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Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
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LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 11, 2015

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 and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Would you canvass the House to see if there's leave to move directly to Bill 213, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act, sponsored by the honourable member for Emerson?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to proceed directly to Bill 213? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 213—The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act

Mr. Speaker: All right, we'll proceed to call Bill 213, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act, sponsored by the honourable member for Emerson.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 213, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act, be now read for a second time and referred to the committee of the House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Graydon: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that I have a vested interest in this particular bill as well, and so for the purposes of the bill, elder abuse is defined as the mistreatment or neglect of a senior, and this underscores that elder abuse can be both an active exercise or a passive one. Neglecting a senior is still an example of abuse.

And so, by the University of Manitoba Centre on Aging's estimate, by 2026 the proportion of the population in Manitoba aged 65 plus will increase to 20 per cent. Due to this demographic trend the unfortunate reality is that instances of elder abuse will also increase.

This bill was also—will also promote information sharing among relevant authorities regarding instances of elder abuse, making the government better track this data. Currently, the government of Manitoba is not tracking the data, and according to their website, based on extrapolation, 4 to 10 per cent of Canadian seniors are abused in Manitoba, and this would amount to between 6,000 and 1,600 instances a year. So we know that there is a need for protection for the seniors of our province. These are the people that have mothered and fathered us, they're the people that built this wonderful province that we're in.

The bill is divided into three parts. Part 1 was establish a seniors' bill of rights, and we're giving the NDP another opportunity to stand up for seniors, unlike the last time around, Mr. Speaker.

Part 2 will establish an elder abuse team which will act as a dedicated advocacy body for seniors who feel as though they have been subjected to abuse. At this point, there is really no place for them to go.

And, Mr. Speaker, seniors are very, very vulnerable when they're in facilities or within their home. They don't have the ability that you and I and many of us enjoy in this House. They don't have the ability to defend themselves in a lot of different ways. They're very vulnerable and they are afraid to speak up sometimes when they are being mistreated because they feel they could be left unattended or mistreated further.

The—this provision also strengthens the whistle-blower protection measures, whereby no action of proceedings may be brought against a person for reporting in good faith that a senior is or is likely to be a victim of elder abuse. And we know from past experience in this province of Manitoba that whistle-blower act is a little bit soft and doesn't have the teeth that it really needs. A lot of the

people—anybody that has been a whistle-blower generally is unemployed within a year.

Unlike the NDP—or, I don't think I want to even say something like that, unlike them—the—there is a failure in a number of places of where people—and it's not just the NDP, it's in a whole system—where people are afraid to point out the abuses that are taking place. They're in fear of reprisal—in fear of reprisal by their employer or their superior in whichever industry they're in or, in this case, in the health-care industry.

This team would network the seniors secretariat, the Adult Abuse Registry Committee and a dedicated investigator and an elder abuse consultant and will work to compile data and share information, helping to combat future instances. This will be an essential, as it's clear that the seniors do need some protection, and it's only, only going to get worse as we go forward with an increase of 20 per cent of the population being seniors.

Part 3 establishes a general provision and associated penalties for engaging in the acts of seniors abuse. And I'd like to go back to when Minister Wong was in Winnipeg and had made the proclamation that—and that was in November of twenty-four, and she reaffirmed in Winnipeg that the age would now be considered an aggravating factor in Canada's Criminal Code when sentencing.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that Manitoba, Manitoba government and all Manitobans need to get in step with what our federal counterparts have put in place to protect the seniors—all of the seniors in Manitoba.

So thank you very much for the opportunity to put a few words on this—on the record. I know that there's a number of people have personal experiences with their families, with their fathers, mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, aunts and uncles. We all have seniors in our past and in our present that we want to protect, and they're very valuable assets. So thank you very much for the opportunity to present this bill today.

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): I'd like to thank the member opposite for raising this in the House.

