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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 17, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would seek leave to move directly to Bill 231.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to move directly to Bill 231? Is there agreement? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 231—The Elections Finances Amendment Act (Abolishing the Vote Tax)

Mr. Speaker: So I'll call second reading, public Bill No. 231, The Elections Finances Amendment Act (Abolishing the Vote Tax).

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that Bill No. 231, The Election Finances Amendment Act (Abolishing the Vote Tax); Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des campagnes électorales (abolition de la subvention sur les votes), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, that Bill No. 231, The Elections Finances Amendment Act (Abolishing the Vote Tax), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. McFadyen: Members will recall that the issue of annual subsidies to political parties arose about a year and—a year and a half ago in the context of the government's Bill 37. That bill contained some measures that we—that we had been calling for and

that we support, most notably the establishment of set dates for elections in Manitoba to provide a degree of certainty and predictability for everyone involved in the—in the democratic political process. And so, as a result, Mr. Speaker, we do—did support that provision of Bill 37.

There were other provisions of the bill though, Mr. Speaker, that we have expressed concern about. We have put comments on the record, particularly in the context of the debate on Bill 37 with respect to annual grants to political parties in Manitoba and at the—in essence, the objection that we have to the establishment of new, annual taxpayer grants to parties is that political parties in Manitoba are already supported by two different kinds of public subsidy.

Firstly, there are rebates paid to political parties after election campaigns are completed. Those rebates represent about 50 percent of expenses incurred by political parties in the course of election campaigns. There are authorized expenses that parties incur in the course of a campaign and local candidates for which they receive a degree of compensation following the election campaign to the tune of 50 percent. The reason that was introduced was to provide some support for participation in the democratic process by all political parties. It was also designed as an incentive for political parties to ensure that they were properly booking all of their expenses in the course of a campaign.

If the election finance regime is to work properly, there's a need to have parties be forthcoming and candid in their recording of expenses as they go through the campaign, and there's a good reason for that, and that is that we want parties to be on a level playing field as they go into election campaigns. We don't want in Manitoba a situation where somebody can come along and simply spend their way into office by buying ad campaigns with unlimited resources. It's meant to ensure that everybody can participate, and so that subsidy is there for a good reason, Mr. Speaker, and we support it.

The second way that taxpayers support the political party system in Manitoba is through political tax credits, which are issued to individuals

who donate money to political parties voluntarily. People make that decision. Some people support the NDP, others support the Liberals, the Green Party and others support our party, Mr. Speaker, and as part of the process, those individuals are provided with credits each year they can use to offset the amount of tax they pay at tax time. It encourages participation in the political process by people at the grass-roots level. People can participate in any number of ways, and making modest financial contributions is one of the ways that Manitobans participate, and we support that under legislation by issuing political tax credits to Manitobans following those donations.

We feel, Mr. Speaker, that those two forms of public subsidy for politics and political parties in Manitoba serve legitimate purposes and serve our political process well, and we feel that the addition of a third form of public subsidy goes beyond what's required and it tips the balance toward a system that really takes volunteerism out of politics. It no longer requires political parties to go out and earn support through grass-roots donations from individual Manitobans. It instead allows them to become reliant on annual grants from taxpayers, and taxpayers are called upon to support a variety of extremely important programs and initiatives in our province. Of course, our public health-care system, our education system, the justice system, community clubs, roads and a variety of other essential public services, which are offered by governments at different levels, are paid for through people's taxes.

We feel, Mr. Speaker, that to add to that burden a grant, an annual grant to political parties serves political parties, but it does not serve the interests of taxpaying Manitobans. To divert money away from other important needs, whether it be health care or any other important service, particularly in challenging economic and financial times, sends a message to Manitobans that members of the Legislature are more interested in looking after their own political parties than they are in responsibly setting priorities and managing the dollars that are entrusted to them by taxpayers, and so we very strongly voiced our opposition to those annual grant provisions within Bill 37.

We said at the time that if the intent was to ensure a level playing field for smaller political parties, for the Green Party or other smaller political entities to provide a level of public support to ensure that they could be viable, then the government would've introduced a cap that would've put

everybody on a level playing field, but, instead, the numbers that were put into Bill 37 were very much designed to help to disproportionately benefit the large parties and, in particular, the governing party, the NDP. Because of the way the formula works based on the number of votes received by the party in the last election, what it does is it requires taxpayers to send money to political parties in a way that is proportionate to how they voted in the last election, and we don't think the taxpayers viewed that as part of the bargain when they went to vote, Mr. Speaker.

*(10:10)

Most Manitobans, in fact, I would argue no Manitoban would've gone to the polls thinking, well, if I vote for this party or that party, that's going to ensure that a certain amount of my tax dollars were going to go to that political party. That isn't what people were thinking when they went to vote. They were going to vote for the candidate and the party, the leader of the platform that they believed in, and they didn't think that there were hidden strings tied to that vote, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we have concerns about this provision that was introduced in Bill 37.

So the intent of this private member's bill, Mr. Speaker, is to repeal those sections of The Elections Finances Act that were introduced just over a year ago and ensure that taxpayers are respected, that we set clear priorities for spending taxpayers' dollars, that the focus be on health care, that it be on public safety, that it be on education, roads and all of those other things that improve the quality of life in Manitoba and not be redirected to the bank accounts of political parties which already receive two forms of public subsidy.

Political parties are perfectly capable, Mr. Speaker, of going out—and every party has events where they ask people to reach into their pockets and make contributions. That's a time-honoured tradition in Manitoba politics, that people are called upon to contribute a dollar or \$5 or \$10 or more at different events along the way to support the process.

And so, Mr. Speaker, let's respect the fact that Manitobans want to be voluntary participants and supporters of political parties. They don't want to be forced to make contributions to parties that they may not support, which is another important issue raised by the former NDP Cabinet minister, Sid Green, when he challenged the notion that he should be forced, through his taxes, to support political causes

and parties that he, in his own conscience, doesn't support and doesn't believe in.

And so we want to respect individual rights to make those choices. We want to respect taxpayers. We want to acknowledge there is a role that already exists in Manitoba for government to support the political process, and we want to send a clear message to Manitobans that health care, that their tax dollars, that the public requirements of Manitobans come ahead of the wants or the needs of political parties who will simply want to use that money to advance their own political interests in whatever way that may be.

And so we're looking for support from all members. We believe that, with all of the changes under way today in Manitoba politics, there's an opportunity for every member of the House to revisit their original position on this provision and to stand up and support this private member's bill and do what's right—do what's right by Manitoba taxpayers in a way that is fair and balanced in terms of our approach to public participation and taxpayer support for the political process.

So I encourage all members to support this bill. We look forward to a good debate, and we know that there will be a variety of views expressed in this House, all of which we respect, but we look for support from all parties and members from all parties for this bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity of putting some remarks on the record with respect to the member's statement. The member's statement comes across constructed as if the recent innovations in the reforming of election law is something the Conservative Party had gone along with and is sufficient.

In fact, every measure that the member talked about, as we move forward on amending election laws, the members opposite voted against or said they would cancel the subsidies to parties. Filmon, former Premier Filmon, was on the record as saying, as soon as we're in office, we're going to cancel that. Well, they came into office and they kept it.

When we brought in our motion to ban union and corporate donations, the members opposite voted against it. They voted against it. They voted against making a level playing field, Mr. Speaker. And when we brought this portion of democratic reform that could try to level the playing field, try to take big

corporate Tory money lobbyists out of the system, the members went ballistic.

Now, that's not unusual, they go ballistic all the time. Most of the time—you know what, most of the time, they're wrong. They make a lot of—they make a lot of noise and sound and fury and then they respond and they accept—they accepted—they took more money in election subsidies, the member for—the member took more money in election subsidies than most of us did. But they had said they were going to abolish it. Members opposite voted against union and corporate donations and now they accept. Well, we've gone far enough.

Then, when we brought in the third plank, they said it's awful, it's the end of democracy. The stuff that they mailed out under taxpayer expense to constituents, the material they mailed out at taxpayer's expense on this, things like deliberately falsified returns, inquiries, cheque swaps, phony invoices. They should be talking about the Conservative Party of 1995 that was convicted of those matters.

So its sound and fury signified nothing, Mr. Speaker. You know, and now they come to us and say, but it's worse, it's worse—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: One of the members, you know, they're yapping from the back seats, they sent out, they sent out taxpayer expense notices to their constituents and said we were taking million dollars in subsidies. We declined to take the subsidy. And they still sent out, at taxpayer expense, letters across the province. Not only being false about what was happening, but false about, in fact, the point that we had not taken the money.

