

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	NDP
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
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
<i>Vacant</i>	Point Douglas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 23, 2017

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

House Business

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, pursuant to rule 38–33(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew). The title of the resolution is Keeping Post-Secondary Education Affordable for Students and Families.

And, also, while I'm on my feet–

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader that pursuant to rule 33(8), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Rouge. The title of the resolution is Keeping Post-Secondary Education Affordable for Students and Families.

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Mr. Maloway: On further House business, I request leave to move directly to Bill 219.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider Bill 219 this afternoon, The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands)?

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I believe you said this afternoon, and I believe the request was for this morning. I just want to clarify that point.

Madam Speaker: Clarification for the point that the Bill 219, leave has been sought for it to be discussed this morning. Agreed–[*interjection*] Or 219.

Mr. Micklefield: Yes, just—I just want to make sure that we're all—219 this morning. We're great with that.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to consider Bill 219 this morning? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 219—The Surface Water Management Act
(Amendments to Various Acts
to Protect Lakes and Wetlands)**

Madam Speaker: So we will do second reading, Bill 219, The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands).

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): We've crossed our first hurdle today; that's good.

I move, seconded by my honourable colleague from Fort Garry-Riverview, that Bill 219, The Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to Various Acts to Protect Lakes and Wetlands), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Altemeyer: I want to thank my colleagues for attending, from all parties, for this important debate this morning.

I imagine there's a fair amount of familiarity with this legislation. It enjoys the rather unique circumstance of having been agreed to by all parties prior to the last election.

Let's be honest. There are different versions of events as to why it did not pass. I don't see any point in delving into that history. People have different points of view; that's fine.

The key thing is that, in this Chamber, we don't often have pieces of legislation that come forward that have all-party support. This is one of them and it's fairly easy to understand why, when we look at the severity of the issues that this bill begins to address. By doing a better job, legally, of providing a

framework to protect wetlands and to take other measures to improve how we manage water when it's on the land in our province, we help address numerous very crucial issues which this government needs to address.

First and foremost, and perhaps most topical, we are in a flood time. The—I understand there are members of the government who are out—members of the Cabinet who are out in the western part of the province, as we speak, meeting with flood officials and municipalities; that's entirely appropriate given the flood forecast indicating what we might be facing. And wetlands are one of the very best ways, of course, to slow flood waters.

One of the reasons why we are having severe floods when they do happen is because so many wetlands have been drained not just in Manitoba, but in all of the states and provinces which send their water to us. And we've seen what Saskatchewan's just proposed: a massive accelerated drainage project covering the equivalent of 250 square miles. All of that water is going to leave Saskatchewan faster than it would have. It's coming to Manitoba.

And another aspect of this legislation is it enshrines the role of the Manitoba government, no matter who happens to be in charge of it, to commit themselves to working with other jurisdictions outside of our boundaries so that we can try and have a better agreement, better collaboration and better results for all stakeholders when dealing with water management issues.

The legislation amends five different acts that exist right now. We can get into the details of those when the question-and-answer period takes place.

But, very briefly, these pieces of legislation are the—part 1 is The Conservation Districts Act. The conservation districts were greatly expanded under our government, but the time has come. It's now recognized to expand their role even further. Previously, each individual municipality would be doing water management within its own boundaries, and it was recognized that that was not producing good results, because water does not respect artificial lines written on a map. And so conservation districts were created to bring multiple municipalities together to take a much more appropriate level of action in dealing with water. And now that the Conservation Districts program has been so successful, it is recognized additionally that watersheds' management is really what we need to be doing.

*(10:10)

And so this legislation moves the conservation districts from that level to the level of co-ordination on a watershed basis.

Part 2 is The Water Rights Act. This is the section which has a significant say in the preventing the drainage of wetlands in Manitoba, trying to slow that down while at the same time, for very small and short-term wetlands which do not typically last very far into the summer season, it is proposed that there would be an accelerated process for stakeholders to be able to move past the current regulations that are in place. So we would end up with a much higher level of protection for the larger and more ecologically valuable wetlands and, in return, recognizing that the smaller wetlands, certainly, incentives could be put into place to encourage stakeholders or individual farmers or landowners to keep those smaller wetlands in place. But incentives would be another issue the government would have to look at.

Part 3 are—is amendments to The Water Protection Act, and this section, Madam Speaker, is the only one where I requested a small change from the original wording. The previous recommendation asks that the data, which the Province collects every single year, monitoring the level of excess nutrients in our waterways—phosphorus and nitrogen—the original proposal said all of that data needed to be tabled every fourth year, and as I reread the act, it occurred to me there's no reason why we couldn't ask for that data to be available every year. It doesn't cost the government any additional money. They are still doing the monitoring. They're still compiling the data. They're still analyzing the data. Let's just make that information public for everyone, and so that is the gist of that section that relates to the amount of nutrients that are in our waterways and enables the government to set targets on what they would like to see those nutrient levels become.

Under the amendments to The Water Rights Act, if someone did want to drain a wetland, this legislation would require that owner to provide money to the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation so that there would be no net loss of wetland benefits. And so Part 4 amends the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Act to enable them to receive that funding and use it accordingly, and then there are some, basically, consequential amendments made to the Planning Act under part 5.

So I will close off my comments there. Suffice to say, this is very topical for the reason that I mentioned earlier, flooding most particularly. But, also, of course, when we do a better job of managing water we can alleviate the potential impacts of drought. We can help address nutrient-excess nutrient runoff into our waterways and, of course, also help mitigate climate change and wildlife habitat.

For all of these reasons, I think all parties agreed to this legislation previously, saw that it was a good thing to do, and I hope that nothing significantly has changed. Certainly, the legislation has not changed, and I look forward to hearing the comments of others today and hopefully we can refer this bill to committee.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The honourable member for Southdale? The honourable minister—[interjection] Okay, the honourable member for Southdale.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I do want to thank the member for taking the time to put this legislation forward.

I just—one question here, just wondering who did the member consult with, and did that include KAP, the Keystone Agricultural Producers?

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Yes, Madam Speaker, a fair question.

I've consulted with numerous groups. I think I've talked to everyone who was involved in the original consultations when we were in office. So that would include Keystone Agricultural Producers; the AMM; the IISD, or International Institute for Sustainable Development; Lake Winnipeg Foundation; the Lake Friendly folks at the Manitoba Capital Region; and there's probably others that I'm—Manitoba Eco-Network, consulted with them and Ducks Unlimited. So always looking for more input from other folks who may be interested, but those are the ones that come top of mind.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Good morning, Madam Speaker.

My question to the member is, seeing as this is an amended piece of legislation, did he have the opportunity to consult with the Cooks Creek Conservation District?

Point of Order

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

I believe the member for Riverview was up to ask a question, and there's supposed to be rotation. Is that correct?

Madam Speaker: That, in fact, is accurate, and I'm sorry, then, I must have missed seeing the member for Fort Garry-Riverview. So we will go to his question first.

* * *

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to thank my friend from Wolseley for bringing this timely, necessary and very important bill forward.

Can he tell us how this bill will help address the issue of spring flooding in Manitoba?

Mr. Altemeyer: A very timely, timely question. Wetlands, of course, are the natural sponges of the prairie ecosystem. Water is held back in wetlands, same as in a forest ecosystem. Trees and undergrowth play the same role there. The equivalent of four and a half football fields every day, on average, is lost in Manitoba when it comes to wetland drainage, and we need to halt that trend and start reversing it.

Mr. Schuler: Well, we seem to be starting everything twice this morning, so, Madam Speaker, the same question to the member. Seeing as this is amended legislation—that means that it's been changed from its original format—can the member tell us, did he have the opportunity to consult with the Cooks Creek Conservation District on this new amended legislation?

Mr. Altemeyer: Not yet, Madam Speaker, but as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the only amendment to the legislation is that the requirement on government will be to provide the nutrient level data in our waterways every year, rather than every fourth year. I would imagine conservation districts

would be in favour of this and it would have no direct impact on the important work that they do.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I thank the member from Wolseley for introducing this legislation.

And legislation is important, but could the member please explain to us how Manitoba families can take part in protecting lakes and wetlands?

Mr. Altemeyer: It's a great question, Madam Speaker, and all of us have an individual role, of course, even something as simple as our individual consumer choices to try and make sure that no excess nutrients or pollution is going to end up in our waterways. Indeed, if I'm not mistaken, when our previous government banned the presence of phosphorus in dishwashing detergent, I think we were the first jurisdiction in Canada to take that important step.

So these types of measures, they all add up. Just as it's been a thousand or millions of individual decisions to get us to this current situation, it'll take the same moving in the opposite direction to fix it.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Time and time again the NDP make decisions affecting people, communities and businesses without consultation. They amalgamated local communities, raised the PST and closed ERs, all without listening to Manitobans.