* (10:10)

I know that I'm not alone, when I have canvassed in my constituency that all the members here would share this experience, you discover the

fascinating people that live in your community, and certainly none are more fascinating than our seniors who have lived interesting lives and have dedicated their working and family lives to helping Manitoba develop, and I've often found myself talking with someone on the doorstep and then being invited into their home to look at family photos or to hear about some of their adventures that they had in their youth. Some of those stories are exciting and fascinating and others are incredibly sad.

And we want to make sure that the work that we continue to do for our seniors in Manitoba is work that provides them the supports that they need and also encourages them to be able to stay in their homes for as long as possible and in as healthy a way as possible.

I know that whether it's my own neighbour who's in his 80s and I've talked about quite frequently in the House with a lot of affection or whether it's someone further afield in my constituency, there are specific issues that come up for seniors that we want to make sure we're able to address, and we have been doing some of those things, without a doubt. We know that without the help of this—the seniors when they were young and working that we would not be in the position that we're in now, and we are very appreciative. We want them to live with dignity and we know that the services they count on need to be there for them.

And I feel that we have been continuing our work in that way. I mean this year we doubled the senior school tax rebate so that senior homeowners could save up to \$1,570 off their property taxes. That means that nearly 24,000 senior households will no longer pay any school taxes at all this year, and for neighbours who are seniors—or constituents who are seniors in—who are still active but in their homes that makes a huge difference because it means they can hire someone to do some of the chores around their property that they don't feel they're able to do, or it could mean the difference between having some extra support in their homes.

We also recognize that there are seniors living in their homes who have family members that are caring for them or perhaps a healthy senior who has a spouse with health issues, so we recognize that without the supports of our caregivers that life—the quality of life for those seniors would be less than it is. So recognizing the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit as a way to support those Manitobans, in—which we've increased again this year to a maximum

benefit of \$1,400. So by 2015 it's expected that primary caregivers will have saved close to \$116 million through that tax credit since it was implemented in 2009, and that's just one way that we're recognizing and supporting seniors as best we can.

In regards to elder abuse, something that I'm happy we're talking more about, we have established a 24-hour seniors abuse support line. I think sometimes people aren't sure what to do. They're not necessarily—when the issue's been raised with me, it's not necessarily their own family members; it could be a neighbour and they're not sure how to intervene. So this line is there to help support those folks to know where to turn and then to find out what resources they—that person who might be abused can get. And it's a 24-hour seniors abuse support line and it provides telephone counselling and follow-up support to older adults who could be experiencing abuse.

We've also created regional elder abuse response teams in each regional health authority, and we've developed the Safe Suite Program, which provides a safe place for older adults who are leaving abusive relationships, and I know sadly that it is regularly filled. But that's a resource that's there for people to help them get out of a situation that would be extremely challenging at any age.

We also want to continue to help seniors to stay in their homes longer, and I have addressed that a little bit with the school tax rebate, but we're also providing them options to continue to stay in their homes. We've invested over \$9 million to provide 162 additional safe, affordable homes for seniors.

I know in St. James, seniors are so dedicated to our constituency that if they're downsizing from a home they don't want to leave the community and we don't want them to leave, we want them to be able to be as independent as possible even if it means they're moving from their home into an apartment or a condo. And this investment, it will make those options available to them, and this builds on our original commitment of more than 517 units that were already delivered over the past five years. So through a variety of programs we provide support to over 15,000 units of seniors housing across the province. We're not just talking about Winnipeg; we're talking about the whole of the province.

In fact, I recently attended a A & O housing and active lifestyle expo. The mayor was there as well as the member who's brought this legislation forward,

and it was fascinating to see just how eager and anxious people were to get in the door. They had the lineup before the doors were even open; they were ready to get in there and find out what information was available for them, for their specific concerns. Some of them were housing, some of them were health, some of these were also social concerns that they had, how to stay fit, how to maintain their physical and mental health. And it was super. There were, like, 87 booths at this event.

And I'm happy to say that we work with A & O support services. These are one of the organizations that I rely on to give me advice in my role. And I'd like to thank the members of the A & O support services for bringing this expo together. There really was a great deal of engagement and it was an opportunity for me to see first-hand what some of our seniors are interested in and have a chat with a few of them.