And the purists over there, the purists over there, who had said they would abolish taxpayer subsidization, the purists over there who voted against union and corporate donations, the purists over there who said that they did—that this is awful—sent out at taxpayer expense all across the province, everywhere, Mr. Speaker, with very cute pictures of—very cute pictures of a preppy-like individual. Before that, before the recent announcement, they had a lot of very bad pictures of the now Premier (Mr. Doer) on their notification. They've now changed it to a—they now changed it, at least they're putting their own leader's picture on their publicly provided propaganda that they send out. But there is a clear

delineation, and the word—there is some words I can't use in this House.

But it is so typical of the Conservative Party to scream and yell and call news conferences and vote against something, and then take the money and run. And it's the same, Mr. Speaker, with this particular reform to the electoral system to allow for fairness. To keep big money out, to keep lobbying out.

And the irony, Mr. Speaker, the irony is, the irony—*[interjection]* The member for—who doesn't choose his words very well, the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) said the word "stealing." The only time I'm aware of stealing in this Legislature was the election of 1995.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. It's very quiet in the Chamber and I can hear every word that members are saying whether you have the mike or not. It is not appropriate to accuse one member or another of stealing or of using the word "lie" or "liar." That's clear in our rules. I caution the members to be very careful on words that they're choosing because any word that is picked up in the Chamber can be dealt with.

Mr. Chomiak: And the only reference is—the members ought to read the book entitled so many liars, which is an account of the Conservative Party's—

An Honourable Member: David. David.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, come on. Some of you were around and you've all stood up and said, oh, we had nothing to do with it.

*(10:20)

And now you throw, you throw and you throw stuff—you don't form—you don't offer any substance in this Chamber. You don't offer any policy in this Chamber. All you do is throw accusations across the floor and throw them and throw and throw. You're not a party of substance; you're a party of accusations. You're in a party of attack. And on this point, the irony, the irony is the federal Conservative Party has the same legislation and accepts the money, your own federal Conservative Party, your own federal leader. All of your federal MPs from Manitoba accept the money, Mr. Speaker, in this same fashion, and the only—the only individuals who seem to be against it is the members of the opposition, who at this point—and remember, they said they were against the subsidy for elections. They voted against union and corporate donations. Now

they say they're against the taxpayer-assisted funding.

The only ones who are against it are the Conservative Party now, and they're only using it because it's an issue that allows them to put out propaganda, taxpayer funded, that frankly, I would not put out. I would not, Mr. Speaker, want to be associated with some of the accusations made in this kind of documentation. It's quite disgusting. Having said that, to get back to the point, the leader of the—the leader of the Conservative Party comes up and says, oh, you know, we believe in fairness in elections and we believe the average working person.

So do we accept there was a bit of a schism before we brought in the ban on union and corporate donations? There wasn't a lot of people giving to the Conservative Party. There was a lot of big companies giving a lot of money to the Conservative Party and the member—the member knows that, Mr. Speaker, and that's why they voted against it. And when we try to level out the playing field for all parties to allow them to have access, to allow them to have reasonable rules like in Québec, like in other provinces, like in federal politics, when we try to bring in reform, as is the case in federal politics, the members howl and scream and throw accusations across the floor.

And I think it's a bit of, you know, it's often used, but sound and fury signifying nothing, signifying *rien*, signifying a political party that is desperate, is desperate, is desperate and only means of conveying or discussing matters in this Chamber is generally to attack, to attack, to attack, to go after personalities, and substance and policy, substance and policy is not—*[interjection]* Well, Grace Hospital was going to be closed, Mr. Speaker. We were—you know, Grace Hospital was to be closed—*[interjection]* Oh, they say that this is in the—*[interjection]* You know, after they—*[interjection]* Now then, the Leader of the Opposition's saying their intervention saved Grace Hospital. It's astounding. They even quote—they even quote MNU documents now.

You know, the point is, we should get back to policy debate in this Legislature. We should get back to a little bit of consistency of statements. If the member wants to discuss what he sent out on public expense and tie it in with voter subsidization, I'd be happy to debate that point any time of the day but I don't have enough time, but I think other members of this caucus will have the opportunity to discuss the

fact that there is a contradiction in that. There's a contradiction in saying, oh, we don't want taxpayers to fund political parties, but gee, we want them to allow us to send out our propaganda sheets on a weekly, daily, monthly basis into constituencies across the province.

And it wouldn't even be so bad if the data was accurate, but it's inaccurate, and with those few points, I—we're clearly not in favour of this resolution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise this morning and participate in second reading debate of Bill No. 231, The Election Finances Amendment Act (Abolishing the Vote Tax). I have listened very intently to remarks already contributed to the debate of this bill, and I find it quite curious that the members from the New Democratic Party's side of the House are, in one term, criticizing this bill, but yet they are, by actions, supporting the bill.

And I'm looking forward to later in the—in the hour of debate for their support in passage of this piece of legislation on to committee, because I think it would be most interesting to see the public's participation in regards to the vote taxes, as the general population of Manitoba has come to know this legislation.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We have already in place numerous supports for candidates and parties in this province of ours, but this particular clause goes above and beyond reason in my mind, because it is a case where, effectively, the governing party, the party of majority, sees a greater amount of taxpayer money flowing to them, and it does not create a level playing field. As much as the member opposite say that it does, it does not, because it's based upon election results, and amounts of monies are paid annually to the respective political parties based upon the vote outcome, and, obviously, it tilts the balance towards the party that garnered the greatest number of votes in the previous election, and, obviously, the New Democratic Party is quite aware that they received more votes in the last election, so, obviously, this legislation is tailored to favour them in the upcoming election because they will receive a greater amount of taxpayer monies over the course year-in, year-out.

So, having said that, a lot of information was put on the record here that I have to say is very tainted, very tainted. Each and every one of us has the

opportunity to place in the mailboxes of our constituents on three occasions throughout the year at taxpayer expense, and I have received numerous pieces of legislation—being that I have an apartment in Winnipeg—from the New Democratic Party. And I will say that the information that is provided through the franking pieces by the New Democratic Party is very tainted, very slanted, very much half truths, and if persons were able to see the balance of the—of the information, a different conclusion would be drawn.

I remember the franking piece that came out from the New Democratic Party that I read that stated that our provincial budget was balanced, and yet the very same party published the budget documents, and the bottom line stated very clearly that this province was going more than \$800 million into debt through that particular budget. So how can anyone, anyone, state that the budget is balanced when, in fact, you are running an \$800-million deficit? That is false information being placed in the voters' hands, and this New Democratic Party wants to say that they are lily-white and do not—do not skew the truth or—

An Honourable Member: At taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Faurichou: —at taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Speaker, or Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate that all of us in this House want to do the best that we possibly can for the constituents which we are responsible for, but I believe it serves no one's purposes to fleece the pockets of those constituents so that members in this Chamber have the opportunity to run for re-election, and it's incumbent upon ourselves to stand on our own two feet, and that is maybe a little of a foreign position to members of the New Democratic Party, because they always, always come to this Chamber looking to the taxpayer to pay for something else.

And this particular government looks to other provinces with the tin cup so that they continue with programs rather than building this province's economy so that we can effectively stand on our own two feet and proudly become a have province. They'd rather us maintain our current status of a have-not province and each and every year go with their tin cup to other provinces who have, indeed, done what is necessary to make their economy what it is today and to stand on their own two feet.

* (10:30)

And this government, and some of the accounting practices, I really, truly encourage

members opposite to stand as the previous administration stood in this House and said, we will get to the bottom, and they did call a public inquiry. Why does this government not want to do exactly the same? Are they afraid of—that something else might be uncovered? In fact, the Premier (Mr. Doer) himself stood in this House and said that this was common practice that had taken place in years past. Well, they got caught in 2003. How many years in past practice did they not get caught? We need to have a public inquiry. We need to investigate how many tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars float to the New Democratic Party falsely.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we need this piece of legislation to pass today because it does not provide for a level playing field in the political arena of this province, and everyone in this House, all parties that are represented in this House, have stated that they will not take the—this particular taxpayers' money.

And I find it very, very, very curious, in the own—in my own election campaign and the monies that I raised, when compared to the New Democratic Party candidate that ran against me, that, by my own personal records, had more signs, had more documentation placed in the mailboxes, had more radio air time than myself—all documented—and yet when I raised more than \$17,000, I was outspent by a candidate that declared that he only raised \$300–\$300. Where did the rest of that money come from that paid for all the signs, all the literature and all of the media coverage? I find it very, very curious, and I'd like to get to the bottom of it and I hope that this government is honourable enough to call a public inquiry into the electioneering finances of their party in past years.

And this legislation before us today, I believe, has the unanimous support of the House because the practice that has been adopted by all parties, indeed, speaks in favour of this legislation. So let's pass this legislation on at committee and let the public have their opportunity to air what they feel about the vote tax here in the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Madam Acting Speaker, it's my pleasure to take some time today to talk a bit about election reform and what the point of election reform is. I feel that might have just gotten a bit lost so far in the debate.

