds roads and they build bridges, not bureaucracy. Our new Progressive Conservative government will get this project back on track by getting this project proper oversight in Manitoba Infrastructure. I want to commend the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen) for bringing this forward earlier.

An operating entity of the NDP government should not be making in the First Nation people, or any people for that matter, should not be made to feel belittled or demeaned. From the numerous press releases and consultations, it is quite evident this is unfortunately the case. Through our better plan, there will be significant savings that will be able to go forward to the First Nation community's roads and programs. When the project is operated under the government itself, it is included in the annual provincial audit. If an arm's-length entity, like the NDP's East Side Road Authority, is set up as a special operating agency, it bypasses the provincial audit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I encourage all members of this Chamber to support the resolution.

Thank you.

*(11:00)

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 10 minutes will be held, and the 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 in a rotation between parties. Each independent member may ask one question, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to ask the member as to the timelines as to when this government is actually going to complete the Freedom Road.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Well, the member opposite has had 17 years to bring that forward. So I don't think timelines from him should be considered.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): When this government first came into being and even during the election, we heard a lot about their Yes! North initiative. What happened to the 300,000 Yes! North initiative that was promised by this government but never appeared in the budget?

Mr. Johnson: Well, to stay on topic here, this—you had 17 years to work on the North. What have you done in the last 17 years for the North? We—what has—sorry—the member of the previous government brought forward in the last 17 years for the people of the North? I would wager it's not very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): I'd like to ask—I believe I heard the member for Interlake indicate a dollar figure that was spent on less than 90 kilometres of road. I wonder, based on that, if he can extrapolate the time frame under the NDP government that it would take to conclude construction of that road.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, there was—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —\$400 million spent on the east-side road, and their plan was to complete it in 30 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 30 years. They've had 17 years to come up with a plan in the last few years of government and then take 30 years to do it. If my math serves me right, that's near half a century.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Can you tell me how much training was received by First Nations people in the area there and what skills they perhaps will take on for the rest of their life?

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was alluded to a quote from the chief of Berens River that they received very little training. They were certified to operate chainsaws after a near—roughly \$135 million were spent on community-benefit agreements

and they ended up with chainsaw certificates and, ultimately, were given shovels to work on the jobs.

Mr. Maloway: Also, we're—we'd like to know over in the—over here about the Premier (Mr. Pallister); we want to know how the Premier can claim to care about the needs of the North and northern communities when he hasn't even bothered to visit any of them in the last six months. They've been in power now for over six months, and he hasn't been—he hasn't visited the North at all.

Mr. Johnson: So to make it clear, we have consulted; I'm assuming that's what the question was. We have consulted with the First Nations, along with people—residents of the East Side Road Authority. I'm not sure if the previous government had done that, as we consulted with the Auditor General report, members of the east-side, residents like Chief Berens from Berens River, and they were made to feel belittled at the end of their program when that—

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

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the member: Were these workers at ESRA, were they considered front-line workers?

Mr. Johnson: The NDP government has been very successful at setting up special operating agencies, so the East Side Road Authority does not fall under the Civil Service Commission but it also conveniently fell outside of the annual provincial audit. Very convenient.

Mr. Nesbitt: Can you tell me any reason why the previous government thought they needed a special group to build roads in Manitoba when we have a very capable highways and infrastructure department here in the province?

Mr. Johnson: Manitoba Infrastructure builds roads and bridges, not bureaucracy.

The previous government concentrated on building bureaucracy, setting entities at an arm's-length distance so they could not be audited. That's not what we're about. We're going to set this project back on track.

Mr. Maloway: Well, the member didn't answer the question about whether these workers at ESRA were front-line workers.

I'd like to ask the member how many jobs have been lost since ESRA was shuttered.

Mr. Johnson: No jobs have been lost, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The ESRA does not fall under—it is not part of the Civil Service Commission, so—and also no front-line jobs were lost.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli): On April 19th our government was elected by—with a very strong mandate to ensure that we commit to eliminating waste and duplication.