There are also investments in health care that we are continuing to do, not just for seniors but certainly issues that address seniors specifically. We have also invested in some long-term care strategies, so 200 new million dollars to build hundreds more personal-care-home beds.

A new, innovative rehabilitation program to quickly help seniors regain and maintain their independence following an injury or a surgery, and that's vitally important. We want to make sure that they can have the quickest recovery possible and be supported in order to be able to regain the independence that they had wherever possible.

We also have a new income-protection benefit to make supportive housing an affordable alternative to a personal-care home for low-income seniors. We've gone from just 69 supportive-housing units in the whole province in 1999, to over 700 today. I mean, you can't deny that is a huge increase, that's more than a tenfold increase, and that's in response to the needs that seniors have expressed, and we've built that.

The number of hospital home teams in Winnipeg, which also include health-care professionals that make home visits to seniors who are in fragile health. We've expanded home care in Brandon with additional evening and weekend staffing to support seniors who are ready to go home from the hospital, seven days a week, including evenings.

We have also increased home-care hours of service to clients who need that extra support. And I know I have a neighbour about a block away whose mom has moved in with her, and that's the kind of issue that she raised with me. And we know that we want to make sure that when seniors are transitioning from their home into some other kind of living situation, that it's as optimal for them as possible, whether that's with their family or whether that's downsizing into an apartment or moving into something that's a little more supportive but still independent.

So we want to make sure that we are continuing to do those things, and we are continuing to do those things by listening to our seniors, by working with our partner organizations and making sure that the issues that affect the quality of life for seniors are being addressed here.

So, with those words, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak and thank the member again for bringing this forward.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member for Tuxedo, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Miami School, we have 30 grade 7 students under the direction of Kiera Sigurdson. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen).

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this morning.

* * *

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I'm pleased to rise this morning and put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 213, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act.

And I want to thank my colleague, the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), for bringing this forward and also my colleague from Spruce Woods who brought forward a similar bill prior to this which unfortunately members opposite did not support.

And I think that this is a very important bill to support when it comes to the abuse of seniors in our communities. We need to do everything we can to ensure the protection of those vulnerable people in our society.

And I know we've all heard from constituents. I've heard from many, many constituents over the years about the unfortunate situations that many have been in within our communities, and abusive situations within our communities. And we need to do everything we possibly can to ensure that we're protecting these individuals.

* (10:20)

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I have a very personal situation that I went through with my father with respect to an abusive situation in one of our institutions. And, you know, I can recall visiting him; he was in the Grace Hospital at the time. This was many years ago now, back about probably eight years ago or so. And I went to visit him on a lunch break, and I found him sitting in a hallway in a chair in a straitjacket with—that was tied to the back of a chair. And it was just a very disturbing experience to come and see your father in that kind of a situation, and I was really, really disturbed by it. And I asked—and I know that the staff—I mean, it's difficult because Dad went through Alzheimer's and dementia and he was obviously agitated and the medication wasn't working and so on, and I don't blame those that are—that were there and working at the time. I know they were trying their best to protect him from himself because he could potentially have harmed himself physically.

And, you know, the staff was very busy. They were working very hard and just didn't have the time to spend with him at the time, to be able to sit with him. And, you know, I wish they had called me and told me and I would've been—done my best to have been down there to help him in that situation, but it was really alarming to find your father in that kind of a situation. And—but I helped him out and got him back into his bed and it was just, you know, nobody wants to see their loved one in that kind of a situation.

It's—and I know I've heard from other constituents who have gone through similar situations. This isn't just about me, Mr. Speaker. This is about many people who, unfortunately, have this kind of a situation that they have to go through personally. And I think it's important that we brings these issues forward to the various, you know, health-care agencies and so on and make sure that we know that they're aware of these situations and that it doesn't happen to anybody else again. And that's why I think it's very important that members opposite seriously

consider supporting this bill, because this bill will help other people.

Now, my father has passed away. We can't do anything to help him at this stage, Mr. Speaker, but we can help others who are in similar circumstances to ensure that we protect them from these—this kind of abuse within the system and we ensure that it doesn't happen to anybody else.