Any election reform, any attempt to change election laws, I think the point of that has to be to ensure fairness and to ensure equality in our electoral system. And I think if you look back at some of the

changes that we have made as a government, like banning union and corporate donations, like bringing forward extended public financing for parties, that's exactly what those changes have been about.

And so I want to be very clear that the principle that underlies those changes is the principle that elections should be fought on ideas. They should be fought about who has the best plan for Manitoba and they should be fought with the resources of ordinary Manitobans. They should be fought with those volunteers who come out to make the phone calls, who pound in our signs, who go door-to-door on our behalf; that is who should be fuelling the election campaigns that we all run.

And I think it's important to be very clear that the kind of changes that are advocated by the side opposite are not—as the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) has said about returning to grass-roots democracy, they are very much about returning this province to a time when big money ruled who got to be in power. And I understand that they want to return to that time because they did very well by that kind of system. But times have changed, and now in this province ordinary Manitobans do get to have a say in who represents them in this House.

We look at what some experts have had to say about the changes in election law, not the members opposite, but some people that have some expertise in this field. Let's look at Robert McDermott, a professor of political science at York University, who said: this is the history of public finance for parties. Time and time again in polls going back to the early '90s, when the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing looked at this issue, Canadians have always said that they support public financing.

I can speculate that they think it's a way of ensuring fairness so that the richest party doesn't always dominate the circus, which is a pretty persuasive argument and I would agree with that. And it's interesting to hear now that the members opposite think that the public financing that they all received after the last election is fair, is something that we should maintain, because in 1983 their predecessors called that kind of public financing immoral, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, and now they've all received it.

And let's look at what they received after the last election. As a whole, the other side took in more than \$1 million in taxpayer money as rebates for the election and I don't quibble with that. I think that that

is part of ensuring a fair democracy. We also receive those rebates but we don't today stand in our places and decry the spending of taxpayers' money on ensuring democracy. There's a word when you stand in your place and say one thing and do something else. I'm not gonna say that word 'cause it would be unparliamentary, but I think we all know what that word is.

So let's take a look, sort of member by member, but where that million dollars went. Well, the member for Fort Whyte, who's brought forward this legislation, received \$10,182 in a rebate after the last election. By his election return, that is true.

The member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) received \$14,299 after the last election. And let's go back to 2003 and see what the member for Brandon West had to say about public financing. I know that the caucus listens very attentively on the other side whenever the member for Brandon West speaks, so I wanna give them the benefit of his words when he was a member of Parliament. This is what he said. He said—he argued that a lack of public financing, in fact, creates a democratic deficit.

Now, they may not want to listen to experts, they may not wanna listen to us, but they should listen to their own members. This is what the member for Brandon West said in the House of Commons in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: In Manitoba there's a piece of legislation that has in fact banned all corporate and union donations, labour donations; however, they do not have a public financing component. As a matter of fact, I would suggest, sir, that there is now a democratic deficit with that piece of legislation being put into place in Manitoba.

And so we have tried to correct some of that deficit. It's too bad that the member for Brandon West has changed his tune but we have tried to correct some of that.

I also want to speak for a moment about what is being used with taxpayer money from the other caucus. And we did hear a bit from the previous speakers about the mailings that they have engaged in and I have some of them with me and I'd be pleased to talk about them.

We have the member from Carman who received \$5,035 after the last election, a bargain, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, and I look forward to his—to his lecture on how to run a frugal election campaign.

He sent out—*[interjection]* Yes, and worth every penny, every penny of that \$5,000, may I say, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker.

He sent out a taxpayer-funded mailing. I don't think that he had a tag day to pay for the stamps for this mailing. I think that this was paid for by taxpayers. He sent out a taxpayer-funded mailing to say what, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker? To say we're not taking taxpayer-funded, political, partisan money.

Now that—I can't imagine the nausea that it might create to have that kind of illogical inconsistency in one's own practice, to send out a mailing saying we're not taking taxpayer money, that's funded by taxpayer money, but that is a—that is exactly the kind of inconsistency that we've come to expect from the opposite side.

I also have here a mailing by the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), that he has chosen on this mailing to put his own face, and it is a handsome face I have to say. It's a very good picture of you. It could make a girl change her mind, that kind of picture, and in this mailing he says there should be no place for taxpayer rip-offs and unfair elections in Manitoba, and I would agree with him. I think that in 1999 those were some of the reasons why the government changed. People reacted to the taxpayer rip-off of selling the MTS system, selling the telephone system without campaigning on it, without any consent from the people that owned it. People reacted in that 1999 election to the kind of vote-rigging scheme that we saw in 1995, which I think was a low mark in our democracy.

So I can't say I agree with everything in his mailing, but I do agree certainly with that statement.

* (10:40)

I also want to comment for a moment on some of the overheated rhetoric that we've heard around this debate. I think it's fine to have a debate about what is the place for public money in ensuring democracy. I think that's a reasonable debate to have, and I think we do have very different ideas and philosophies in this Chamber on that. What I think has been very troubling about this debate has been the way that members opposite have suggested to voters that it is now going to cost them money to go and exercise their right to vote, and I think that is not only shameful from people who should be upholding democracy to disenfranchise people who are the most vulnerable but is something they should think

very seriously about how it reflects on their own integrity to go into by-elections in places like The Pas and suggest to people, who are vulnerable, who do not have a lot of income or money, that it's going to cost them \$5 before they go and vote is not only dishonest, but it is shameful that anyone who purports to uphold democracy would go and spread that kind of dishonest statement in a by-election, and I think they will be held account for that kind of behaviour.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. I just want to remind all members that all members in this Chamber are honourable members and that we need to keep our comments reflective of that. Thank you.

Ms. Howard: Thank you, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. I also want to take on this statement that somehow this public financing means that we're supporting—we're making people support parties they don't support. This is patently false—this is patently false. If I go and vote for the party of my choice, if I vote for the NDP, that vote counts for a certain portion in public financing. It doesn't count for public financing for a party I don't support; it counts for the public financing for the party that I voted for. That's why federally, that's why in all other systems of public financing, you take the amount of votes and you make public financing proportionate on that. So it does indeed reflect the amount of votes and support that you have in public financing.

So you want to have a debate about this topic, you want to debate public financing, let's debate it, but let's debate it honestly and let's debate it with integrity. Let's not debate it on the basis of things that are not honest and things that are damaging to our democracy.

Thank you, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Before recognizing the honourable member for Morris, I just want to remind all members that this is an issue that is passionate and closely held by many of the members in this Chamber, but that we need to keep our words in mind as we do our debates. Thank you.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Well, thank you very much, and I'm pleased to speak to Bill 231, The Elections Finances Amendment Act, which abolishes the vote tax which the NDP party so wants to impose on the taxpayers of the province. And just listening to the debate today, it certainly struck a nerve, hasn't it, over there. Both the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) and the member for Fort Rouge

(Ms. Howard) are shaking. They're quaking when they speak, they're so worked up about this, and the reason why they're so worked up about this, because they know, they know that they need that money because, you know, they're unable to go out there and raise money the way other political parties have done.

What they're trying to do here is put a tax of \$1.25 per vote per year, so in every election they're trying to rake in a million dollars from the public in Manitoba that really does not want to have to pay the tax that these people say they must pay. Whatever happened—if you want to talk about democracy, let's talk about freedom of choice. I don't choose to have my taxpayer dollar do—I'll choose where my taxpayer dollar goes to, thank you very much. I am tired of this Big Brother government trying to make decisions for me and for every other person in this province. What about freedom of choice? Everybody can choose how they want to contribute. If they want to contribute to a political party, they can. They can have the choice. But why should it be mandated by government that you must contribute to a political party?

And, you know, this government talks about, oh, the big money and the lobbyists and the big Conservative Party. Well, let's talk about how much the unions donated in advertising in the last election campaign. Let's talk about that. Oh, yes, let's talk about the unions and all that lead-up in the political advertising. It's just a little bit non-transparent, isn't it? Ah, see, we struck another nerve over there. They start chirping away whenever it gets a little too close.

You know, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) is crying about something that happened in 1995. Well, at that point, we had a Premier in this province who was committed to finding out what happened. He had the courage to call a public inquiry, a public inquiry. There's not a person on that side of the House that has the courage. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has gotten out while the getting's good, and there needs to be a public inquiry as to why the NDP quietly had to pay back \$76,000 quietly, which deemed by Election Manitoba, that they collected in an illegal manner, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We need to get to the bottom of that. Falsifying election returns, the common denominator in all that, who was it? The Minister of Justice. The common denominator in all of that falsifying election returns. There's a lot more to that scandal, Madam Deputy

Speaker, and there needs to be a public inquiry, and I cannot know why anybody in that party will not stand up and say, if you wanna talk about democracy, and if you wanna get to the bottom of something, why isn't there a public inquiry called in this election return scandal that we see before us today?