I ask the member how he feels our government is able to accomplish that by amalgamating East Side Road Authority with Infrastructure.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, on April 19th, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans decided rather forcefully that we needed a new government going in a new direction. Included in that new direction was an election promise made by this government. That promise was to repeal the East Side Road Authority, reducing bureaucracy, getting the job done. The money will go towards the road, towards the communities, and have a better result than the previous government did in their mandate.

Mr. Lindsey: Will this government honour any of the commitments to the community benefit agreements that ESRA had signed with the different communities that actually employed people in those communities?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

Mr. Lindsey: Will this government commit to the concept of community benefit agreements going forward and sign new agreements with new projects so that those communities benefit from those construction projects?

Mr. Johnson: The east side members of this province are going to benefit from the road. There is lots of things to be considered, tax dollars, benefits to the people on the east side and getting the job done without multi-levels of bureaucracy formed by the previous government.

Mr. Martin: I'm wondering if the—I wonder if the member can reiterate to this House, and I think it's a valued point, the amount of money the previous administration spent on community agreements in that short time frame leading up to the provincial election, and the member's thoughts as to why that occurred so close to the provincial election.

Mr. Johnson: Well, I'm sure we can all suggest ideas of why it happened so close to the provincial election. But between January 18th, 2016, just one

day before the pre-election blackout period for a seven-week period following January 18th, the NDP East Side Road Authority pursued additional agreements worth nearly \$160 million.

* (11:10)

This \$160 million worth of NDP East Side Road Authority vote buying mere weeks before the recent provincial election exceeded the entire value of the agreements that the NDP East Side Road Authority signed between August 2009 and August 2015 of—

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

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Once ESRA is finally folded into MIT, when can we start making firm plans? My people are really hoping for plans to be laid out.

Mr. Johnson: I would like to thank the member for Kewatinook from that question. It's a very good question.

We have, in our budget, budgeted \$70 million, and this will start the process off of the east-side road.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

Debate

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

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise this morning and speak on the member for Interlake's (Mr. Johnson) resolution which calls for the supporting of government amalgamation decision of East Side Road Authority, or ESRA, it's more commonly known. I have no doubt that at the conclusion of this morning's debate on this resolution that we will have again unanimous support of this resolution, because the idea of transparency, the idea of accountability, I think, transcends party lines. It's a concept that we as legislators were all elected to bring to this Chamber in whatever form it takes. And in this case it takes the form of the repeal of the Manitoba East Side Road Authority.

I don't often agree with my colleagues across the way, but in this case, you know, there was a comment recently made by the MLA for Tyndall Park in relation to the idea of eliminating the East Side Road Authority. And I'm quoting the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), and he said, and I

quote: The way that I see this and the way that I read the action of the Infrastructure Minister in cancelling this—as in the East Side Road Authority—this is the fulfillment of the attempt to save money, which is a good thing. End of quote. So, I mean, the MLA for Tyndall Park, I think he has—it has the—he has an understanding of the purposes of that decision, of that decision making.

And the idea of saving money and actually redirecting those funds into those communities and into those infrastructure that is most needed, is really what today's debate is about. As my colleague for the Interlake noted, the previous administration had spent upwards of almost half a billion dollars, all on less than 90 kilometres' worth of road. So in that amount of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'd be looking at well in excess of 50 years before we'd actually see the completion of the east-side road.