So I encourage all members of this House to support this bill today. This is a very important step towards helping protect the most vulnerable people in our society, our seniors.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy): I thank the member from Emerson for bringing Bill 213, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act.

All of us here in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, believe that Manitoba seniors helped build this province we are proud to call home. All our seniors deserve to live with dignity and know that the services they count on are there for them. I have the honour and privilege to represent a good number of seniors homes in my constituency, and I value the seniors in my constituency. I visited many of them, those who are in Manitoba Housing for seniors, on many, many occasions.

When I was first representing the constituency of Wellington, there were two high-rise senior residences on Arlington and there were two on Elgin and one on Keewatin. In my desire to reach a lot of seniors in my constituency, I even visited a high-rise, also on Arlington, not knowing it's no longer in my constituency. So, nevertheless, I got to meet many people there that I know from a past life in the community, and these visits to those seniors homes were quite fun and delightful. We brought coffee, tea, dainties, on other occasions the famous noodles, the pancit, and the people loved it. As well, I brought, at one time, young folks, young people who were singers besides the singing talent of my executive assistant at that time. So we entertained the seniors with songs and we even brought them—we even brought—I even brought my karaoke machine so the seniors could join us in singing.

So those were fun moments, and I had been blessed because I not only got to meet many of seniors in my constituency, but also being the recipient of sound advice. As you know, seniors have had long years and with it many, many life

experiences. So I come to them for advice on concerns that we are facing in our constituency, as well as party issues, and I am grateful for the advice that I get.

And we had very thoughtful discussions with the seniors on, surprisingly, issues like abortion—yes, seniors have this issue in mind—assisted suicide for those living in pain, affordable housing when they are no longer able to live in their own homes or in their present place—assisted living places, as well as a grocery store for those living in the downtown area. These discussions were hot topics, especially right after the downtown grocery store at the Bay's basement area was closed. Thankfully, very recently there is a store—big store, that opened very close to downtown, still within Logan constituency, but not as close to the downtown area as many would have loved it to be.

Mr. Speaker, as—our government has many programs in place to help protect seniors from abuse and also to deal with long-term care issues. As Manitobans age more and more, people are going to rely on senior services to make sure their families are taken care of. We are building more seniors housing and expanding home care because we want to make sure our parents, grandparents and other loved ones have the care they need when they need it.

A very good example that I cherish is the assistance we were able to provide to a seniors group in the Weston-Brooklands area. For, they say over 15 years, they have long wanted to see a seniors home built in the Weston-Brooklands area, especially for those who will no longer be able to live in their own homes because of age. They would love to stay in the area. Their family and friends are still in the Weston-Brooklands area, and when they approached me I took it as an honour and privilege to be able to assist in the little way that I can and, lo and behold, because of the hard work of the—of these organizations as well as the support from three levels of government, the 37-suite, two-storey Westlands at Oddy was built and is now fully tenanted, a beautiful, beautiful place that is now home to many, many seniors. And they're so happy that they are in the Weston-Brooklands area still in their old age.

* (10:30)

Mr. Speaker, our Seniors' School Tax Rebate means that senior homeowners can now save up to over 1,500 off their property taxes. This means that nearly 24,000 senior households will no longer pay any school taxes at all this year.

This was a very—this was a most welcome news for seniors in my constituency. Last year, I did some door knocking and at least came across a household which are tenanted—which were tenanted by seniors. When I brought this news to them, they were so excited. At that time, we don't have this full amount yet as—that they could receive when they apply for the rebate, but when I return to their household in the next few days, I'll be able to gladly share this good news to them. And I'm sure they'll be delighted.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to support our seniors by replacing the current EIA shelter allowance and RentAid programs to make things easier, simpler and more accessible.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we are providing seniors with better care options with personal-care homes in Winnipeg, Morden and Lac du Bonnet and improvements to home care.

I myself has a mother who will turn 90 this month, and right now we are benefitting from the home-care program. She gets visited by home care twice a week, at least for an hour. And she's very grateful for these visits.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we have announced the construction of new affordable housing units for seniors in—at Pineview Manor in The Pas and a partnership with the City of Brandon that will see five new sites developed.