They don't wanna talk about that, and the member from Fort Rouge talks about all the members on our side of the House, who by the election rules—everybody is governed by the same rules, and we do—we do get some money back from the campaigns. That's just the rules that we all work under. And she wants to point fingers at this side of the House, but she doesn't point fingers to her side of the House. And if you wanna talk about the member from Gimli, whose return was the highest of anyone's, but she doesn't mention that at all, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, this party is the party that spends thousands of dollars. They are the epitome, the epitome of political partisan spin when it comes to their mailings and their press releases. In fact, they spend thousands of dollars on spinners whose job it is just to be the social engineers of the NDP government to dupe the public into believing every piece of garbage they put out there to the public.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order.

I would just like to, once again, caution members about their choice of language, as they are doing their public debate, which is going on record in *Hansard*.

Mrs. Taillieu: So I will talk about the ultimate waste of refuse that goes out to the public from the NDP and their political spin doctors. And the problem here—the problem here is we don't believe that the public will support a vote tax. It's just another tax grab.

This party did not go to the polls saying, when we get elected, we're going to take \$250,000 a year from you, a million dollars over the—over the next four years, so vote for us. We didn't see that on your election campaign material, did we?

And then they get elected, and then what do they do? They come back in and they say, oh, well, we're going to put a vote tax on everybody, we're just gonna bring in some more money, because, you know what? You know what happened? The Conservative Party out-fundraised the NDP party.

We out-fundraised, and we did it by volunteer contributions; we didn't go and tell people they had to give us the money like they want to do.

* (10:50)

We did it by our own accord because we went to the people and they said, we believe in you so we will give you some funds for your campaigns. And we don't have to go and say, we demand it from you. In fact, we not only demand it, we legislate it. We make sure that you have to pay it to us, and the reason for that is because we out-fundraised you and you're running scared.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, let's talk about that. Let's talk about the \$76,000 that was quietly repaid because it was collected from the citizens, the taxpayers of Manitoba, by falsifying election returns so that that money could funnel into the NDP party. And we also know that this didn't happen one year, it happened every year, every year. So the only way we can find out how much money the NDP siphoned from the unsuspecting taxpayers of Manitoba—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. Order. I just once again—I just wanted to once again put on the record for members who are speaking to this debate, which I totally and absolutely understand is passionate on each side of the House, that we need to be cautious of the words that we choose in doing the debate. Thank you.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I'm just trying to impress upon the House today that the NDP, every year, every year, they got caught, they got caught and quietly had to pay back \$76,000. But every year—they've been doing the same thing every year. How far back does it go? We'll only find out if the courage—if there's courage by the Premier (Mr. Doer) before he leaves his office to call a public inquiry, or will he just get out while the getting's good and leave it to the next person?

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's very important that we put the facts on the records here, we put the facts on the record. The biggest problem with this is that it violates my freedom, my freedom of choice. I want to choose where I make my political donations or any donations for that matter. I do not want the government collecting all the money and then Big Brother deciding where the money's going, particularly if it's going to their own pockets. Thank you very much.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): It's an interesting privilege to put some words and some thoughts on the records after having listened to various members of the House speak about this issue and this particular bill, especially those who seem that volume somehow equals credibility. And we know that that's not necessarily the case.

I do find it rather amusing with the various dollar values being thrown around and the rather, I guess you'd say soft philosophical posturing that's going on, again, where volume is used to accommodate for lack of credibility, because there's a basic misunderstanding of the financial aspect of this.

The member from Headingley just spoke of the aspect of choice and where her tax dollars are going. Well I'm sure she pays at least more than \$1.25 a year in taxes, so when her taxes get paid, whoever she votes for, that \$1.25 will go to the party of her choice and really—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. Order. All members are called by their constituency.

Ms. Blady: I said the member from Headingley.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): It's the honourable member for Morris.

Ms. Blady: My apologies.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Thank you.

Ms. Blady: Yes. Morris. Sorry.

And, anyways, what I really find amusing here is, again, the lack of understanding that it is your tax dollars that will pay for your vote.

And for a lot of Manitobans who don't have the financial ability to donate to a party, this is actually politically empowering because they know that it's not costing them to vote, but that, in fact, every time that they vote, they are not just supporting the party that they believe will do things correctly, but they are able to make, in a sense, a contribution that they cannot do as the wealthy do to political parties. So that is their small financial contribution coming out of their tax dollars. So this is empowering. This means that those people that cannot make donations to political parties have their voices heard.

And, as my colleague from Fort Whyte mentioned, that to go into communities and buy elections and tell people that it is going to cost them to vote is, again, very disingenuous. And I also,

again, find a certain contradiction when dollar values are mentioned because I would like to submit some documentation.

Madam Acting Speaker, we had the honourable member from Portage la Prairie reference the mail-outs from this side of the House but was not able to submit any documentation. I would like to submit copies of mailings that have gone out from the Progressive Conservative caucus and various MLAs, and what's interesting about that is that those mailers have been going into ridings that these members opposite do not represent, and if each of these mailers costs about 60 cents, and I know I have a constituent who has told me that he personally has received three of these, so \$1.80 alone to his household, times 9,000 constituents, equals \$5,400 per mailing, totalling \$16,200 that—of taxpayers' money that has been spent by the Progressive Conservative caucus to mail into my riding.

I can assure you—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order.

Ms. Blady: —that the constituents of Kirkfield Park do not appreciate that money, their taxpayers' money being sent—spent. And you know what's interesting about that? That's \$1.80 per taxpayer, \$1.80 that the Progressive Conservatives spent of their tax money without their permission. These people did not vote for you so you talk about vote tax. When people vote under this kind of public financing—

Some Honourable Members: Louder, louder.

Ms. Blady: Well, maybe if the ruckus on the other side was—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. Order.

Ms. Blady: We kept quiet while members opposite railed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order, if I could just have order in the House, please. Prior to recognizing the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), I would—I would just like to remind all honourable members that I am required to make a ruling in this House in regards to the decorum, in regards to what is said, and how it is said, so I just would ask all honourable members, when there is an individual who's up and who's speaking, if it's possible if we could give that individual some attention. There is loge that people can use if they wish to retire to the loge.

Point of Order

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): The honourable member for River East, are you up on a point of order?

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Yes, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): The honourable member for River East, on a point of order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Acting Speaker, I know that when the member that is speaking right now stood up initially, she talked about volume, and I would just like maybe you—through you to remind her but that volume doesn't necessarily mean substance, and I think her volume had accelerated to a point that was somewhat unacceptable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Seeing no other honourable members who wish to speak to this point of order, I must rule that your point of order is not a point of order but that I have just mentioned to honourable members in the House that there is a loge if they wish to retire to such—excuse me, to have private conversations.

* * *

Ms. Blady: Yes, it is again quite ironic because we had a member opposite at top volume when no one else in the House was speaking, so I was merely speaking to be heard. So I will continue.

As I said, my constituents are probably not thrilled about the \$16,200 of their taxpayers' money that was spent, you know, mailing into my community, a community that they no longer represent after the—and you know, when you take that into consideration that it's not just my constituency that they've been wasting taxpayers' money by mailing into, but you even just ballpark it at another 10. You're looking at a \$162,000 of taxpayers' money that has been spent by the Progressive Conservative caucus to mail into ridings that are not their own.

Now I do not mail into the constituency of Charleswood or Morris. I use my money to represent my constituents and to inform them of what is going on in this government and it is a non-partisan mailer—

* (11:00)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. Order. The time being 11 o'clock, the honourable member will have three minutes remaining when this matter is again before the House.

The House will now consider the proposed motion of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 19—Supporting a Foreign Trade Zone at CentrePort Canada

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to move a resolution here supporting a foreign trade zone at CentrePort Canada, and I would move, seconded by the member from Lakeside, and I would like to read the private member's resolution as follows:

WHEREAS the Progressive Conservative caucus is a long-time supporter of the formation of an inland port; and

WHEREAS CentrePort provides much potential for numerous economic benefits for Manitoba businesses and can position Manitoba as a global trade leader; and

WHEREAS an inland port's long-term viability is based on its ability to facilitate and encourage trade between jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS Manitoba is a trading province and has developed strong economic ties with many countries, especially the United States; and

WHEREAS Manitoba is strategically positioned to help facilitate global trade and is positioned well within North American transport corridors; and

WHEREAS the North American Mid-Continent Corridor and the Asia Pacific Gateway are becoming increasingly important trade corridors in supply systems; and

WHEREAS many established inland ports in the North American Mid-Continent Corridor such as Kansas City offer foreign trade zones; and

WHEREAS many companies, when choosing where to locate, will analyze the geographic position and incentives offered by a jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS foreign trade zones help to facilitate international trade and increase the competitive advantage of an inland port; and

WHEREAS foreign trade zones can increase the manufacturing viability of a jurisdiction increasing economic activity and jobs.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the

provincial government to support the establishment of a foreign trade zone at CentrePort Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): It has been moved by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Dispense.