So, the member, the MLA for Kewatinook, spoke of hope and how these communities, you know, are hoping, and rightly so, that this project finds itself to a conclusion. Unfortunately, under the previous administration, despite 17 years in office; despite illegally hiking the PST and ignoring the referendum provisions that were put in place by the previous administration; despite going to court and fighting against Manitoba's right to have a voice in that; despite assuring Manitobans that—you know, that those extra monies, the spreading of the PST, the widening of the PST, the raising of the PST, the application of the PST on products and services it had never previously been applied to, that additional half a billion dollars in new revenues that they were taxing Manitobans on and receiving from Manitobans and taking out of the economy, they assured taxpayers and Manitobans that this would be going to infrastructure.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Though, interestingly enough, Madam Speaker, when they first made the announcement, actually, it was to—it was more ambiguous. It was to—it was for splash parks and sort of vague references to schools and services and that. And it was obviously once they saw the polling numbers and once their internal rebellion started to bubble beneath the surface that they decided to sort of focus in on sort of the motherhood-and-apple-pie concept of infrastructure.

So, despite that, Madam Speaker, and despite raiding Manitobans' pockets to the tune of half a billion dollars, they spent that. And, despite that,

they were able to successfully get 90 kilometres' worth of road done.

So what we need to recognize, Madam Speaker, that this road is more than just simple infrastructure. The concept for the road is connectivity to communities that have remained isolated for a significant amount of time, to bring, as the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen) noted, sort of hope to connect them to the larger economy. And also, with that connectivity, will become not only opportunities in terms of, you know, potential employment opportunities, investment opportunities but also as simple as bringing down the costs of goods and services within those communities.

Because as we all recognize, no matter where you live here in our province of Manitoba or, for that matter Canada or North America, transportation remains the single biggest factor in the cost of any good or service. And so we can all imagine—or I guess many of us actually can't imagine, because we have, you know, a corner store literally just down the corner from us—the immense cost that that adds to providing those goods and services to the more isolated communities that we need to make sure that are represented here in this Chamber.

And so, as noted by the member for Interlake (Mr. Johnson), despite the previous administration going on a wild tangent mere weeks before the election, signing some excess of \$160 million worth of agreements with communities, greatly exceeding the previous six years' agreement, so in the—literally, in the weeks before the election, they signed a value of more agreements than they had in the previous six years, which obviously raises red flags. And those are red flags that the Auditor General of the province of Manitoba did note in their recent report.

And I know my colleague, the member for Infrastructure, keeps a copy in his desk so that if members opposite need an opportunity to review it and need an opportunity to have an understanding of what the Auditor General had to say in relation to the East Side Road Authority, they'd have that.

So what did the Auditor General find, Madam Speaker? Because, clearly, if you just listen to the questions asked by members, they haven't read that report yet. So I will attempt this morning to enlighten members opposite, and we will focus on concepts and—from the report from the Auditor General.

So I would hope that members opposite are supportive of the office of the Auditor General, supportive of the work of the Auditor General, because I think as an independent officer of the Legislature, I think we all need to see the value in their work.

So, and I quote from the Auditor General: ESRA was not monitoring local procurement of—on any of the tendered construction contracts. Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, that no monitoring of local procurement was going on, on such a massive scale? Quote: "Several ESRA staff members told us there was no specific training for employees in contract administration," end quote.

Again, you've set up—or the previous administration set up this massive bureaucracy because they didn't have faith in the Infrastructure Department. They didn't have faith in the very civil servants that had been there all those years whose main role is to—obviously is to identify infrastructure requirements in our province and to make sure that they are built to the specifications required by the engineers.

Another comment by the Auditor General: that "ESRA did not have a policy on how to calculate the amount of capacity building allowance or how the allowance was to be reduced over time." So, again, they—classic NDP where they would just throw more money after more money after more money. And after \$400 million, again, it's worth noting, 88 kilometres' worth of road has been built, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, ESRA has no set, measurable objectives for its Aboriginal Engagement Strategy and, as a result, is not able to measure progress against targets. And I think this is a fundamental concept and a fundamental comment that the Auditor General has made.

As the member for Kewatinook (Ms. Klassen), who represents a number of communities in northern Manitoba, has noted, this is really about engagement of our First Nations, of those communities, of bringing those opportunities to those communities.