We know that housing is central to the lives and well-being of all Manitobans, and that's why our government has committed to add 500 new affordable housing units and 500 new social housing units over a three-year period.

Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this matter has elapsed.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand up today and put a few words on the record on Bill 213, The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act, brought forward by my colleague from Emerson. I stand today because it is a very important topic to be talking about, elder abuse, seniors abuse.

And just a little bit of background, Mr. Speaker, back in November of 2014, the Honourable Alice Wong, Minister of State for Seniors, reaffirmed in Winnipeg that age would now be considered an aggravating factor in Canada's Criminal Code when sentencing. This inclusion of age as a variable of

sentencing was incorporated into Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Elder Abuse), and was granted royal assent on December 14th, 2012. This now creates seven aggravated factors, showcasing that age needs to be seriously taken into consideration when sentencing those found to be victimizing seniors.

As the Criminal Code now states, a sentence should be increased or reduced to account for any relevant aggravating or mitigating circumstances relating to the offence or the offender and without limiting the generality of the foregoing evidence that the offence was motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, nationality or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or any other similar factor, Mr. Speaker.

With this change formalized, we felt it necessary to draft a bill that would stress provincially what our federal counterparts have noted, that elder abuse is real and must be confronted.

For purposes of this bill, elder abuse is defined as mistreatment or neglect of a senior. This underscores that elder abuse can be both an active exercise and a passive one. Neglecting a senior is still an example of abuse, Mr. Speaker.

This bill will also promote information sharing amongst relevant authorities regarding instances of elder abuse, making the government better track this data. Currently, the government of Manitoba is not tracking this data and, according to their website, based on extrapolation, 4 to 10 per cent of Canadian seniors are abused. In Manitoba, this would amount to between 6,000 to 16,000 instances per year.

Every instance needs to be prevented to the best of our abilities, but in order to do so we also must know what the true number really is. In regards to the member from Logan—stood up and mentioned some of the great things that this government has been doing in regards for services for seniors and that, I need to remind the member and her colleagues on that side of the House that when we talk about treatment of seniors, we also can't forget about some of the actions that this government has put into play over the last four years since the 2011 election.

We've spoken to the topic more than once on this side of the House in regards to the broken promises in the 2011 election when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) went door to door with 56 of the other NDP candidates and promised to all Manitobans, including

seniors, to not raise the provincial sales tax, and that that thought would be absolutely absurd, ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. And what ended up happening, another example of not only abuse to Manitobans but to seniors, specifically, is within the next six months what ended up happening was they ended up broadening the PST, the scope of the PST to various things that then gets the 8 per cent—or the 7 per cent back then—tax put onto it, and that would be things like insurance, things like haircuts, car insurance, various things that people, Manitobans, hard-working Manitobans, especially seniors who are on a fixed income who can't go without. So they were actually penalized by this government's broken promises.

But this government didn't stop there. They decided in the 2013 budget that the money that they received from broadening the PST onto those other services wasn't good enough, so they decided to increase the PST by one point, which was actually a 14 per cent increase. Well, you talk about—we're talking about seniors abuse today, and a 14 per cent increase, not many people are receiving those types of increases in their allowances or their benefits or their salaries.

And so seniors are on that fixed income and, unfortunately, that 14 per cent increase to the PST is hurting seniors especially. And especially when we look back at their taxation, increasing the PST on their insurances, the car insurances, and then what is this government doing now? They went to the Public Utilities Board and they've—they're increasing hydro rates at 4 per cent increase each and every year. And I don't really think that they even know when they're going to stop doing those increases, Mr. Speaker.

So, unfortunately, those are things that are hurting some of our senior population and Manitobans in general. And what I'd like to say or conclude with is that this bill is going to actually give the NDP a chance, after wronging seniors so many times over the last—especially over the last, five years, this will allow them to prove that at least in this case, they do have seniors' best interests at heart. Seniors deserve to have a bill of rights established to ensure that as builders of our great province, they are respected and protected and allowed to age with dignity, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, I encourage the members on the other side of the House to support this great bill, Bill 213, brought forward by my colleague, the member from Emerson.