Mr. Maguire: Madam Deputy Speaker, and it's my privilege to be able to speak to this motion today, to this resolution. I think that this is probably one of the most important aspects of the development of CentrePort Canada and the development of the future of Manitoba, with Winnipeg and CentrePort being in the hub of that prosperity or future potential for prosperity.

And, before I go further, I'd just like to say, as well, that I have had an opportunity this morning to congratulate the Deputy Minister of Finance myself in regards to her appointment as the new president and chief executive officer of CentrePort Canada, effective in early November. And so her experience, that is, of course, Diane Gray, the Deputy Minister of Federal-Provincial and International Relations and Trade for the province of Manitoba, as well as Deputy Minister of Finance.

I know that there'll be a void left in the bureaucracy when Diane leaves, but I do know that she has had great experience in regards to the helping with the development of CentrePort and its—to get it to this point. And I enjoyed the opportunity of working with the government, in fact, making sure that the bill went through last fall about—just about 10 months ago, to make sure that CentrePort's development was expedited and that the board was put in place. And it's been some time that we've awaited the announcement of the CEO, but certainly want to recognize and congratulate Mrs. Gray on regards to her appointment by the CentrePort board of directors.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Manitoba has many natural trade and transportation advantages due to their central location in the continent, and I've spoken on this and had the opportunity to speak to it in a number of occasions in this House. The federal government's commitment to CentrePort represents an opportunity for Manitoba to capitalize on our central location and broad transportation network.

And that is, of course, as I've pointed out earlier, because we are centrally located in Canada,

east-west, but also I mentioned the Asia-Pacific corridor in the actual resolution, and the mid-continent corridor, but there's also the Atlantic corridor, Madam Deputy Speaker. And it's just as important to recognize that we are the centre of moving goods and services through this province because of the culmination of railroads in this region, CN and CP, but also Burlington Northern. We've got No. 1, and the confluence of No. 1 and 16 highways, basically, coming through here, as well as 75, as a major trade route south. And we cannot forget the Port of Churchill, because it is a viable and integral part of the whole aspect of foreign trade zones being established here in Manitoba, and there are other cities vying for this opportunity in western Canada and throughout North America. And I believe that we have that natural advantage, but can never take that for granted.

And I urge the government, and that's why I'm urging the government today to support the establishment of a foreign trade zone at CentrePort Canada here in Winnipeg. And that location has been designated in the act as a 20,000 acres of land in the City of Winnipeg's jurisdiction, as well as the R.M. of Rosser, and I know the R.M. of Rosser makes up the largest amount of that area, but the immediate area around the James Richardson International Airport is where the immediate development is taking place, although the federal government and the Province have teamed together to put over \$200 million into the development of the highway leading into and through CentrePort development from Inkster Boulevard and moving right out to the Perimeter Highway. And we need to make sure that we look at all of the trade routes in the future and develop further economic opportunities in both the development of the Perimeter Highway. And, of course, the federal government made it possible for the announcement, the other day, of Kenaston to be joined to the Perimeter Highway as well. But we need to make sure that we look at the level barriers that will be in place in those and make sure that trade is enhanced by—you know, at one time we had the only blockage right in the city of Winnipeg between here and Mexico, the longest stoppage one before we put the underpass under the railroad track at Kenaston. And so I encourage the government to continue to look at those areas.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think the most important part of this is that our Progressive Conservative caucus has supported the concept of an inland port in Manitoba, and CentrePort Canada, and

I've made reference as to how we made sure that this moved forward. But I think there is some issues lacking, and that is that the government needs to look at a foreign trade zone, in this, in conjunction with CentrePort. The Province needs to be advocating for the establishment of that foreign trade zone, and I know, with Ms. Gray's experience, that she will understand very clearly the importance of having a foreign trade zone in place to enhance the opportunities for business to locate here.

I'd just like to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a foreign trade zone is an area where duties or tariffs or taxes are either deferred or eliminated until they leave that zone. And, although Canada—we do have a series of programs in Canada, and I have a list of them here that I'm not going to go through today because of time, but I think that we are the only G-8 country, according to the Canadian Airports Council that does not yet employ a single, true foreign trade zone program. And I'm encouraged that the federal government is looking at amendments and changes to help encourage these types of areas in Canada.

And, of course, I think that this would enhance, then, other companies that look at Manitoba as an opportunity to invest and facilitate international trade and provide tremendous economic spin-offs for the future of Manitoba. It's been mentioned that this could be the development of tens of thousands of jobs, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think it's incumbent upon all of us in government to make sure that we look at what we can do to establish infrastructure development around this type of a port so that private companies, or in public-private partnerships, will be able to come forward and establish more opportunities in those areas, as the government is doing in some other projects already.

*(11:10)

And so I think that we need to—we need to encourage this government, particularly here in Manitoba, the NDP government, to encourage this. And I'll say why, Madam Deputy Speaker, because in spite of all these natural advantages that we have, I'm concerned as to whether they will be enough to overcome what this government has in place and hasn't changed, and I'm just going to list a few: highest personal income taxes west of Québec. We've still got the payroll tax in Manitoba on these companies coming into Manitoba. We've got the largest debt in Manitoba's history. We're still a crime capital in some areas, and I think that these are all things that we need to take into consideration and do

everything that we can to make sure we enhance the opportunity of companies to come here. And a foreign trade zone would certainly be one of those areas to provide a greater competitive advantage for us here in Manitoba.

I had the opportunity this summer of being in the United States, and the Midwest legislators' forum, and took the opportunity to speak with some of the people that are in economic development in the city of Kansas City and state of Kansas City in regards to the development of their areas. Mr. Bob Marcusse, is the executive director of the economic development area in Kansas City and has dealt with their—with their equivalent of CentrePort development there. And there are a number of other areas in the United States, hundreds, actually, that have foreign trade zones in the United States or the equivalent. And while theirs is established in a little different venue, not being in one location as, as—I said, it takes in a 52-city area, but most of it is right around the city of Kansas—the area of, and in the core of the city of Kansas City and the neighbouring state of Missouri, and it has enhanced that. They have brought thousands of smaller and some larger companies to the state and to the city in their development because they have the opportunity here to defer some of these taxes until the projects that they have, whether it's warehousing, manufacturing—one, as an example, is just bringing motors in and putting them in to tractors, Madam Deputy Speaker. And it's a great business opportunity, and we have a great opportunity to enhance those types of opportunities here in Manitoba.

We are the central part of Canada. As I've said, these corridors are established. We are the largest trading partner to 37 of the 50 states in the United States to the south of us, and all 11 of the Midwest legislators forum states that know how important the trade is with us. We have a joint agreement with the city of Kansas City to enhance development of opportunities and trade with each other, and, I think, it's just an excellent opportunity. To enhance that opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker, we export 8.4 billion in 2007, representing 71 percent of all exports from our province to the United States.

And so I think that this is just an example of the importance of the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. Order. The honourable times—the honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to make a few—put a few comments on the record, and I really thank you for the opportunity to speak on this private member's resolution.

Foreign trade zones have been a discussion for a long time in North America and elsewhere, but just to talk a little bit about CentrePort and the value of this is CentrePort. Our government has been talking about an inland port now for a number of years. There was an attempt at an inland port by the previous Conservative government in the 1990s that just fell flat and just became a huge flop and a bit of an embarrassment. But the reason it did—the reason it did is because it was just a really an air connection route between China and Winnipeg or between Winnipeg and China, and this is far different. CentrePort Canada is far different than what the attempt by the previous Conservative government of the 1990s was.

This has a great opportunity. CentrePort is a great opportunity to be successful for many reasons, not only do you have business and chambers of commerce supporting it, but you also have organized labour. You have the three levels of government: the City, the municipal governments, as well as the Province and federal government being on board with regard to supporting CentrePort Canada and our inland port initiative.

The Prime Minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) made, I believe it was around \$212-million announcement a short time ago with regard to CentrePort and its initiatives. CentrePort Way, a new roadway will be built in and a couple of interchanges there will take place.

But, primarily, we—why is CentrePort so important not only to us but also to many businesses? We're very fortunate to have—which already exist, quite frankly—intercontinental rail lines: CN, CP, Burlington Northern Santa Fe connect to Manitoba and, of course, we have all that trade coming from the port of Vancouver, as well as Prince Rupert coming through Winnipeg.