And so to find out from the Auditor General that it has, and I quote, not set measurable objectives for its Aboriginal Engagement Strategy, I mean, that's just shocking that you would set up, again, an entire bureaucracy, that you would funnel untold amounts of money to that bureaucracy, that you would set these lofty goals that they would put in their press

releases and hold news conferences on and, at the end of the day, those were just words, because the NDP simply didn't care about the final result. They were more concerned about headlines than they were the actual work required in engaging these communities and making sure that this work and these announcements were put to fruition.

* (11:20)

So it's not—it's very clear, Madam Speaker that, despite the lofty goals of the East Side Road Authority, that those goals were never meant—met. It's quite clear from the auditor's report that the previous administration had no interest whether those goals were met or not. They're more interested in making the announcements.

And as we know—as former Berens River Chief George Kemp noted, quote: None of the First Nations on the east side saw any benefits.

So, again, Madam Speaker, after \$400 million, here we have one of the chiefs saying that they saw absolutely no benefits. So Manitobans and taxpayers and those community members have every right to ask themselves what went on during those seventeen years.

So I encourage members opposite to support this resolution as I'm sure all members will. Thank you.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): We most assuredly will not be supporting this resolution because this resolution makes no sense.

You know, this government likes to cherry-pick their facts and figures and only report part of the story, not the whole story. They say X number of kilometres of road got built. What they always fail to mention is that there was bridges built in preparation for the next phases of the road.

What they fail to mention is that there was other preparation work done, bush cleared, grading done, getting ready. What they pick is just one small part of the fact, and then they run out and claim that as being the whole truth and nothing but the truth, when, clearly, that's not quite right. The whole picture is there was a lot more work done than what this government chooses to admit. There was money spent; there was benefits.

What this government also fails to want to do is actually help the communities along the road—along the proposed road benefit from it. I mean, yes, getting a road there will be a benefit, but helping workers, helping members of those communities

become workers so that they can actively compete on other projects going forward is part of the real benefit of what ESRA was all about. It wasn't just building the road, as much as this government likes to focus on that; it was also about helping people get ahead in the world, helping people become active participants in their own future. Rather than always having to wait for a handout, they would be part of the future that the road will provide for them.

All Manitobans deserve access, Madam Speaker, access to things that so many of us take for granted, that people along the east side and, in fact, people throughout northern Manitoba don't have. And while this government has talked about some, perhaps, failings in the East Side Road Authority, what they've never talked about is what their plan is.

They've talked about 17 years, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. What they've never said is what the next three years are going to bring to make people's lives in northern Manitoba or Manitoba as a whole better. They haven't talked about their plan to actually build the road. They've talked a lot about what they claim didn't happen, but what they haven't talked about is a plan for anything.

They don't have a plan. When they got elected, they had a Yes! North plan; then it became a Yes! North initiative; now it's become let's keep quiet about the North, because they have no plan. Jobs have disappeared throughout the North. No plan, no action, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) hasn't bothered to talk to anybody, but they took quite a nice junket of people on a little holiday, I guess, up to Churchill to look at some beluga whales and maybe some polar bears, forgot to take anything to tell the people that they were actually doing for them in Churchill, the same as they're failing to tell people along the east-side road what their plan is for them.

Because they don't have a plan. Their whole concept is to throw stones and not build. Their whole concept is to blame somebody else that was doing something while they do nothing.

And not only is it bad enough that so far the only thing this government has done is attack working Manitobans, they have no plan going forward of how they're going to make Manitoba the most improved province, or who they envision is going to be part of that most improved province because it's certainly not people at the bottom end of the scale, it's not minimum wage earners, it's not workers that are trying to unionize.

And from what we've seen from this government so far, it's sure as heck not people in the communities along the east side, nor is it communities in the rest of northern Manitoba that they've got no plan for. This is just one more instance of no plan for people.