* (10:40)

And so I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to put a few words on the record. Thank you.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Now, I'll put a few correct words on the record to correct the member from Lac du Bonnet.

He was talking about seniors abuse, but he got into this—off topic about the PST, which I'm not quite sure where the member's coming from since he voted against the seniors' tax credit that actually gives seniors three or four times more back in a tax credit than what it cost them in PST for the average family of four. So when he wants to talk about one or the other, I mean, the seniors' tax credit is now \$1,570 a year for seniors. That would be like spending \$157,000 worth of money on PST-related items in order to spend that 1 per cent. So, you know, if we're talking about seniors spending \$157,000 a year, I'm thinking he's probably not talking about the ones that we're looking after protecting, Mr. Speaker. We're looking after protecting all seniors, obviously, but we're especially concerned with the ones who are making less of an income.

You know, he also wanted to bring up other things, you know, like the cost of living here. Well, the fact is that the bundle of home heating, electricity and auto insurance is the lowest in the country, saving an average person \$2,000 a year, which those seniors benefit from. You know, when we hear them talking on the other side of the House about things that benefit seniors, well, I guess he's going to stand up in this House and discredit his federal party from cutting OAS and CPP to the age of 67. I actually worked—in my previous life before becoming elected, I worked on a great campaign which his federal counterparts crushed which was to double the CPP, Mr. Speaker. I worked very hard lobbying all governments, especially the federal government, because that's the one who controls it, to double the CPP, which would lift 165,000 seniors in this country out of poverty.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? What we're talking about when he talks about, you know, seniors and poverty, we're talking about \$3,000 a year would lift the—those 165,000 seniors out of poverty. Well, our seniors' tax credit, which we do control as a province, is \$1,570, which is half of that. Now, only if his federal counterparts would jump on board and maybe they would pony up the other half. But he wants to talk a big game. His party doesn't support seniors. They're the ones who refused to double CPP.

They're the ones who actually cut CPP and OAS. I'm not quite sure where he's coming from.

You know, right now we have one in five Canadians reported by Stats Canada—I know they don't like stats, but reported by Stats Canada—are worried about what they're going to do in their retirement. Twenty-two per cent are saying that they're not confident at all that they'll ever be able to retire.

So what does that party do? Instead of raising CPP and, you know, helping lift those people out of poverty and giving people a—you know, a 50 per cent pension as suggested by myself and the campaign that I worked on with the Labour Congress, they—instead, they cut CPP, extend the age of retirement to 67 and they create a PRPP program because companies can donate money to this PRPP if they so desire. Well, how's that working, Mr. Speaker? It's not, and that's what their side of the House and their party believes in.

You know, 42 per cent of people in Canada's retirement—retired people in Canada's income is dependent on CPP—the 42 per cent. And yet, their party extended the age to retirement and actually didn't double the CPP when the request was on the table. And it came very close, Mr. Speaker. It was very close. You know, I have to give former Finance Minister Jim Flaherty some credit. He took it to the table at Kananaskis when they were all meeting, and he went and he said I wanted to do this. Unfortunately, they had a leader, in Mr. Harper, say no and crush the idea. I have to give Jim—the late Jim Flaherty credit. He did have a—he actually did listen when we campaigned and when we talked to him, and I had email exchanges with him. He actually did listen. It was their party and their higher-ups that decided to not listen.

So when we talk about where they stand for seniors, Mr. Speaker, our party has a great record on what we've done in this province. We've increased the seniors' tax credit by \$1,570—to \$1,570 when it was only \$250 underneath them. We have the lowest bundle of home heating, auto insurance and electricity in the country. We also have a very accessible public health-care system, one that the Leader of the Opposition would like to see become a two-tier, for-profit system. That's not going to help seniors on a fixed income when they need to have a hip replacement and somebody with a ton of money can jump that system and then buy their way to the

front. We don't stand for that on this side of the House.