Can the member explain to the House what meaningful consultation he claims to have made, specifically, my home district of West Interlake Watershed Conservation District?

* (10:20)

Mr. Altemeyer: The member is new to the Chamber, so I had hoped that if he had listened to my opening remarks, he would have understood that significant consultations took place when our government was in office, and, as I mentioned in answer to one of his colleague's earlier questions, I've consulted with no small number of organizations in the relatively short time that we've been in opposition.

There's also a very timely article, a letter from Ducks Unlimited today, which perhaps I'll use in answering a future question, which he may want to read about the benefits of this legislation.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I want to thank the member for his bill.

I'd like to ask him: How will this bill help in negotiations with Saskatchewan regarding drainage and its impact on spring flooding in Manitoba?

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, obviously, Madam Speaker, this is an exceptionally timely question. If we in Manitoba are not taking all of the reasonable steps that we can to address drainage issues and to address the loss of wetlands and our own natural flood-fighting capacity that exists on the land, our representatives from Manitoba will be in a much weaker bargaining position with Saskatchewan, because we'll be asking them, effectively, to do something that we have not been doing ourselves. And this government's track record of negotiations with Saskatchewan have not been very successful just yet, on a number of fronts, so I hope they would look at this legislation as an opportunity to have a positive tool in their kit when next they need to have those conversations.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question relates to clause 5.1(2), which requires that the applicant must either pay a specified amount to The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation or restore and enhance a wetland. An individual may not have the capability of restoring or enhancing a wetland on his property, but he may be able to work with neighbours or others in the municipality to restore or enhance wetlands.

Would this be covered, or is this pretty inflexible in terms of how it would be applied?

Mr. Altemeyer: I thank the member for the question, and the legislation does have those two different options in it. If an individual is able, on their own, to be able to compensate for any loss of wetlands which may occur from a change on the land or a development that they wish to implement, then that is one option.

If, on the other hand, the individual does not have that capacity or chooses to pay the amount of money the government would assign as necessary to the habitat corporation, then they could go that route as well.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): My question today for the member is: How does he reconcile his claims of the NDP record with the facts that we can all see before us in our province?

I think—just of a few examples: first of all, the failure to protect the health of our lakes, streams and rivers when zebra mussel threat was first identified;

the failure to provide for appropriate solution on draining Lake Manitoba from the Portage Diversion; and, frankly, the failure to make this bill, when it was originally introduced as Bill 5, a priority for their government and to get it passed.

How do you reconcile that with your current position?

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, I'll start just by saying, Madam Speaker, that I'm discouraged by the partisan tone of the member's questions. There's really no need for that. If this government wants to bring in its own version of this bill to address flooding, I have no problem with that. There hasn't been a whole lot of environmental legislation coming from this government. In fact, I think, with this bill, I've now equalled the number of bills that they've introduced related to the environment.

But the thing that the member—I would encourage him to get past is the partisan stripe and look at the content of the bill and ask himself—do we as a province want to be in the same situation next spring with another flood coming and no legal protections in place to try and prevent it?

Madam Speaker: Prior to recognizing the next member, just a reminder to all members when asking questions to please do it through the Chair and using third-party language.

Mr. Allum: I'm also concerned about the hyper-partisanship in the Chamber this morning. This is about the health and safety of our environment and our lakes and waters, and so I want to ask the member—

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Allum: I want to ask the member, does he think that the current government has learned any lessons from the Walkerton tragedy?

Mr. Altemeyer: That certainly has been a topic and an important one. I think just—as this is the last chance I'll have to speak, I'll just read the following quote, from Scott Stephens from Ducks Unlimited Canada in Stonewall, who wrote in today's paper that: universal wetland protection through legislation is the first and most important step for governments to begin managing flood-induced deficit issues. Only then can voluntary incentive programs repair and improve watershed health.

It's right there in today's newspaper from a reliable expert. I hope the government sees fit to move this legislation forward. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired. Debate is open.

Debate

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): It's great to be up in the Legislature debating bills. We've seen multiple weeks of filibustering on behalf of the NDP; they didn't want to debate bills and it's, obviously, a new morning. They want to get up and start debating bills, and we think that it's healthy because, actually, that's why Manitobans sent us here.

And I want to take this opportunity, as I always do when I have this honour and privilege to get up and speak, and thank the people of St. Paul—which is West St. Paul, East St. Paul and Springfield—who have given me the honour of being here. And, speaking of the great constituency of Springfield, which is home to the Cooks Creek Conservation District, one of the finest conservation districts you can find in this province, that does phenomenal work. In fact, my colleague across the way, who is a caretaker of part of Springfield—I've—I was honoured to represent the whole RM of Springfield for over eight years, or a little bit more than 10 years, I should say, and now he's a caretaker for part of it.

I hope some point in time—the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), I hope he's taking good care of a good chunk of Springfield. He's got great areas there. We share the Cooks Creek Conservation District, and they do wonderful work. And it was through a lot of hard work and effort on behalf of the former Filmon Progressive Conservative government that the Cooks Creek heritage district—conservation district came into being, and I've had the opportunity to visit them and have great conversations with them and the kinds of work that they do. And it's important, considering that Birds Hill park also is in my constituency.

And, as members should know, and I'm sure they do, that it is actually a riparian lands district—because of the gravel and the makeup of the soil, that a lot of water is cleaned for the aquifers that we take water from that—we enjoy when we drink a glass of water. And Birds Hill park is one of those riparian areas. It's very well maintained, and I'd like to thank Cooks Creek Conservation District for the work that

they do and the efforts in the RM of Springfield, which is involved in that. And there are a lot of communities that rely on the aquifers that come out of the riparian Birds Hill park area.

In fact, East St. Paul draws a lot of its water from there, as do other rural municipalities. We rely on good, safe drinking water. So we thank these individuals in these communities.

And, thus, I was somewhat surprised that we have a piece of legislation—by the individual who brought it forward, indicated that this is a piece of legislation that he changed. And, when a legislator gets up and says, you know, it's kind of similar, sort of like something else that came before, but I changed it, that means it's a different piece of legislation. You can't get up and say: it's the same piece legislation; it's just that I changed it.

And my question to the member was: Did he have the opportunity—did he make himself available? And he's no longer, you know, mismanaging the economy of Manitoba's government; he's an opposition member. He should have had the opportunity to go to Cooks Creek and have a—maybe a little bit of a tour. He could have asked them, you know, how is it that they run their great and successful operation? And maybe consult with them, say, you know, I'm looking at bringing forward a piece of legislation that had all-party agreement—which then he promptly changed and, thus, wanted to have some consultation on it. And he indicated that he hadn't.

* (10:30)

In fact, my next question was going to be—but I suspect I already know the answer. Did he consult with any conservation district? And I suspect he didn't.

And I would suggest that it's important to do consultation. It is important to get out and speak to people in the community and get their advice and their input. It's something that—I've spent a couple of years, Madam Speaker, in opposition, and I always made sure that I was very, very clear that legislation had to be vetted in the public. And, when I went to briefings, that was one of the things that I was asked about, and now, as minister, I am always very clear that we're—we tell the opposition members that this legislation went in front of these groups, and we consulted with these individuals because it's important that we get out and do that.

And I would recommend to the member, I know it's—it means you have to leave the Perimeter Highway and you have to get off the Perimeter Highway, and I would—*[interjection]*—yes, he just has to get out of Wolseley—but I would recommend it, and they would love to see it. In fact, they would love any legislator to come and visit because they're very passionate about what they do at the Cooks Creek Conservation District. They're very passionate about the environment. They're very passionate about the riparian lands that they find within their purview. And I would suggest to him they would actually love to see him, and, you know, take your legislation, sit down with them, have a conversation with them. He will find that they are—they're going to be very helpful and they'd be very respectful. And, again, every time I've gone, I've always appreciated that I went after I left because of just the kind of discussions we have.

I would like to point out to members opposite that it's our party, the Progressive Conservative Party, that has been on the forefront of these environmental issues, and I would point out, the member mentioned that he got an endorsement from Ducks Unlimited, and I would like to point out to members in this Chamber that it was members opposite who fought a Mr.—the Honourable Harry Enns, one of the longest serving MLAs in this Chamber, decided that he was going to help them build the new Ducks Unlimited building, and it was members opposite that fought him. Them and their friends and their colleagues fought it every step of the way. It was going to be a disaster. It was going to be bad, you know, on and on and on. And now, when they go there, they fawn over that building and what a great idea. Yes, it was a great idea when it was proposed. It was a great idea when our previous government with minister, actually Minister of Agriculture Harry Enns signed off on it. It was a great idea when it was being built, and it's a great idea today. And it's good to hear—good to hear that members opposite now go to the very groups and the very places that they used to oppose and go get endorsements for something they're proposing.