You know, they talk about what didn't happen, and let's talk about some things that did happen. The east-side First Nations were seeing results from ESRA. Chief Roland Hamilton of Bloodvein First Nation had a good experience with ESRA. The community won tendered contract to do work on their own land; over 60 people were employed from his community, 18 were trained now as heavy equipment operators, one trained as an environmental safety officer, others participated in the introduction to construction and received different training from that.

Again, what the government opposite chooses to do is cherry pick facts—did every community get every benefit that they wanted from this? Absolutely not. But we had a plan going forward that those communities would benefit and that's what's missing again, Madam Speaker, from this government is the plan going forward.

There's been all kinds of talk again about X number of kilometres of road was all that was built, and they failed to talk again about the whole picture of the work that was going on to get things ready to build the next phases of the road.

It's not just the lack of activity on actually building anything, I mean, this government has been in power for six long, torturous months so far—working Manitobans shuttered forever about what the next couple of years will bring to not make their Manitoba improve. It can't end soon enough.

But we ask repeatedly in question period, in debate: what is the plan; when do you plan to build road; how much road do you plan to build; when do you plan to start? Whether it's the east-side road or whether it's Freedom Road, we've asked the same questions about Freedom Road; are you committed to what was previously committed to? No answer. When do you plan to start building your portion of Freedom Road? No answer. When do you start—plan to start building the east-side road? No answer. No answer, no answer, no answer.

And quite frankly I talk to Manitobans, I talk to people that actually pay attention to question period, and whether it's on the East Side Road Authority or Freedom Road, or anything else, people of Manitoba

are sick and tired of no answers. Oh, they appreciate the fact that people are trying to get things done, but they're sick and tired of no answers and it's time that this government actually started answering the questions that are asked, answering to the people of Manitoba, and lived up to their commitments that they made.

So again, you know, we've already moved over 600 kilometres of road from on top of lakes and rivers to land in order to increase the safety, so there's more that goes on than what this government is willing to admit.

There's all kinds of disjointed pieces that are part of the whole picture of what the east-side road is going to look like when it's all said and done, and many members I suppose fail to grasp the complexities of building roads in northern Manitoba, failed to grasp the complexities of building through swamps and muskeg, crossing rivers, crossing lakes, short construction season, all things that the members from the south really don't have a good grasp on—*[interjection]*

* (11:30)

Yes, it's completely different than building a road across some farmer's field where you plough some dirt up, pack it down and call it a road. That concept doesn't work in the North, so it makes building roads more expensive.

The East Side Road Authority was charged with making sure that road got built and making sure that people on the route benefitted for their future, and that's why we do not support abandoning the East Side Road. We do not support abandoning the people that were in the process of getting that road built and we do not support abandoning the people that live along the East Side Road. We want to get that road built.

Thank you.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I'm pleased to get up and to speak to this resolution, although, I have to say, Madam Speaker, that in my short time in the House—about five years now, but a lifetime of watching parliaments and watching the activities in Ottawa, watching the activities in Queen's Park in Ontario—where I come from—watching what's happening here in the Legislature here in the province of Manitoba since we moved here 20-odd years ago, I don't think I've ever seen a more poorly worded resolution in the history of resolutions—maybe in Manitoba, quite likely in

Canada, and maybe in western democracies far and wide.

Now, I don't know who's responsible for this grammatical stew that's put in front of us that we're having to try to piece out here. I hope it wasn't my friend, the Minister of Education. I think we know that we need a higher—and I would assume he has a higher level of grammatical standards than that, and I am confident it wasn't the member from Interlake, because I know this wasn't his idea in the first place. He was merely served up to put this out there for our entertainment value, I suppose.

So I can only assume, maybe it was one of the tall foreheads in the basement of the Conservative Party who, in a moment of great rush and under siege and told to get this thing done, comes up with a resolution that, as I say, may well be the most poorly worded resolution ever in the history of parliamentary democracy.