And we have been recognized as the centre and we also are recognized as a hub for transportation. Our history has been transportation and trade. At one time, we were the gateway to western Canada. Now we are going to be the gateway to the world and the gateway to North America, and we're very proud of that fact.

And the Premier, the Ambassador-designate, has been a real, true champion with regard to this file, but also I have to say that, going back to the 1990s when our government was in opposition, the MLA for Transcona was a true champion of this and saw the real vision of what an inland port could be. He was the critic at the time for Transportation, and I would be—I would be—it would be remiss without my pointing this out, that he has been a champion many, many years ago. And when we became government in 1999, part and parcel of our 2020 vision was also to enhance trade and how do you make transportation an economic enabler and be able to use transportation to also enhance trade.

As was mentioned, Diane Gray will be sorely missed. Diane Gray, it will be made official this afternoon at the airport, will become the champion for CentrePort Canada. The new CEO, she has the passion, she has the ability, the knowledge to truly, and with all her connections, to really make a difference on where this port will go in years to come.

The opposition—I don't want to be—well, I should be careful in what I say. I'll just say they've been Johnny-come-latelies with regard to supporting this, but I do have to—I have to say, we do appreciate, you know, their activity to try to make sure that we pass this. But, you know, the business community and many others have been supportive of it. It would be really political suicide for the opposition to be opposing such initiative when everyone in the province wants to move ahead on this. So maybe I'll just leave my comments at that.

But let me just raise another issue that the opposition—I'm not sure where they're coming from, quite frankly, with regard to tax increment financing—and what we're talking about also is foreign trade zones. But tax increment financing is another tool that Bill No. 4, which minister from—of Intergovernmental Affairs, the MLA for Thompson, has introduced and I believe it's in second reading now, but tax increment financing is a bill that at the request of the City of Winnipeg, Brandon, CentreVenture, they're asking the Province to introduce tax increment financing legislation as an important component in the development of an inland port. You need monies to be able to develop this port. It's 20,000 acres of land and you have to have a way to be able to move forward on community redevelopment and all kinds of initiatives, including many that the City of Winnipeg wants to do.

So, for nearly a year, the opposition have blocked this legislation one way or another. It's an important piece of legislation to really be put in place, to be putting monies towards the development of this port.

As I mentioned, later today Mr. Kerry Hawkins, who is the chair of the board of CentrePort, will be certainly present, as I will, to introduce Diane Gray as the new chair, and the Province of Manitoba strongly—

An Honourable Member: CEO.

Mr. Lemieux: Or sorry, CEO of CentrePort—and the Province of Manitoba strongly supports the creation of a foreign trade zone for CentrePort Canada.

Foreign trade zones are not tax-free zones, but are geographic zones where goods can be stored, manufactured, processed and re-exported. Duties and taxes are paid only when the goods leave the foreign trade zone for consumption within Canada. So, in collaboration with CentrePort, we are in active discussions with the federal government on how to improve access and comparability of the federal government foreign-trade-zone-like programs.

So I'd like to thank the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for his ongoing interest, quite frankly, in supporting CentrePort. As I mentioned, they took a shot at it in the '90s and it flopped and fell apart because they weren't able to bring together the parties that were necessary to make this initiative go ahead, and it really—it was focussed on just one area primarily, in transportation, one mode.

* (11:20)

This government has been working closely with rail, trucking companies and, indeed, even marine, using the Port of Churchill as an important gateway to the United States.

Many meetings have taken place with regard to the Russians and to, with regard to Churchill, but with Russians and Russian companies and China and India and many other countries that would want to access Churchill to be able to bring their goods into North America. And we see that CentrePort is a, is a huge important initiative to be able to improve the, not only the well-being of Manitoba but, indeed, Canada and so, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to say that, aside from making comments on Winnport, and how the opposition at that time trumpeted out a number of press releases as a

solution developing Manitoba as an inland port fell flat on its face, and this initiative is truly different.

So I know there's other speakers that wish to speak to this and talk about foreign trade zones. I tried to briefly just show, at least state the difference between them but I just want to conclude by saying, I want to see where the opposition stands on tax increment financing, on that bill, which is a bill really geared to put investment and help investment in CentrePort. That's a true initiative that, and a piece of the puzzle that is important to CentrePort, as foreign trade zones are, as well.

So, with that, I just want to conclude by saying that there are a number of different initiatives that are important to CentrePort, tax increment financing is one of them, free trade zones are another, and we look forward to seeing where the opposition stand on those kinds of issues that will also indeed support, indeed support CentrePort Canada. Thank you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Thank you. I do have a few things I want to put on the record in regards to the, this particular resolution brought forward by the member from Arthur-Virden, but I'm not gonna waste my 10 minutes arguing about whether Winnport was a success because of the government changing the name to CentrePort. I'm not gonna go that way, but I do want to put some things in the record regards what is very important to this particular resolution, and it has to do with a large part of my area which is in Lakeside and that has to deal with Rosser and the benefits that's gonna come as a result, not only to my constituency, but the province as a whole and Canada as a whole.

I did have an opportunity to tour the trade zone in Kansas City of which Bayer has an operation there and they have a, the division of crop science, and I can assure you that I was very impressed with that particular business and the way they ran things. And I know they have some problems, and one of those in regards to the foreign trade zone was to deal with customs. And they had trouble getting officers in to—from Mexico to do the compliance checks in order to make sure those checks and balances were in fact in place, and so they made a deal with the Mexico government in order to ensure those officers would come on a rotating basis.

So we have a lot to learn from our counterparts to the south, which is one of our largest trading partners, and I know the minister talked about business out of Russia and those other countries which is also very important to us. And this

resolution is just as the minister said, and the member from Arthur-Virden, a next step of which we need to make sure that we do take very seriously.

There's another—there's another piece to the puzzle that I want to put on the record, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that's to do with Alliance Texas, and this is a 17,000-acre alliance development that is unparalleled in its vision of a dynamic and diverse community. The project's foundation is Alliance's global logistics hub, offering inland port transportation facilities via BNSF Railway's alliance international facility, two class II one railways with the world's first 100 percent industrial outport and connecting state and interstate highways, stemming from a strong commercial base of corporate campuses, offices, complexes, tech and data centres, designation retail and entertainment venues, residential housing, schools, churches, community shopping. In total, the development encompasses more than 29 million square feet, over 200 corporate residents, 28,000-plus employees and more than 71,000 single family homes.

This is what we're talking about by creating not only CentrePort, but making sure that it does become a foreign trade zone; the economic benefits goes along with this, hand in hand, and we certainly advocating very strongly that—and we know the federal government is onside with us, and we need to make sure that we take it to the next step to ensure that this, in fact, does happen.

Out of the 17,000 acres, I think this is also important to be read in the record, there is 9,600 acres at Alliance that are designated as a foreign trade zone, No. 196, which provides benefits to global companies that are simply not available through any other legal mechanism. Hillwood guides companies throughout the foreign trade zone process, from education to implementation of operation.

The following are the 10 most significant foreign trade zone benefits: improve cash flow, which means hold merchandise in inventory; transfer it to another foreign trade zone, export it or destroy it without paying U.S. custom duties until the imported merchandise has been shipped to a U.S. custom territory. Also reduces inventory tax. Tangible personal property held in foreign trade zone status is not subject to state and local taxes. Also weekly custom entries, reduce paperwork and expense. Companies may consolidate multiple custom entries

into one per week, reducing custom brokerage fees and merchandise processing fees. Exports. Exporting from a foreign trade zone eliminates U.S. custom duties on exported merchandise. "Inverted" U.S. customs and duty savings. Elect to pay the duty rate applicable to either component materials or finished product produced from the component material, whichever is lower. The reduction or elimination of U.S. custom duties is significant. Waste, scrap, damage. Reduce, eliminate U.S. customs on merchandise subject to these account losses. Non-dutiable labour, overhead and profit. Eliminate delays on U.S. custom duties on labour, overhead and profit from production in a foreign trade zone. If the same production operation occurred outside the United States, in this particular case, the value of labour, overhead and profit will be subject to U.S. Customs duty only. And reduce the chain time, supply chain line. Eliminate delays related to U.S. custom clearances. Special direct delivery procedures expedite the receipt of merchandise in company facilities, reducing inventory cycle time. U.S. quota management, which we see an awful lot of now, and it's called just-in-time delivery, and this has to do with most merchandise may be held in a foreign trade zone, even if it is subject to U.S. quota restrictions. When a quota opens, the merchandise will be immediately shipped into the U.S. custom territory. Voluntary restraint or orderly marketing agreements are not subject—or not impacted by the foreign trade zone use. Insurance cost, and this is something that we've noticed at a personal level for everybody in this Chamber and all members of the province of Manitoba, is the insurance value of merchandise held in a foreign trade zone need not include U.S. custom duty payable on the merchandise. Cargo insurance rates should be reduced.