And we have always been very strong supporters of Ducks Unlimited as a political party. We have always been very supportive of the entire conservation program as a political party. We helped to establish these. We made sure they were well funded. We made sure that they were doing a good job. We were always very supportive of riparian areas because you know how important those are, the

whole Birds Hill Park area. Birds Hill Park, I believe, was created under former Premier Duff Roblin, who did a great job in creating that. What a great heritage, and now we're starting to get the linkages even between Winnipeg and Birds Hill Park. They're not completely done, and it was the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) who started that process by building a bridge across Highway 59. I would point out to members he did half a job. He got the bridge to go to the wrong side of the floodway, but, you know what, it was an attempt. You can't criticize that. He almost got it right. He just got it to the wrong side of the floodway. He should've gotten it to the other side.

But what's important is that we always respect our environment. What's important that we always make sure that we are cognizant that not just we have the ability to have fresh air and clean water and great spaces to live in but also that we leave that for the next generation, and we've got Bill 19 coming, which is going to be the new Efficiency Manitoba, and I know members opposite are looking forward to debating that bill and passing it on.

We, as a province, are on the forefront, and we can thank the kind of legacy left to us by individuals like Harry Enns and the Filmon government, which brought in the blue box recycling program. We have a lot of things that we can be very, very thankful for in helping to protect our good environment, our fresh air. You know, if there's one thing that people come here—and the first thing they say when they arrive in Winnipeg is, wow, do you guys have fresh air. Now, sometimes a little crisp, but it is very fresh air and it's—we've got really great drinking water. The fact that you can go swimming in most of our lakes and drink water and swim at the same time—hopefully, not too much of it—but the water is that clean and that fresh. That is amazing, because, if you've travelled the world, you know that is not something you can do in most places in the world. That's how good our water is, and I would suggest to all members that we stand up and be proud of the kinds of things that have been done in the past, in particular people like Harry Enns in the former Filmon government.

My time has run out. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I just want to thank the member from Wolseley for introducing this legislation, and I look forward to it passing unanimously.

We need to do everything we can to make sure we're protecting our waterways. The former speaker talked about how wonderful the water is here in this province, and we need to make sure it stays that way, as opposed to some things that we've seen recently about cutting regulations that protect waterways.

You know, we want to make sure that we are protecting that for the future and making sure that the clean water that the member opposite was carrying on about stays there so that our kids have clean water. We want to make sure that we're protected as much as possible from flooding and all of the rest of everything that this bill will address going forward.

So, with that, Madam Speaker, I'll sit down. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for the Interlake (Mr. Johnson)—the honourable member of the Interlake?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Interlake? Oh, sorry, I heard Gimli.

I rise in the House today to debate Bill 219. First, I want to put a few things on the record, though.

While I served for the Rural Municipality of St. Laurent, I was nominated to sit on the West Interlake Watershed Conservation District. Bill 219 directly affects conservation districts, Madam Speaker. My conservation district is located along the eastern shores of Lake Manitoba and it backs on to the East Interlake Conservation District. Other participating municipalities, besides the RM of St. Laurent, include Armstrong, Coldwell, Grahamdale, West Interlake and Woodlands. Woodlands is situated in the honourable Minister of Ag's riding, and he's doing a sensational job there. So, of course, prior to the forced amalgamations imposed by the former NDP government, West Interlake was known as the RM of Siglunes and the RM of Eriksdale.

This board position was one that I held with pride in respect to the environment, as did the entire board, of course. Our district was very successful in a number of initiatives. The conservation district offered the following programs: groundwater and surface water protection and quality protection, surface water management, aquatic ecosystem and 'riparium'—riparian area management, wildlife habitat protection and watershed education, including our annual water festival.

Madam Speaker, Bill 219 would not affect conservation—would not only affect conservation districts but all of their initiatives as well. The Burnt Lake Drain is a major spawning ground for many species of fish, including northern pike, walleye, white sucker and yellow perch.

Ducks Unlimited installed a weir during the '70s to improve wildlife habitat for waterfowl, not taking in to consideration the spawning shoals. The fish that were upstream of this weir became, in a sense, trapped. The fish looking to spawn from Lake Manitoba had since been unable to enter the lake.

Through the West Interlake Watershed Conservation District, a new three-step ladder was installed to allow fish to move from Lake Manitoba to easily swim into the marsh-lined, nutrient-rich lake. The ultimate goal of the project is to promote population growth of various species of fish. That delivers a real benefit for the environment as well as for fishermen and tourism and recreation in the Interlake—a true win-win situation.

*(10:40)

Madam Speaker, I question the extent of the member's concern for conservation districts. Under the failed NDP area they cut this very program—cut it, Madam Speaker. I'm glad that it's—I'm glad that the people opposite seem to have discovered the virtue of a proper water management. Better late than never, but the reality is that the NDP had 17 years to make an effective and positive change in Manitoba, and Manitobans are tired of NDP broken promises.

The West Interlake Watershed Conservation District has actively been involved in improving the health of watersheds within the Interlake region of Manitoba. The member cut this program, the member across, Madam Speaker. West Interlake Watershed Conservation District initiated a number of studies to gain better understanding of these issues that would potentially affect water quality in stream habitat and the riparian health of a multitude of different watersheds.

Madam Speaker, this program was also cut by the previous NDP government. This government on this side of the House is working on a plan for long-term water management in our province. Our government is committed to seeing our resources and ecosystems safeguarded for future generations.

Another great program that the West Interlake Watershed Conservation District managed was designed to protect well water. This program is

designed to assist watershed residents with the protection and restoration of drinking water sources. Specific drinking water protection projects that were involved in—include flowing wells and wellhead protection. If pollutants enter an active well, the cost for remediation is substantial, so it's important that landowners be able to protect the land around a wellhead to prevent chemicals, road salt, fertilizers or anything else from getting in. We have a program to do that in the West Interlake cut by the NDP. Abandoned well sealing—surface runoff can enter a contaminated—and contaminate aquifers through abandoned wells. For that reason, it's extremely important to make sure that all unused wells are properly plugged. It isn't even very expensive but guess what? That, too, was cut by the NDP.

The winter off-site watering program is designed to assist landowners in relocating winter feeding sites for livestock away from the main water sources; cut by the NDP. Must I go on, Madam Speaker?

An Honourable Member: Yes, you got four and a half minutes here.

Mr. Johnson: I hear more. I hear more. I will continue. I will continue.

The forage seed, seed protection assistant and sod seeding assistant programs were designed to assist landowners in protecting marginal or erosion-prone areas by establishing a permanent forage cover—cut by the NDP. These programs are ultimately enhancing agriculture productivity and encourage efficient land management, all while protecting our water quality.

The riparian management program is dying—designed to assist landowners in the protection and restoration of riparian areas along waterways in an effort to reduce sediment and nutrient entering our water—cut by the NDP, again. The riparian management program also reduces stream bank erosion, enhances fish and wildlife habitat, improves health of livestock and creates a safe environment for a herd—all of those cut by the NDP.

Madam Speaker, we had a community tree nursery program to assist with the root vegetation of the shores of Lake Manitoba. Of course, this was the previous government that flooded Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin, Lake Pineimuta and so on; this, also, cut by the NDP.

You see, Madam Speaker, I'm not going to take lectures from the member for Wolseley on

water quality. He was part of the government that talked the talk but never managed to walk the walk when it came to water management.

I was involved in conservation districts for many years, and my riding touches on both of Manitoba's largest lakes, so I know very well the importance of managing our water and protecting our lakes for future generations. I am proud to be part of a government that is working on exactly that. We know the Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox) is working with our neighbours to make improvements to flooding and drainage issues.

We care for Manitobans, on this side of the House, Madam Speaker. The NDP government made it clear by their actions that responsible environmental and water management weren't priorities for them.

Under leadership from the member of St. Boniface, Lake Winnipeg has become the most threatened lake in the world. As we know, the NDP successfully put us last place for numerous things throughout Canada. They also successfully put us last place in the world for health of our lakes. What would have happened to our other 100,000 lakes in Manitoba if they were to continue their mismanagement? Thank goodness for April of 2016.

Madam Speaker, this is the legacy of the NDP. Our government is left to clean up their mess, but that's what happens when smart Manitobans realize they're in trouble; they elect a Progressive Conservative government.

The NDP had four terms in power, mismanaged many floods, ignored rural provincial drains and ignored proper watershed management practices.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of our province and being the land of 100,000 lakes. Our government has begun the hard work required to repair the damage, correct the course and move toward balance in a sustainable way. We're focused on fixing the finances, repairing our services and rebuilding the economy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Madam Speaker, I want to talk to Bill 219.