And because it starts at that most lowest level, then you realize that there's actually no substance to what the resolution is trying to convey. We have spent now—this is a government that has put a bill forward on the East Side Road Authority, and here we find ourselves on a Tuesday morning now having to debate a resolution on the East Side Road Authority.

And it leads one to wonder, well, why this endless overkill?

An Honourable Member: You've got the bill.

Mr. Allum: You've got the bill. We're in the midst of debating it; it's—*[interjection]* We've got a bill, and then suddenly we're required to look at a resolution essentially on the same thing as the bill and—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allum: —thank you, Madam Speaker—and I don't understand why we would necessarily need to double up in this regard except to say that this is clearly a government with no answers, no plan and absolutely no idea what to do.

We saw that during the election campaign, the most minimalist election platform ever, also, in the history of western democracies, because they didn't know what to do before the election; they didn't know what to do the day after the election, although they were—they were high as a kite about their own self-importance, suddenly, and now six months later

it's still eminently obvious that they don't have an idea of what to do.

So you take a very, very small, miniature, miniscule part of government called the East Side Road Authority and you make it into the worst thing that could ever happen, and we know that. We know that our friends across the way don't really feel that way. It's only because they're taught since they arrived here—how many new members do they have? Twenty—

An Honourable Member: Twenty-four.

Mr. Allum: Twenty-four, thank you, I appreciate that.

They've been taught from the moment they arrived here that you don't carry on substantive public policy debate. What you do is you engage in hyperpartisan political activities. Day after day after day, you torque every possible conceivable issue you can think of, and you torque it, and you do these things; you engage in hyperpartisan political activities, and you torque every conceivable issue, and the reason for that, Madam Speaker, is because you don't have an agenda. They don't have an agenda. They don't know what they're doing—no plans, no idea what they want to do.

And the East Side Road Authority is, in fact, a classic example of a government, already six months into its mandate, careening out of control, looking for something to put its stamp on and not being able to find it, but the result of that careening ineptitude is to place some—have some very serious, serious consequences for the people of Manitoba.

We saw just this morning, 7 o'clock this morning, picket lines going up at the 'une' of man—University of Manitoba, all for one reason and one reason only: Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen), minister of labour, minister of education, Premier (Mr. Pallister) all pushed those folks onto the picket lines because they want to have a war with organized labour here in Manitoba. Why? Why, no one knows. No one's really sure what the endgame is here. No one's really confident as to what direction they are going. They don't know. We're not sure.

People of Manitoba are utterly confused by the new government because they engaged day after day after day in reckless hyperpartisan political activity to the detriment of actually building this province, creating opportunities in good jobs for Manitobans, and making sure that in this province, in the decade to come, that we remain the most progressive

province in Canada. And, instead, they're engaged in some kind of activity to undermine the very fabric, the economic foundation of this province, all because they're ideologically out of control. And I'm sorry to say that to you, but it's actually true. It's—I want to be clear about that, Madam Speaker.

And the East Side Road Authority is a classic example of a government already ideologically out of control: no sense of how to build a province because they don't have a plan. And when you don't have a plan, then you careen from issue to issue, creating mayhem all along the way with the result of which is that the people of Manitoba suffer; my constituents suffer, my friend from Tyndall Park's constituents suffer. I dare say members of the government's constituencies also suffering from a government with no plan, no idea, no concept, just a sense of ideological purity that is doing significant damage to this province.

Now we've heard on some occasions from the government's side their inability to commit to Freedom Road. And, of course, the East Side Road Authority had been given that mandate, and they'd done it in connection with the federal government, the municipal government, provincial government. I was at the fantastic celebration that we had—I think it was last December—when three governments finally came together and said, we're going to build that road, and we're going to get it done. And that came after 10 years of Stephen Harper saying, no, we won't do it; no, we're not interested; no, we don't care.

* (11:40)

So we had a—Canadians sent that particular individual packing. New government in Ottawa, and suddenly a new energy for getting the road built. And then the new Infrastructure Minister comes along—and I use this word advisedly—has the temerity to continually refer to that road as Shoal Lake road.