So this has significant impact on each and every one of us in regards to insurance and cost of that particular product so that we're ensured that we're getting the best possible deal that we possibly can when we are buying these goods that we import, that we trade back and forth between one country and the other.

Here's some other facts I think that are very important. I already mentioned the 17,000 acres. The economic impact between 1990 and 2001, \$33.8 million; economic impact for year 2007, \$2.52 billion; total public and private investment between 1990 and 2007, \$6 trillion; private

investment, \$6.5 trillion; public investment, \$376 million; jobs directed as—direct jobs created as of July 1, 2009, 28,300; direct jobs, construction jobs created, 31,355; indirect jobs created, 68,165; number of companies as of July 1st, 200; Fortune 500, Global 500, Forbes top five private companies, 65; number of international companies, 14; single-family homes as I talked about earlier, 7,154; apartments, 288; hotel rooms, 200.

* (11:30)

And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look at what this can do and will do for the overall benefit of Manitobans, the overall benefit of Canadians is significant.

And I know the minister tried to throw some mud here in regards to some of the initiatives that had been brought forward. And I can assure you that we, on this side of the House, are working very, very hard and to ensure that everything possible is being done to move CentrePort forward.

And I know that every time we try to get information on some of this stuff, it seems to be a big dark secret. This is about working together. This is about working in harmonization to ensure that CentrePort does, in fact, become the reality. Yes, we made some mistakes in the past. You can call it whatever you want to call it, whether it's a failed blunder. I called it an education process where we can learn from those mistakes; find out what we did right, what we did wrong. Do we make mistakes? Sure we do. Do you make mistakes? Sure you do. But let's work together and overcome some of these so we're able to work in ways and means of ensuring that we don't make those mistakes again. And, in fact, we want to make sure that this does become a foreign trade zone.

So I'm very pleased to, as I say, to have seconded this particular resolution brought forward by the member from Arthur-Virden and look forward to the government's support in making sure this initiative to make it a foreign trade zone, in fact, does pass and takes it to the next step which is very important in this initiative. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Prior to recognizing the minister, I would like to recognize the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): In accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food Needs to Be Convened, sponsored by the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Thank you. It has been announced that the private members' resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food Needs to Be Convened, sponsored by the honourable member for Lakeside.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): It's a pleasure to put a few comments on the record today about the foreign trade zones at CentrePort Canada.

CentrePort Canada is a 20,000-acre inland port in Winnipeg and it will be anchored by the James A. Richardson International Airport which is the third busiest cargo airport hub in Canada. It will connect Manitoba's existing assets which include three intercontinental rail lines: CN, CP and Burlington Northern Santa Fe; over 1,000 for-hire trucking companies, and access to the Pacific gateway via the ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert; the Atlantic gateway via the port at Thunder Bay; and the Arctic gateway via the Port of Churchill.

This is, I believe, one of the most visionary projects that our government has implemented over the course of our last 10 years in government. It is very, very exciting and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Premier (Mr. Doer) for his vision. He worked with business leaders and other governments including the federal government, the City of Winnipeg, the R.M. of Rosser, labour leaders and others, to turn this incredible initiative into Canada's first inland port.

And I believe that this is something that we will be able to look back on years from now and we will realize that this is part of the legacy that our Premier has left here in Manitoba. I mean, there are many, many legacies that our Premier has left here in Manitoba, but this is certainly one that will stand out and, I think, we can all be proud of.

This is a major, major infrastructure project. It is a \$212-million project, and it is going to be a huge

benefit to our economy and to our province and to our nation. And I would really like to thank the federal government for their support of this very project. Also, in our last budget, the Province expanded our fuel-tax exemption for international cargo flights to include direct and indirect flights to the United States. And this is another component of something that we have done here in Manitoba that will assist this very, very innovative project.

Along with my colleague the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), I would like to compliment him as well on his, on managing this file and being part of this very visionary project. But I would also like to extend my congratulations to Diane Gray, who is going to be announced this afternoon as the new CEO of CentrePort. This is another feather in our cap here in Manitoba in regards to taking somebody who really has an incredible amount of expertise and putting her in a position where she is really going to be able to take charge and make this happen. She has incredible skills on the trade file.

Although we're very, very, very sad to lose her, we know that she will do well, and I'd like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to her for all of her hard work here in government over the last 14 years and extend our congratulations to her in her new job.

I just wanted to mention that I do believe it's a very exciting opportunity for Manitoba to create the foreign trade zones at CentrePort. They are zones that are geographic zones where goods can be stored, manufactured, processed and re-exported. Duties and taxes are paid only if the goods leave the foreign trade zone for consumption within Canada.

We are also in active discussions with the federal government because they have some programs as well, and I know that that is a very, very important part of this initiative, is to take—stay in touch with the federal government in regards to those foreign trade zones.

So I just—I know there's other people that would really like to speak today on this very, very important initiative that our government has worked on, and I would just like congratulate everyone who has been involved in this very, very exciting initiative. Thank you.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Madam Deputy Speaker, I also would like to put my support in for this resolution brought forward by the member for

Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), and like my colleagues throughout the House, I would also like to congratulate on the impending announcement this afternoon of Diane Gray as becoming the CEO of CentrePort.

And this is—CentrePort, as everyone knows, has been supported by all parties in this House. What this resolution speaks to, though, is the addition of a foreign trade zone to CentrePort, and it becomes very vital to make CentrePort really work to its potential. And CentrePort by itself is a good initiative, but it lacks the potential that we see could come from having a foreign trade zone included within the CentrePort.

And I noticed—I listened very intently to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), and not once did he reference foreign trade zone as being part of the CentrePort. He talked about many other things, but there was that lack of commitment towards pushing—towards a foreign trade zone. The Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) did say they're in consultations with the federal government, but I think passing this resolution would be a step towards the Province really initiating and making a foreign trade zone become a reality within CentrePort.

And we know that—it's not just the CentrePort, which will—while CentrePort will gain advantages from being there, having a free—foreign trade zone within it will not only allow merchandise to come in, and the duties, tariffs, taxes are either deferred or eliminated before it leaves the zone which helps in the—in the paper shuffle and helps in the movement of goods and services, it makes it become much more attractive to companies from outside Manitoba to set up shop here so that they can not only ship their products through here but perhaps even setting up manufacturing facilities as what, I believe it was the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), was mentioning about manufacturing and within a foreign trade zone.

* (11:40)

I think the concern that I see here is we know, going back, that many of the NDP party were vocal opponents of the free trade agreement when it first came in with the United States. Now, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has been very vocal in his support of free trade, but, and as the Minister of Labour alluded to, his visionaries of Manitoba and the CentrePort and amongst other things that was added by some other members, that the—what we're looking for now as the

NDP are in the midst of a leadership debate and they're going to decide on a new leader here in a month, and yet we're not hearing anything from the leadership candidates in terms of where they stand. We assume that they're, because their party is behind CentrePort that they will keep encouraging CentrePort to become a reality, but where do these candidates stand in terms of a foreign trade zone? And this, as we've said, is becomes very integral in the CentrePort operations.

And I want to also add that CentrePort has the potential and a foreign trade zone within there is, if there is manufacturing and if there's as much rail activity as what is being promised by both the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) and this government, that this has some spinoff benefits to us out in the country. Right now, in my constituency, we're in the midst of trying to save a rail line that's scheduled for abandonment. Perhaps somewhere down the road, if the vision is large enough, this can include outside of CentrePort and we can have some spinoff within our constituencies outside of the actual area and can help create more business for our rail lines that we're in the midst of trying to hold now.

We've lost some rail lines within my constituency, which is a shame, but the fact is that they're gone. The one is gone. We've got another one, a short line running now just south of our constituency, which is good, but we're in the midst, as I said, of trying to save yet another line, and it makes no sense to lose our transportation hub, and I call it sort of the hub and spokes. If CentrePort becomes the hub, where are the spokes for this operation to be? And we want to be part of it and we hope that this government will see that there is much more to it than just the actual area in, the land area in CentrePort.

So we—I think there, this government should support this resolution. This is part and parcel of CentrePort. In order to make it work better, this really does become an integral part and it's all about trade. It's about increasing manufacturing, increasing trade, jobs, and we're talking good jobs here that can come to Manitoba and that we can keep in Manitoba here.

We need to be very tax competitive within this province. We know that we're not now. The payroll tax is certainly a disincentive to businesses either already operating in Manitoba. We call it the tax on success, because when a company starts small, you're

not paying a payroll tax. As you become larger, then you begin to pay a payroll tax and that's the price of success in Manitoba is to pay another tax, and so there's a lot of things that this government really needs to be looking at in order to make CentrePort and a foreign trade zone work properly within Manitoba.