I thank the member from Wolseley for introducing this bill. It is, as he's already said, pretty much a duplicate of a bill which was introduced in the dying days of the former

government, the NDP government. But it is a bill which is worthy of coming back and being considered.

The water management and changing the way that we manage water on the land and surface water management is of extraordinary importance in Manitoba. It is important in terms of how we manage the future of our land with climate change and the potential for increased drought and for increased floods.

It is vital that we engage in a major effort to store water on the land, and it's vital that we move to a no-net-loss-of-wetlands policy. It is critical that we do this as we've seen with the floods, and the flood of 2011 is a good example, in that there was very severe flooding. And because studies were done in the RM of Blanshard, as an example, which showed that something like 30 per cent more water was coming off the land due to poor water management in that municipality. And, as a result of that, that contributed—because that was happening all over southwestern and western Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan—that contributed very significantly to the size of the flood in 2011.

Indeed, if the amount of water coming down the Assiniboine had been reduced by 30 per cent because if there had been a different water management policy in western Manitoba, the amount of water that would have had to go down the Portage Diversion would have been much less. The extent of the flooding on Lake Manitoba and on Lake St. Martin would have been much less, and it would have been a totally different situation that we were facing in 2011.

Sadly, because the governments of Conservatives in the '90s and NDP in the 2000s were negligent in putting forward a policy that would have established a strong surface water management regime, that flood in 2011 was a very, very severe flood. It was a big wake-up call that we needed to have this very urgently.

* (10:50)

Now, I want to take the member for Wolseley back to 2000—it was about 2005. I introduced an amendment to give no net loss of wetlands. But I think the member from Wolseley wasn't in the Chamber at that point, but his—the former NDP government of that day rejected that amendment. There was an opportunity to act, but it was missed.

And then, of course, in 2011 we had the extremely severe flooding. It was a wake-up call like no other wake-up call. There should have been immediate action on 2011, and the fact that there was not meant that in the fall of 2011 right after the severe flood there was extensive—extensive—drainage of wetlands in southwestern Manitoba and that drainage has continued in southwestern and western Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan, southeastern Saskatchewan and it has made the situation worse. There have been studies in eastern Saskatchewan near Yorkton, and I think it's a Smith Creek drainage area, that have shown very clearly the extent of damage that comes from not managing the surface waters well and the extent of increased flooding that can result, and it has hammered home the important of doing this.

Unfortunately, because of no action being taken in 2011, the extensive drainage continued and the situation has got worse. There was an opportunity in 2011 to act. There was an opportunity in 2012 to act. In the spring of 2013 we were promised a surface water management act, but it never came. I can remind—on March 17, 2014, I spoke in this Chamber, and I said in more than 14 years as a government this premier and his team have yet to produce a surface water management plan.

Most recently, two years ago, that was 2012, it was promised for the spring of 2013. A year later with no mention in either the Throne Speech or the budget, it appeared to have vanished in thin air. It should have been produced then. I mean, it was very, very late in the day, but it was not produced in the spring of 2013. It was not produced in the fall of 2013. It was not produced in the spring of 2014. It was not produced in the fall of 2014, and so in the dying days of the NDP government this legislation was introduced and, sadly, it didn't make it through.

There is—I want to talk about one particular area in this legislation which I think needs to be improved, and that is this section 5.12 which offers just two alternatives. One alternative, that the farmer restore, enhance a wetland on his own property; or B, that the farmer or applicant pay a specified amount to the Manitoba heritage corporation. I think that there's room for a lot of potential co-operation among farmers so that one could be draining and somebody nearby could be putting in water storage. I think there's significant potential for work and co-operation among municipalities or within watersheds so that you can have trade offs within watersheds and people, farmers can work

co-operatively with conservation districts and so that they're not, you know, forced to work with the Habitat Heritage Corporation which, of course, is a noble corporation and does good work. But I think that there is an opportunity to be considerably more flexible and I think that greater flexibility would be appreciated by farmers who often want to work co-operatively together to solve problems.

So now, where are we today? We are approaching, not quite a year after this government has—was elected and, clearly, if this was a top priority, it would have been one of the very first bills that was before this Legislature. Where have this government been in 11 months? I mean, it's incredible. They talk and talk and talk, blame the other parties, but here you go, you have an opportunity. Where were you? It's 11 months, we haven't seen a bill on surface water management.

This is a very poor government. This Conservative government needs to get their act together. They think that they can just dump on others, but now you've been in government for 11 months, you should have brought forward legislation on this instead of just kind of crawling about what others are not doing.

Where are you? Where have you been for 11 months? There's so many of you. I mean, even one of you could have brought forward this legislation—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please. Order.

I would remind the member that all debate should be through the Chair and that all comments be made in a third-party manner. And I would ask the consideration of the member for that, please.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I stand corrected. What I wanted to say was that the members of the government have been sadly, extraordinarily delinquent on this file, which is so important. And we are now facing the potential of flooding this year, and nothing has been done.

And so, if we have more severe flooding this year, it is on the shoulders of this government because they have not acted, and it's time they did. And we hope that if they don't support this bill that they bring in legislation to have a surface-water management act within the next two or three weeks because the time is long past for delay.

Thank you.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I do want to thank the member for giving us the opportunity to discuss this matter today.

But in light of the recent outburst by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) I might just spend a moment talking about what we have been doing as a government, what our hard-working Minister of Sustainable Development (Mrs. Cox)—who's busy working right now, I see—has been doing.

We're working on a long-term water management plan in this province. We're involved in meaningful consultations—and I'll get back to what a meaningful consultation looks like in a few minutes. But we're engaged in meaningful consultations.

We've fully committed to the alternative land-use services model, the ALUS, to help reduce flooding and improve water quality and nutrient management. We're re-examining upgrades to the North End Sewage Treatment Plant to improve water quality, relying on science to help move our understanding forward. We're reaching out to Saskatchewan to address the drainage issues between our provinces in a way that the previous government under the NDP never did.

We know that our Minister of Sustainable Development is working hard, and she's working to make improvements to deal with flooding and drainage issues in this province, and even right now as we speak a number of Progressive Conservative caucus members, including Minister for Infrastructure and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) are out right now speaking with municipalities, speaking with groups that are going to likely going to be affected by spring-fall flooding. That's meaningful, that's hard work, that's the kind of work that our government brings.

So I thank the member for River Heights for giving me the opportunity to put on the record what we have been doing and what we will continue to do as a Progressive Conservative government here in this province.

But now I just want to shift gears if I may for a moment and dwell on some of the comments made by the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) as he brought forward this bill, and as he made his introductory remarks and answered some of the questions that were put forward.

And the first thing I want to talk about is his opening statement where he says, well, the history of

this bill isn't really important. But I would take issue with that. I would take significant issue with that because the history of this bill is important because it demonstrates that the NDP government under the previous administration did not make this bill a priority. They only introduced it at the very, very end and then even when it was introduced, they failed to put it high enough up in their Order Paper or whatever it takes to get these in their priorities, to get these things debated on the floor and sent to committee—that did not happen. It wasn't a priority for them.

And you know what? I can understand why it might be a priority for the member. I know the member is certainly interested in continuing to serve as an MLA, and I understand that might be a challenge for himself with his own constituency association. But, I mean, he comes from a riding, a constituency where there's a tremendous amount of support for green initiatives and things like that.

And I think, you know, that's a commendable thing to have a concern for the environment; it's certainly a concern that I share. I believe strongly that as an MLA it's my responsibility to ensure that we're putting forward meaningful legislation that also takes seriously our job of stewarding the environment of this province, of doing a good job of guarding it and protecting it—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have six minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 7—Protect Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private member's resolution. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Protect Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program, being brought forward by the honourable member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino).

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the honourable member for—*from Elmwood,*

WHEREAS Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program is one of the most successful newcomer sponsorship programs in Canada and is supported by a broad

consensus of business groups, like the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, as well as labour and community leaders; and

WHEREAS provincial nominees to Manitoba are helping to keep the province growing, filling the skilled labour shortage and enriching the social and cultural fabric; and

WHEREAS in the past, the Provincial Nominee Program emphasized skilled applicants with strong connections to Manitoba through family, previous work experience and education, and other social connections; and

WHEREAS this past process ensured that nominees would have a community around them to provide settlement supports and would encourage them to stay in Manitoba to work and grow the economy; and

WHEREAS provincial nominees account for nearly 70% of all immigration to Manitoba, and because 85% of nominees are working three weeks after landing, Manitoba's nominees have the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has announced changes to the Provincial Nominee Program which eliminate the emphasis on community connection to Manitoba, making it harder to attract nominees who will stay in Manitoba instead of moving to larger market cities; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has instituted a regressive \$500 fee for successful applicants; and

WHEREAS the Premier has falsely alleged that nominees create high unemployment rates and have an excessive dependence on social assistance.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to reverse its changes to the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program and continue to invest in supports for nominees.