That name, Madam Speaker, was named by the community as Freedom Road. And for the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Pedersen) to come in and call it Shoal Lake road, to diminish its importance to that community and what it means to that community even more broadly, I think, is one of the worst aspects of this debate.

Madam Speaker, here we are debating a bill on the east-side road, a resolution on this road. We don't support it. We don't like it. And we'll never stand for it.

Thank you so much.

Madam Speaker: For clarification, in the order of rotation, it would now be the independent member's turn in rotation.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I am absolutely crushed that the indigenous people in my constituency were led on—13,000 people plus their children believing that the roads were coming. I'm not sure my NDP colleagues realize, but they don't even know or appreciate that it took nearly 30 years for the elders in my community to agree to the road in the first place. My elders lining up before community meetings, pleading that the road would not be allowed. Year after year, the leaders of my community went by their recommendations. The roads were not agreed to.

The Island Lake communities finally came to an agreement nearly 30 years later. They finally said yes to the road. And then this went nowhere for another decade, because the government at the time—it fell on deaf ears for decades.

Finally, the government acknowledged us and the talks finally began, but it would take another 30 years and \$3 billion, we were told. My colleague, the former—the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) is not supporting this resolution, and I'm wondering, how can he when the First Nations in the North—specifically Brochet, Lac Brochet, Tadoule Lake—are going to suffer because of his inaction?

I implore the government: on behalf of my beautiful Dene relations in the northwest, please include projects for roads for them as well.

My constituents will not be abandoned. I'd like to correct the member in his statement. I will not let that happen under my watch. And I implore the general public of Manitoba: My constituents will prove to everyone that it will be a great investment for all Manitobans.

Health-care costs will decrease. We will realize gains. We will have food security again. Again, a realization of gains. We will have access to housing materials. We can start factories. We can start data mining. We can participate in sport. We can even farm. The dreams of so many of our youth will be realized.

I cried when I read this report. It was a real brunt force to realize how much we were used as tokens. I myself have been a token Indian for so long, used publicly so many times throughout my life. My

relations within the community—and I'm speaking directly—I have so many family members in every community along the east side. And to know that we were used as pawns, that's disgusting.

My mom hated flying, and so she would only see doctors during winter months. And so it took her an entire winter ice-road season for her to have the courage to go and see a doctor. And this was—by the time she went into Victoria General, her cancer had progressed so bad that she could no longer be saved. She tried chemo. She tried everything, but the cancer was too far gone.

There are many other similar stories where people don't like flying; they need those roads. And so I appreciate this motion by Mr. Johnson, a great family friend—oh, sorry.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Just a reminder to all members that when referring to a member we have to use their constituency name or their ministry portfolio. So I appreciate the member recognizing that.

Ms. Klassen: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I apologize.

He was a dear—his father was a dear family friend to many people in the North. His father's name was Wayne Johnson, and I remember him as a child, we used to call him John Wayne. He brought satellite communications to our communities in the North.

And we support this resolution.

Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I would like to—it's actually an honour to get up and put a few words on record in regards to this resolution brought forward by the member from Interlake.

I believe the east-side road is an important project, but when we have mismanagement in the way this road has been, so far, constructed, I think things need to be done.

As government, we are responsible to make sure that things that happen are done properly for the people of Manitoba. I have to totally disagree with the member from Fort Garry-Riverview on his views of the east-side road. I think it's very important for us as Manitobans to make sure we do a good and proper job.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I didn't expect my honourable friend to embark on a exciting, you know, 10-minute presentation on this 'resolution'-resolution only to have him sit down, like, 45 seconds into his speech. I was just to getting into his speech there and he decided that somehow he had come to a conclusion rather quickly.

Well, Madam Speaker, I think we have another five minutes or so, and so I'm very pleased to—and I

know that I will have my time carried over to the next—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have nine minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 1, 2016

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