We all—all of us here want to see the best for Manitoba. We want to come, attain our potential. We don't think we've attained our potential at all in the last number of years here because of unfriendly tax, unfriendly business initiatives by this government, but it's never too late to correct your errors and ways and so we would like to see some real initiative coming out, some real commitment out of this government that they would, in fact, encourage development of a foreign trade zone.

It takes more than just saying, well, we're talking to Ottawa. It takes real initiatives within the Province. It's not going to happen in Ottawa; it's going to happen here in Manitoba. This is where the real initiative needs to come from, and we hope that this Province sees that and will take up the cause here for a foreign trade zone.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my time is almost up, and I just want to encourage this government to take this resolution seriously. This is—this is a policy that all parties should be supporting because it's for the betterment of the province, and there is—this is not—this is not a political statement that one party or the other should make. This is part and parcel of CentrePort. We all supported CentrePort. We should all support creating a foreign trade zone at CentrePort Canada. Thank you.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Madam Acting Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the private member's resolution introduced by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

The Province of Manitoba strongly supports the creation of a foreign trade zone for CentrePort Canada and, in collaboration with CentrePort, we are in active discussions with the federal government on how to improve access to and comparability of the federal government's FTZ-like programs, which is why we are supporting this resolution.

CentrePort Canada is about building Manitoba for the future. So I'm not really sure why this resolution is being introduced, but I'm certainly most happy to speak on this amazing initiative because it's also in my constituency of St. James and, as such, I

get to hear a lot of things that are going on beforehand. So it's been quite an exciting adventure for me.

Again, I thank the honourable member for his ongoing interest in and in support of CentrePort. It's a very important economic development asset for investment in Manitoba. CentrePort Canada is a priority for the Manitoba government. Our Premier (Mr. Doer) has worked with business leaders, other governments, including the federal government, City of Winnipeg and the R.M. of Rosser, labour leaders and others to turn the dream of Canada's first inland port into a reality.

This House unanimously passed The CentrePort Canada Act last fall, 2008, creating CentrePort Canada Inc., a non-share, capital corporation that will operate, develop and promote business investment in the inland port area.

And the other reason I really wanted to speak to this was, as the minister from Infrastructure and Transportation and Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) have said—and my colleagues on the other side behind me here—I just—I just want to also offer my congratulations to Diane Gray, Deputy Minister of Finance, and deeply regret that I can't be there today beside our honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), but I have had the opportunity to offer my congratulations and give a big hug.

I think—as it says in the paper today—that Diane is one of the most powerful public servants in Manitoba, and I think that states her skills in a nutshell, who help—who helped negotiate the development of CentrePort Inc. She's been there and has been doing all of those things already, Hawkins said. CentrePort was created by the Province in 2008, and she's been right in there all this time, and, as Hawkins goes on to say, that her hiring will put the port into gear, and that's a wonderful thing. I can see this just flaming along now and it's going to be an exciting ride.

I have a colleague who is very anxious to speak, too, so I am just going to reiterate, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this and thank you for reaffirming our belief in the importance of this project. Thank you.

* (11:50)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I, too, want to put a few words on the record because I understand that there is a sense of good will in seeing this particular resolution pass, and to, you know, clearly indicate that the—from the Manitoba Liberal Party's perspective, that this resolution, in particular, the support for CentrePort and its concept is something that's fully endorsed by the Manitoba Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

This resolution specifically makes reference to a foreign trade zone, and I think that's in keeping with the whole idea of the future of our province and how it could actually benefit by the more we invest into CentrePort and come up with some creative ideas that I think that had been evolving over time. That, in fact, I would ultimately argue, Mr. Speaker, that over the years, inside the Legislature, I've heard many, many debates and discussions about one of the natural advantages of Winnipeg's location is being the centre of North America and being a hub for our trucking industry, the rail lines that go through and, of course, the vital role of having a world-class airport here in our city. And to be able to capitalize on those different modes of transportation and take into account the considerable amount of land that's there and available to be—to be developed, that would be able to cater to the needs of things such like—such as the—a free trade zone, if I can put it using that terminology. I think the potential is overwhelming.

And I think we should give credit to not only individuals from within this Chamber, but I would suggest to you even individuals that are no longer in this Chamber that have talked about it. In fact, both the private sector and our—labour have talked about this concept for many years. And when we came time to pass the legislation that, in essence, created the formal part of the board, that it received support from all members of this Legislature, indeed, all political parties, from what I understand, support the concept.

So, in reviewing the resolution, in particular, the therefore be it resolved, we see that there is just great merit in terms of having it accepted and passed with unanimous support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise to speak to the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to start, since this is my first opportunity to speak this week, to welcome our new pages to the legislative Chamber, all of the pages that are going to be a part of this service to the members of this Chamber, and thank them for their service in advance, and I know and hope that they will have a tremendous learning experience through this opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution, I think, is an important one for the province of Manitoba. And I listened very carefully to the comments that were made by honourable members opposite with respect to foreign trade zones. But I wanna kind of put into context some of the things that have been happening in this province. One of the opportunities, of course, you have, by virtue of long service here, is you have a memory of things that have happened in this province as a result of that service. And I can remember back, and I look at the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) when he mentioned in his comments successes and failures that have occurred in this province.

Now there were not many things that I agreed with for the previous provincial Conservative government, but the Winnport concept, I thought, one, had tremendous merit, and is a concept that I supported in this province. And I was—I have to say that I was disappointed when that concept failed, because I thought that there was not only opportunity for trade between Manitoba and other nations of the world, but there was also tremendous employment prospects as a result of that and, of course, through that, there would, in some way that was yet to be determined, also some revenue opportunities for the province of Manitoba and the municipalities into which those ventures would be operational.

And I do know that, as a result of the Winnport, and I go back into the files that I have, I've got a news release here going back to September 6, 1994, when they were talking about the Northern Hemisphere Distribution Alliance, and Winnport was going to be a part of that process. It was going to tie together all of the trading cities of North America through the corridor, and I thought that there was great prospect there. It's unfortunate that that didn't proceed any further. And I remember the folks that were involved in that venture—Mr. Kleysen and Mr. Bishop and others, chambers of commerce—talking about the prospect of us having container traffic move from our various suppliers or manufacturers in North America up to the Winnipeg International

Airport and loaded onto cargo aircraft and then flown over to Asia-Pacific countries.

Pork products were one of the items that were being talked about, as a significant market in Japan for pork products, and I thought that was a tremendous opportunity for our pork producers in the province of Manitoba, and I thought that that was going to help our farmers, it was going to help our slaughter capacity in this province and the jobs related to both of those ventures, and I thought that that was a good opportunity for the province of Manitoba, and it's unfortunate that that did not proceed.

I know that there were many, many news releases as a result of that Winnport concept. In fact, I think it's seven or eight of them talking about Winnport. It's unfortunate they didn't proceed, and that was a mistake, and it—I think it failed because it didn't have a broad enough vision or concept about how that could play in the province of Manitoba.

Now, I'm hopeful that the CentrePort concept and vision that our Premier (Mr. Doer) has brought forward in partnership with the federal government is the way to go. I'm thankful, and I thank the federal government for their interest in the CentrePort idea in the province of Manitoba and for partnering with the Province of Manitoba on that corridor into that particular 22,000-acre industrial zone, but I think that it's an important first step, and I hope that the federal government will also look very favourably upon the province of Manitoba with respect to the continued investment in the CentrePort opportunity.

Now, there's—obviously, there's increments or parts of the zone that are important. The foreign trade zone is an important component of that, and I think our provincial government has already said publicly many times that the foreign trade zone is a part of the CentrePort opportunity, so this resolution reinforces what our provincial government has already indicated publicly for some time. But the tax increment financing, I think, is also an interesting part and important—an integral component of that, and I hope—I'm disappointed in the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) for not supporting that position, but I'm hoping that his colleagues in the opposition benches will work on him and convince him that the TIF, the financing component, is an important part of the CentrePort development and that we can move forward with that into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take up all of the time in adding comments to this. I do know that CN

Rail, in my own community and in the city of Winnipeg and Manitoba, has an important job provider, is CP Rail and Burlington Northern Santa Fe and the trucking companies headquartered here, as well as the airlines, and we want to see those opportunities expand.

So, with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I think it's an opportunity for us to look at the passage of this resolution, because it also provides opportunities for the Churchill Gateway and tying in to northern Europe opportunities as well for our communities and we want to see that proceed. So with those few comments, I thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts today.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), Supporting a Foreign Trade Zone at CentrePort Canada.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Government House Leader): Is it 12 o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 17, 2009

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