Motion presented.

Ms. Marcelino: Manitoba's population grew to 1,324,000—or 1.3 million for short—as of October 1st, 2016, thanks to a large degree on the success of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics maintains that Statistics Canada substantially underestimated Manitoba's May 10, 2011, population. MBS's estimate of the undercount is 16,200 individuals.

Over the past 10 years almost 130,000 people from all over the world have called Manitoba their new home. Manitoba's economic growth stems from several factors with immigration in the top categories.

Madam Speaker, from independent studies and government records MPNP is the most successful nomination program in Canada. It is the gold standard of all nomination programs. It has helped reverse negative net migration in Manitoba during the '80s and the '90s.

The new immigrants filled labour and skill shortages and added cultural diversity and vibrancy in the communities they settled in. If it ain't broken, why fix it?

In 2009, an independent study on the nominee program by Professor Tom Carter concluded that Manitoba has the most successful Provincial Nominee Program in all of Canada. Over the period 1999 to 2008, Manitoba received over 38,000 provincial nominee arrivals, or 50 per cent of all provincial nominees who came to Canada during that period.

I had the joy and privilege of visiting many citizen towns of Manitoba since 2007. Everywhere I went the vibrancy and diversity of the area through its people were apparent. To my delight, people from the Philippines ranked the highest in numbers. I think the only place that I did not see a Philippine at the time of my visit was in Churchill. It was very brief visit though, and I didn't even have the chance to see the town.

But everywhere else I have met many, many Filipinos—in Vita, Steinbach, The Pas, Flin Flon, Thompson, Portage la Prairie, Winkler, Morden, Russell, Minnedosa, Neepawa, Brandon, Souris and, of course, in Winnipeg. Besides Filipinos, I've also seen folks from South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, south in Latin America. Manitoba that we know today is home to people from over 100 countries in the world.

The provincial government has proposed aggressive changes to the Provincial Nominee Program that will create financial and social barriers for newcomers. Starting next month successful provincial nominees must pay a \$500 fee as part of their application, adding to the financial burden of applicants. While the provincial government's stated justification for the fees that it will be reinvested into language-support programs, the PNP already

requires nominees to have passed international standardized English- or French-language tests in listening, reading and writing.

The application fee of \$500 for applicants being introduced by this Conservative government is similar to the Chinese head tax charged to each Chinese person entering Canada from 1885 to 1923. The head tax was first levied after the Canadian Parliament passed the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885. It was meant to discourage Chinese people from entering Canada after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. With few exceptions, Chinese people had to pay \$50, later raised to \$100 and then \$500, to come to Canada. Is that the way to treat those who laboured long and hard under the most difficult working conditions and harshest weather to start and eventually complete the Canadian Pacific Railway? Without the Chinese workers, Madam Speaker, the railway connecting all of Canada would not have been built on time on a very little budget, as the immigrant workers were paid low.

The Chinese were good enough to work, but when they wanted to apply to immigrate, they were not good enough to stay. In 2017, in Manitoba, the government, headed by the member from Fort Whyte, is employing the same cruel and discriminatory treatment that the Canadian Parliament, in 1885, under Sir John A. Macdonald did. Incidentally, both leaders belong to the Conservative Party.

While at this topic, I would like to pay my highest respects to Dr. Joseph Du, beloved leader of the Winnipeg Chinese community, who passed away last Sunday. He was a visionary and untiring advocate for his community. Imagine if the likes of Dr. Du were prevented from immigrating to Manitoba due to discriminatory policies like the head tax. Manitoba will have missed the vibrancy and culture and the boost to the economy that the Chinese community provides. Thank you to the huge contributions of Dr. Du and many who, like him, were passionate and persistent in seeing their communities flourish.

Madam Speaker, the provincial government is also changing its criteria from selecting nominees with family and community connections in Manitoba to an employer-driven focus that will only prioritize nominees with approved job offers from established employers. The shift in focus jeopardizes PNP's successful 86 per cent retention rate, as without

family or community ties, nominees will move to other provinces with larger target markets. This change provides employers with an incentive to select newcomers based on reduced costs, leaving nominees vulnerable to exploitation.

The business community and the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce have made it clear that the PNP is a successful program, driving our economy with skilled workers. According to a report, in 2014, 94 to 98 per cent of nominees report employment earnings within their first year of arriving in Manitoba and had the second lowest unemployment rate among immigrants in Canada. Despite the wealth of economic and social benefits that newcomers bring to our province, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) cruelly portrayed them as a burden to society by inaccurately linking provincial nominees to high unemployment rates and social assistance.

So, Madam Speaker, this private member's bill urges the provincial government to maintain the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program's criteria, remove the \$500 fee, and continue to invest in newcomers who build our province, drive our economy and promote diversity and inclusion in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (11:10)

Questions

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

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): Just wanted to ask the member opposite, after almost 17 years in power, why did the NDP do so little to clear the backlog of applications, many dating back to 2008?

If it ain't broke, don't fix it, right?

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank the honourable member for the question.

In the past, our government had moved towards streamlining the process of the nominee program. But I believe due to interference from forces beyond our control they have made changes to the program

midstream that's confusing and that—even without consultation to affected communities, as I've said—it was beyond our control. There are forces moving it into and—have moved into it for ideological purposes.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I want to congratulate the member for the resolution.

I'd like to ask the member: How does the government's changes to the PNP create barriers for newcomers coming to Manitoba?

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the member for the question.

As we know, applicants to the nominee program have gone through very rigid assessments: their education, their employability, training, skills, language skills including—they also come here with their proof of settlement funds.

Yet adding the new changes to the nominee program like the \$500 head tax and the requirement of a job offer, those would create barriers in the first place to applicants and even when they're already here as new immigrants.

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): I'm interested in discussing facts this morning; specifically, how the NDP failed to track PNP nominees.

Will the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) please tell us what report the NDP quote whereby it claimed 85 per cent of all PNP nominees were working three weeks after landing?

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the member for the question.

In 2009, there was an independent study conducted by Professor Tom Carter. And in that study it was made very clear—it's a very encompassing study—it was made clear that applicants to the nominee program were employed 94 to 90 per cent in their first year. And how did they obtain it? It didn't say there, but I was told it was through the income tax return file by the applicants.

And I'm very active in the community. I know a lot of people who have come through the nominee program. And I've—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to thank the member from Logan for bringing forward this resolution. I think her and I are on the same page in wanting to see improvements to the Provincial Nominee Program.

My question is, though, with all of the issues within the program, is this the highest priority? And why did she choose this one for the resolution?

Ms. Marcelino: As we know, in the website of the government and immigration, they will impose a \$500 application fee, effective next week. Our community, I'm sure the honourable is aware, is opposed to this fee and also the changes to the criteria. So this is a priority right now because of the impending implementation of the changes.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the member why it's important to put an emphasis on family sponsors and community links in the application process.

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the member.

Again, based on personal experience, I've seen hundreds and hundreds of new immigrants come to Manitoba and, wonderfully, they stay. We have a high retention rate of over 80 per cent. Why are they staying? Because they have family and we have community supports here.

Our government is aware that supporting newcomers is for the benefit of all, so those family connections, the community connection, they all come together and help each other, and also a very good way for new immigrants to feel at home, because of—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'd like to thank the member for Logan for, in her preamble of the resolution, commend the—Bonnie Mitchelson for—one of the creators of the PNP program.

I'd like to ask her though, in her resolution, one of the clauses in regards to the 85 per cent that she's stated, the report, the OAG found that the proper tracking was not actually done, so we're challenging this assertion by the member from Logan, whereas the Auditor General disagrees with her assertion.

Ms. Marcelino: We go by reports by the department and also by the independent study of Professor Carter. I'm not fully aware of what the Auditor General's figures are, I'm sorry.

Mr. Maloway: I'd like to ask the member how the changes to the PNP will affect the program's retention rates and will drive away newcomers to larger markets.

Ms. Marcelino: Thank you to the member for the question.

As mentioned earlier, family and community are the greatest factors for a newcomer or new immigrant to stay. A job is important, of course, but the family trumps jobs. So, this has been the experience of many, many people. I've seen several hundred already in my foray into the community, and they're staying because of family. They're staying because the children are in schools that they are happy to be in. They're staying because they have found their niche in—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Mayer: Can the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) explain to the members in the House why the NDP knowingly accept false information under their management of the PNP business program?

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the member for the question.

We were informed that the business nominee program have been made very strict because of some not-so-good results of past applicants. And they have even contracted the services of International Organization for Migration to double-check the documents submitted from business applicants. I think the nominee program officers did their best to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I will ask the member from Logan, considering the retention rate of those who have immigrated through the Provincial Nominee Program has been a little bit just average, would you say that family is one of the most important—or family reunification is one of the most important considerations that should be given by this government?

Ms. Marcelino: I thank the member for the question.

* (11:20)

I'm speaking from experience that family—if the new immigrant has family in Manitoba and has close friends in Manitoba, they will stay, and I've seen that happen, and—as borne by the 80-plus per cent retention rate.

Family, especially for immigrants from Asia, I'm sure even Africa and other parts of the world, it's the support of family that's foremost and the importance cannot be overlooked. The jobs, they'll come second, but family comes first.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The debate is open.

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): I'm glad to have the opportunity to put some words on the record with respect to the member's resolution on the Provincial Nominee Program.

My dad came here in 1968. Immigrated here, was granted automatic Canadian citizenship because of his trade. He had a job in line waiting for him as a textile worker. So, when it comes to family unification, we know that there is federal programs that exist for family reunification.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I'm also glad that the program was actually created under a PC government, actually, the Filmon administration, to give provincial government the voice in recruiting skilled immigrants to Manitoba.

In 1996 a framework agreement was reached with the federal government with a final agreement secured in 1998. This agreement made Manitoba the first province to have a direct agreement with the federal government which other provinces were quick to follow.

As Progressive Conservatives, we recognize that recruiting and settling skilled immigrants will help us grow our economy while adding to Manitoba's diversity. However, under the NDP the PNP became so poorly managed that both the stream for skilled workers and the stream for business suffered.

They say that we did not consult with immigration practitioners, but, in fact, we did. Our government consulted with Manitobans, including immigration lawyer Reis Pagtakhan on ways to improve and enhance the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, as it was the PC government, again, that initially created the program in '98. And we will continue to consult with key stakeholders like Reis to make it even better: faster processing times, skilled workers with jobs immediately, helping refugees at no cost to the taxpayer.

They say that the \$500 fee is regressive, when, in fact, speaking as recent as last night with my friends in the immigration industry, that they all agree that the fee is justifiable and that even existing applicants who are waiting find that the fee is satisfactory because of the service that they're going to get from this government—six months of processing times that will be processed. And, you know, but the other side claims if it ain't broke, don't

fix it. Well, I guess 42 months ain't broke—42 months ain't broke. And so they say that it'll create stress and anxiety, but I think you're creating more stress and anxiety for families waiting in other countries or here being accepted.

You see, Madam Speaker, the whole point of the Provincial Nominee Program is to attract skilled workers to Manitoba who will have a positive economic impact on the province. They claim we are against labour; however, we have a labour market strategy for immigration. Manitoba's renewed immigration model would include: a plan that puts priority on skills and job creation; annual and quarterly plans communicating Manitoba's skills and investment priorities; innovation partnerships with industry and education that build pathways to employment. So we'll be working with employers, sector councils and training institutions to better prepare and match international students and skilled worker nominees into—in demand jobs; skilled worker selection that emphasizes early and strong attachment to the labour market; business nominee selection that fast tracks investors establishing job-creating businesses to create jobs; and a cost-recovery model that re-invests revenues into long-term economic growth. We will have measurable where they didn't.

My friend Reis also stated, under the current system many, if not most, of the immigrants that come to Manitoba arrive without jobs—surprise, surprise. While many are skilled and eventually are successful, these immigrants must first deal with being unemployed in a foreign country. Because of this the government has programs funded by taxpayers to assist these new immigrants in finding jobs.

The NDP claim that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is being disrespectful to immigrants, but, on the contrary, that they are being disrespectful. When you have a backlog of 8,000 applicants and make applicants wait 42 months, that's disrespectful. There are times, again, which I've heard from the opposition, that the MPNP, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Well, I've said it before: I guess 42 months of waiting is not broke under their watch, really. So the NDP has shown complete incompetence managing all streams of the PNP and, after 16 years in power, it's difficult to consider today's resolution genuine.

Our government has taken many steps to fix the mess the NDP left by making improvements to the PNP. Enhancements will improve processing times

and fast-track nominations to provide job-ready, skilled workers, including international students, with opportunities to build a prosperous future in Manitoba.

As we all know, economic-immigration is a driver of economic growth and a way to address targeted labour market needs and the gateway for innovation in our economy.

Moving to a new country is stressful as it is; we want to see immigrants succeed not to suffer from the stress and anxiety of not being gainfully employed. I mean, I just go out on the streets and—she talk about, yes, we come from the same community. I was born here in Canada, proud of my Filipino heritage, but when I talk to people in my community that came through the Provincial Nominee Program, they were—they don't work in the field that they were—that they should be working in, so they're struggling. And we don't want that; we want them to be successful right away when they get here, and that's what this new, improved, enhanced PNP program is all about.

So renewing Manitoba's PNP will facilitate the inclusion of skilled immigrant workers as an integral part in the development of our labour market and the Manitoba economy as a whole.

A new labour market strategy will support the renewal of the PNP by matching skilled-worker applicants to Manitoba employers. This is what the industry is saying. They want a program—integrity and quality insurance. The renewal of the MPNP must be based on program changes which enhance overall program integrity with respect to managing the risk of fraud and misrepresentation; must not increase the risk of fraud; and must enable the program to achieve predictable, measurable outcomes sufficient to demonstrate the program that continues to have a positive impact on the Manitoba labour market and overall economy. Manitoba's 2016-2022 labour market projections indicate a strong need for skilled immigrants. These projections indicate a need for almost 170,000 job openings, 25 per cent which are filled by newly skilled immigrants. The new PNP, again, will include innovative partnerships with industry, priority selection for skilled workers, priority selection for business nominees and a cost-recovery model that reinvests revenue into improved settlement and training supports—not regressive, as the member states in her resolution.

Some of these backlogs, again, date back to 2008. We are on track to succeed. Full elimination of the backlog will allow the department to guarantee return of service of six months, a processing time for 80 per cent of applications—not the 42 months, as they claim that's not broke.

The renewal of Manitoba PNP will ensure our province continues to attract skilled workers and entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs with the potential to make the strongest contribution to our economy. Between July 2011 and July 2012, the Provincial Nominee Program for Business was audited using a standard specifically designed to detect concerns related to fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct. Under the NDP, the business stream of the program also suffered, resulting in 13 scaling recommendations from the office of the Auditor General of Manitoba. Clearly, the NDP has neglected and mismanaged the program.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba is the home of hope, and we as a government will repair the services, in this case, the state of our immigration services, through a more improved and enhanced Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

* (11:30)

There's also that—you have these groups that they have formed the Save the MPNP Coalition groups and it's unfortunate that the messaging that they're passing on to those folks is that 42 months is satisfactory. We'll make you wait 42 months and be very—be stressed and have anxiety while you're waiting, and as the members may know, they get MPNP applications or families that come into their office. And we've waited three years to find out that we've been refused. And that's all happened under their watch. Is that good government? Of course it's not. Plus, they're getting jobs that are not related to the field that they should be coming into when they come to Canada; that's the thing.

So, anyways, for the record, I just want to say I'm proud that my parents immigrated to this country, and I'm glad to be part of Manitoba, and I want to serve the best that I can.

Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to speak to the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) and the leader of our party's resolution on the PNP. And I just listened intently to the last 10-minute speech here from the previous speaker, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes), and just wonder who he's

been talking to lately. I mean, somewhat delusional comments, I would suggest to you, because I have certainly spoken to I don't know how many hundreds of people affected by this program over the last few months, and I can tell you, it's almost universal (a) that they know that the \$500 fee is coming in; they know the amount; they know the date. So this member's going to have to be playing a lot of catch-up to try to change people's attitudes about this because I can tell you, they pretty much decided that Conservatives are up to their old tricks when it comes to making it tougher on immigration.

The resolution itself is that resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to reverse its changes to Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program and continue to invest in supports for nominees. And that is what I hear every day when I talk to these people. They want this—these changes reversed and they are very concerned about it. And the fact of the matter is the member has the group that's very, very active, and so, obviously, the issue is out there and the Conservatives, well, they can ignore it, I guess, at their own peril.

Our NDP team recognizes the positive impacts of immigration for our province, the important contributions newcomers have made to Manitoba over generations, and our diversity is one of our biggest strengths, and our NDP team will work hard for all Manitoba families. Now, Manitoba has the most successful provincial immigration program in Canada. From the early 2000s, immigration has boosted our population to a record 1.3 million people.

And I'll say at the outset that the Conservatives are technically correct. Bonnie Mitchelson did introduce the program, but that's really all she did, Mr. Deputy Speaker. She introduced it, and I think that in their first year they had, you know, 500 people on the program. Well, we were 15,000. This program grew. It was so successful that we were bringing in 15,000 people a year, and I believe Nova Scotia copied the program, that's how successful it was. And my prediction is, going forward, we're going to see the program wither and will not be the success that it had been all the time that the NDP was in power.

The MPNP was an incredibly successful program as it stands, counting for nearly 70 per cent of all immigration to Manitoba. This government's regressive changes to the program MPNP are deeply

concerning. The \$500 nonrefundable fee for applicants of the Provincial Nominee Program adds unnecessary barriers for applicants to the program that is comparable to a head tax on immigrants.

And I remember, you know, just a few years back now, the federal government, the, once again, Conservative federal government, increased the fees on immigrants, and a lot of people were, you know, are not coming here as one, an individual; they're not here as one. They've got a family; they have, you know, four or five people in the family. And when they see the fees—these were the federal fees at the time three or four years ago now, going up, you know, \$150, \$200 per person, all you have to do is just do the math. You know, you're talking about a huge amount of money for people that are struggling and are working a lot of jobs, a lot of minimum wage jobs, in fact, and it's very, very difficult for them. I mean, maybe \$500 to some of the members opposite's rich friends is not a—*is* a drop in the bucket, but to a lot of the people that I talked to, \$500 is a huge, huge amount.

The emphasis on family sponsor and community linkages to employer-driven nomination will drive away newcomers to larger markets and jeopardize the high retention rate of immigrants remaining in Manitoba under the MPNP.

The—unlike what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) alleged, the vast majority of newcomers do not depend on social assistance or create high unemployment rates. I couldn't understand when he, you know—when he made a comment like that. It just doesn't kind of fit with the reality of the situation.

Matter of fact, I run into people that are literally, like, here for, you know, just a couple of weeks and they're already working. You know? There's like, lots of people in that situation. So I think he should get out a little more and get around and talk to some people, and you see—and I mean by—when I say he, I'm referring the Premier of the province here. I know the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Reyes) gets out a bit. He may not be too accurate in some of his comments, but he does get around, unlike the Premier, who is just absolutely, totally out to lunch. I mean, he's just way out there, you know, out in the Pleiades star system somewhere.

Now—so, the—and in fact, 98 per cent, 98 per cent of newcomers find employment within their first year. More than 86 per cent of these PNP immigrants stay within the province. The—since the introduction of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program for

Business, 763 businesses were started, \$255 million was invested. The program has been a major contributor to maintaining vibrant communities throughout Manitoba.

Business leaders all agree immigration helps Manitoba's economy. The Conference Board of Canada said immigration schemes such as the Provincial Nominee Program—*[interjection]*

The Acting Chairperson (Dennis Smook): Order. Order.

It's getting a little loud in here for me to hear the speaker, so I would ask everybody's co-operation just to keep the conversations down a little bit. If you wish to confer, there's a couple loges over here to speak.

Thank you.

Mr. Maloway: I have to admit, I'm used to that environment because, like, I'm—can be making a speech and I can't even hear myself.

Now, the Conference Board of Canada—as I just indicated, the Conference Board of Canada said immigration schemes such as the Provincial Nominee Program have been successful in luring workers to settle in places like Manitoba. And this government is trying to fix something that isn't broken, and is putting in regressive changes to the—make it inaccessible.

The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program has proven to be essential in meeting Manitoba's long-term economic and skills-development goals, accounting for nearly 70 per cent of all immigration in Manitoba, and we did important work to increase the number of nominations from—once again, as I mentioned before—only 500 under the Filmon government to 5,000 in 2015.

Our team—NDP team clearly recognizes the value and the contributions of newcomers to Manitoba, and we would ask the government to do the same.

With every passing day, it's becoming more and more clear that the Premier and this government are out of touch with everyday Manitobans. With a Premier who's spending two months in his Costa Rica mansion without any access to cellphone or email—and that's, like, two months—it's probably going to start adding up even more than two months as time goes by, because as he gets more stressed out with all these cuts that are coming out here, he's going to leave the member for St. Norbert.

* (11:40)

You know, you got to wonder. The backbenchers in this government, they've only been here, like, just slightly under a year, but in that one year, they've had their wages cut, they're not allowed to even do members' statements. You have ministers up here doing members' statements. That never used to happen under the NDP. That—those were reserved for the backbenchers. And they got—the leader disappears on them, right? The boss is gone and they're left here, and so far things have been relatively calm. But that's only going to last, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for another two or three weeks, and then the whole—the floodgates are going to open and they're going to be, you know, getting lots of phone calls while the boss is out in Costa Rica hiding out.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Madam—so thank you, Madam Speaker, I think this is really a good spot for me to end. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Colleen Mayer (St. Vital): I'm happy to stand up to speak in regards to resolution 7, the protecting Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program.

Madam Speaker, I wish to start off by saying that my thoughts and prayers are with those who have been affected by the tragic attack in London yesterday. This senseless act of terrorism has left many friends and families of the four victims and that of the some 40 injured with a deep sense of sadness and disbelief.

All of us in the Manitoba Legislature rely greatly on our security personnel as well as our police services across this province to keep us safe. To them, I say thank you. Thank you to all the men and women who put their lives on the line day after day to ensure our safety.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to resolution 7, as I stated earlier, brought forth by the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino).

Let's start with what we know to be factual, Madam Speaker. Fact: The Provincial Nominee Program was created under the Filmon administration to give the provincial government a voice in recruiting skilled immigrants to Manitoba. It must be stated that if it were not for the work of the former MLA for River East, this program would not even be here. I applaud that honourable

member and the Filmon government for giving immigrants the opportunity to call Manitoba their home.

Fact, Madam Speaker: A final agreement between the federal government and the Province of Manitoba in 1998 made Manitoba the first province to have a direct agreement with the federal government and, upon securing that agreement, led the way for other provinces to follow suit.

Fact, Madam Speaker: As Progressive Conservatives we recognize that recruiting and settling skilled immigrants with help—will help us grow our economy while adding to Manitoba's diversity. Immigration is a driver of economic growth and a way to address targeted labour market needs, and a gateway for innovation in our economy.

Fact, Madam Speaker: Under the NDP the Provincial Nominee Program became so poorly managed that both the stream for skilled workers and the stream for business suffered.

Fact: Under the NDP there was a backlog of more than 8,000 applications, some dating back as far as 2008, for skilled workers.

Fact, Madam Speaker: The NDP have shown complete incompetence managing all streams of the Provincial Nominee Program. And, after so many years in power, it's difficult to consider today's resolution genuine.

Let me take a look at the member's resolution and break it down, if I may, Madam Speaker. According to the member, 85 per cent of all nominees are working three weeks after landing in Manitoba. I would like to ask the member, as I did earlier, but it's worth repeating, what supporting documents are the basis for this assertion, because according to the Auditor General's scathing report from 2013 on the program, the tracking of nominees was not properly undertaken by the previous government?

So I ask again: How can she prove that number? She tried to answer that earlier, said it was based on income tax returns. Well, the last time I looked there's 52 weeks in a year that they look at calculating your taxes; that's not three weeks.

Madam Speaker, in this resolution, you will find that the member states that the current government's changes to the Provincial Nominee Program will eliminate the emphasis on community connection to

Manitoba, making it harder to attract nominees who will stay in Manitoba instead of moving to larger market cities. I find this interesting, as the previous NDP government never bothered to track business outcomes of long-term placements of applicants. And again, how does the member for Logan (Ms. Marcelino) plan to prove this statement?

The basis of this resolution is to protect the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, but I argue it is our current government who is taking this program that was abandoned by the NDP and enhancing it by eliminating the 8,000 backlogged applications, dating as far back as 2008. Can you imagine, Madam Speaker—almost 10 years? It's shameful. Our province is better than that.

And we, our government, will prove and provide a higher level of service, creating a new labour market strategy announced by our Premier (Mr. Pallister) in November of 2016 that will support the renewal of the Provincial Nominee Program by better matching skilled workers—worker applicants to Manitoba employers. We're going to enhance it by committing to provide strengthened language skills to better ensure labour market success for applicants.

The renewed Provincial Nominee Program will include innovative partnerships with industries, the priority selection for business nominees and skilled workers and a cost recovery model that invests revenue into improved settlement and training supports.

You know, Madam Speaker, a few short weeks ago the member for Logan was quoted in the Chamber, when speaking about the Provincial Nominee Program, as saying—like my member from—my colleague from St. Norbert said, if it ain't broken, don't fix it. Well, Madam Speaker, there are many things in this province after years of the NDP's watch that are broken: broken promises, broken finances and, sadly, broken families.

After a decade of debt, a decade of decay and a decade of decline, our government has set a course to fix the services, and the one we are talking about today, the Provincial Nominee Program, will facilitate the inclusion of skilled immigrant workers as an integral part in the development of our labour market and Manitoba's economy as a whole. After the Auditor General released that scathing report, Madam Speaker, that highlights the failures and gross mismanagement of this program, and after

16 years of the NDP refusing to admit that they broke—what they broke, the government is willing to recognize that our province deserves better.

For over 20 years, Madam Speaker, I have lived and worked in the community of St. Vital. And I have had the opportunity to meet many wonderful immigrant families. These families have shared their stories with me and I—they've shared their stories with me and I know how important it is for them to be in our community.

Madam Speaker, I'm happy to say that Manitoba is on the road to recovery and headed towards the most improved province. Our government has taken steps to fix the messes left behind by the NDP. Our plan—with our plan, the fact is enhancement will improve processing times and fast-track nominations to provide job-ready, skilled workers, including international students, with opportunities to build a prosperous future in Manitoba.

We will strengthen Manitoba's economy by renewing the Provincial Nominee Program. And it is my hope that the member for Logan will withdraw her resolution, admitting the NDP failures and join us as we improve services for all current and future Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to start off by thanking the member from Logan for bringing forward this resolution. It's a great time to be bringing it forward, as she answered my question during the question-and-answer period, that it's about to take effect. So, Madam Speaker, it does, it needs to be discussed here in the House.

* (11:50)

This fee is completely unacceptable and it should not be implemented. It's unnecessary. It's taking advantage of new immigrants coming to Manitoba because, yes, they're going to be willing to pay the fee if they get to come here to Manitoba, but think about how finances could be distributed otherwise.

Madam Speaker, I don't want to go into cheap shots, but the only thing I want to bring up is the new salaries that all the ministers and the premiers are willing to happily take on, yet they're charging new immigrants—when we're supposedly a welcoming province—this new fee.

You know, historically this fee is not needed either. This new government is claiming that the fee is going to help with processing times. When the Provincial Nominee Program was first implemented there was no \$500 fee and applications were actually processed within three months. Now they're claiming they need six months and they need this fee. Madam Speaker, it's not necessary.

The real issues though of the program are the long wait times, four years—or I think the member from St. Norbert was reiterating 42 months over and over again. People are waiting unreasonable amount of time. They are planning their lives, they're getting excited, they're putting their lives on hold whether—say, for example, a person is coming here from the Philippines, they get excited to come to Manitoba. They talk about the plans with the family where they're going to live; they look on job banks to where they can work; and then three years later, they still haven't heard anything. Maybe they put in an inquiry, Madam Speaker, they don't hear anything back, and then they find out they're going to be rejected.

Madam Speaker, it's completely unfair. And then you want to talk about the responses; it's not adequate. It's not. I have a constituent who waited three months to hear back from the provincial nominee only to find out—or three years, sorry—only to find out that she was rejected, and the reason for this was because they had a cousin living in BC. Now, my understanding is this rule has changed and now if you have family members in other provinces, it will not hurt your own application.

But this is completely unreasonable. These are the concerns that we should be talking about: an inability to communicate. You know how hard—as an MLA it took me nine months to get a response from the minister responsible, and I've reached out to Immigration Manitoba, I wrote letters to the minister, to the deputy minister. I did everything in my power. I was asked to leave Immigration Manitoba and, you know, finally we did get some answers. It took a sit-in; it took some forcement there but I am very pleased with the answers we received. So I'm optimistic moving forward.

And, you know, I have to say—

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I just would like—and I apologize to the member for Burrows (Ms. Lamoureux)—but we have students

that here in the gallery and they're only here for five minutes.

So we would like to welcome all these students from Wellington School, which is in the constituency of Minto. Welcome to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Again, my apologies to the member for Burrows.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Madam Speaker and welcome here, students. I hope you enjoy the gallery experience.

Madam Speaker, it's important. I know the member from St. Norbert quite well. We've—I've known him for five, six years. Is that correct?

An Honourable Member: I remember your dad when he had hair.

Ms. Lamoureux: Yes, there you go. He knew my father when he had hair. Yes. And we have the same circle of friends, and I find it very, very, hard to believe that he is speaking on behalf of these people saying that they want this \$500 fee, because I've spoken to the very same people and they are saying that it's not necessary and that it's a cash grab, it's a head tax, it's completely unfair, it's uncalled for.

But I want to be positive, and I actually am positive, you know. I had a great discussion with the minister responsible for Immigration recently and with these new implementations, whether it's the six-month procession time—we'll hold them accountable to that, Madam Speaker, and if he does keep his word, credit is due. I do believe in that.

You know, even opening up the lines. Now there's—he's implemented an email account in which MLAs can go directly to Immigration Manitoba. I have sent a couple of emails. I haven't heard back yet. But I'm giving them a little bit more time to continue processing. I think he said these new changes would take effect April 1st. So I'll give him a little bit more time. I'll be patient.

You know, we just—we're going to continue to hold the government accountable. In short, we agree that this resolution should be taking effect, that this \$500 fee is completely unacceptable, and we'll be supporting it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'm pleased to stand up today to put a few words on the record in regards to this resolution. And the first thing I would

like to say is that I would like to applaud and commend the hard work of the previous MLA for River East, Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson, for the great work that she did, because it was actually under her watch and under the Filmon government in the '90s that gave the provincial government a voice in recruiting skilled immigrants to Manitoba. The department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation was renamed to include citizenship, with a mandate to negotiate the Provincial Nominee Program.

It upsets me to hear the member from Logan, the interim Leader of the Opposition, when she starts speaking to her own resolution and realizes there are some points within the resolution that are actually inaccurate, and she pointed out—that out on the record, as well, so it sort of—it—I'm beside myself, and it boggles my mind, Madam Speaker, to see that the member from Logan probably didn't even get a chance to read this resolution before she presented it to this House.

It does—also, I'd like to commend previous speakers, on our side of the House, who spoke towards this resolution as well, and they put some very meaningful remarks on the record. I would also like to commend the member from Burrows, actually, for standing up and actually condemning the former NDP government for their failures on this file.

And, also, I'd like to commend her for applauding the Minister of Education, which this file falls under, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), for the great answers that he had given her when she had actually emailed him for some responses.

I know that the resolution starts off with the first few WHEREASes and, absolutely, you know, congratulates and speaks positively about the Provincial Nominee Program, which, again, I know the member from Logan was really meaning to congratulate that Filmon government era for bringing this forward and to having such a strong program. I know that, also, as I had mentioned earlier, that she mentions one of her WHEREASes having inaccurate wording within the WHEREAS, and she didn't necessarily understand or realize that, actually, the Auditor General wrote a scathing report in regards to how the NDP government handled this file, which is deplorable.

But, at this time, Madam Speaker, I know that there's some other members in the House that would

like to put a couple words on the record. So I thank you for this time.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Indeed, always an honour to get up and speak in this Legislature. And I want to put a few words on the record about the Provincial Nominee Program, a program that was actually conceived under the former government of Premier Gary Filmon. It was signed on by one, the Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson, and Bonnie Mitchelson, under the leadership of her premier, came up with a terrific program, a program that has worked exceptionally well for Manitoba and for Manitobans. When we look at different pieces of legislation that have come in to Manitoba, we can see there are benchmarks whereby a province defines itself, the way a province moves forward.

And we can, for instance, look at the amazing robust and dynamic and exciting Filipino community that has grown and has contributed and brings so much to Winnipeg and Manitoba, and that was, in large part, to the Provincial Nominee Program. There is the large German community that came in through the Provincial Nominee Program, our East Indian community that has contributed so much to our society.

And, Madam Speaker, it was through the leadership of individuals like our former premier, Gary Filmon, and his minister, the Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson, and we understand that the NDP recognize this as being the good program it was. Again, typical socialists, they mismanaged it—

An Honourable Member: Made it five times bigger.

Mr. Schuler: And, unfortunately, it's gotten somewhat off the rails, and the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) chirps from his seat. And, you know, he and his colleagues even went so far as corrupted some of the public civil servants to fight the federal government—

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable—order. The honourable member for Minto, on a point of order.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Well, given the comments of the member speaking right now, I wonder if you'd canvass us—this House to see if there's leave to extend debate so that all members of

this House who wish to speak to this important resolution can do that and put some facts on the record.

So would you canvass the House to see if we could extend debate to allow us to speak and bring this matter to a vote?

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): The request is denied.

Madam Speaker: The request has been denied.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The hour now being noon, when this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have eight minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 23, 2017

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