Thirty-two point six per cent of seniors right now live in—on an income of less than \$20,000 a year in this country. And do you think that the members opposite would stand up—I want to hear them stand up on the next speech and I want one of them to say that they disagree with their leader, their federal leader, Harper, and that they actually think the CPP should be doubled. I want to hear them say that, Mr. Speaker. I want to hear them stand up for seniors in this country. Let's hear them stand up for seniors in this country.

You know, on our side of the House, if—as I've said, we've increased the seniors' property tax credit. That means nearly 24,000 senior households will no longer pay any school taxes at all this year, Mr. Speaker. We've also replaced the current EIA shelter system—shelter allowance and RentAid programs to make things easier and simpler for seniors. We've done—we've made more personal-care homes. Actually, we're building them in some of their ridings. They might want to listen. The—Morden and Lac du Bonnet are getting, you know, personal-care homes. But, you know, they voted against those very investments that they talk about, that they want to help seniors in this province, but yet they vote against the investments that we made in their communities.

You know, we've committed to 500 new affordable housing units and 500 new social housing units over the next three years. But, once again, investments that would actually help seniors, they voted against, Mr. Speaker. So, you know, when—they talk a big game, but when it comes to putting rubber to the road, our party is the one doing it. We're putting money to those very things that are going to help seniors have a good quality of life.

And we know that money is one of the biggest stressors when it comes to seniors and violence within the family, Mr. Speaker, because money is a big issue when you're living on the edge of the poverty line. And that's why, on this side of the House, we're fighting for a better CPP plan that's going to give seniors more money. We're fighting for things like the seniors' tax credit on their homes, so they can stay in their home—age in their home longer. We're fighting for more social housing units. You know, an additional 1,500 social housing units and 1,500 affordable housing units have been—will be completed or have been completed by the spring of

2014. We believe that everybody should be able to live in dignity in their retirement, and that's why, on this side of the House, we support strengthening the CPP and not increasing the age of retirement to 67—that doesn't help anybody—and not leaving them out in the cold when it comes to giving them a better pension plan: 25 per cent currently under CPP, 50 per cent pension would definitely help seniors. But the members of the opposition won't stand up and talk about that.

You know, we've done a lot of things for seniors in—as far as helping fund OAS and— or funding A & O—sorry, Mr. Speaker, not OAS, A & O. We fund A & O and we have a lot of initiatives that help seniors stay in their homes longer, safety initiatives providing, you know, free safety devices in their homes to the—you know, avoid falls. They—we provide a service where they—we help fund the A & O, provides a service that comes and put new peepholes into their doors, bigger, larger ones so they can see through them, increasing the safety in their household. We fund an extra \$5 million a year in support services for seniors programs. Every single time we put that money on the table, they voted against it.

So, you know, we're putting things in place that help seniors age in place, age in their home. We're investing \$9 million to provide an extra 162 additional safe and affordable homes for seniors, Mr. Speaker. This builds on our original commitment.

Personally, Mr. Speaker, I actually helped arrange one of the A & O sessions for safety in my area. I, consistently, I take out my seniors. We take them out every three months on bus trips to the mall to get them out to help them shop for goods and services, and they socialize and they enjoy, we keep them active in the area. I bring them—I throw picnics and tea parties and coffee parties, and I bring them out to keep them active and engaged in the area. They're a huge asset to this province and a huge asset to this country.

And the member opposite is asking about protecting seniors, Mr. Speaker. He's heckling me right now asking about protecting seniors. Well, the fact is our government does by putting in place funding that funds A & O, that funds health care, that funds all of the programs that these seniors depend on.

The biggest risk to seniors in this province would be having the Leader of the Opposition in

power where he would cut \$550 million worth of funding, create a two-tier health-care system and slash all of the affordable and social housing for the seniors. And he would cut the property tax credit that we put in place to help seniors age in their home.

* (10:50)

On our side of the House we take a different approach. We support seniors, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to put a few words on the record in relationship to this bill.

I think it's important and, as many members here know, I have spoken up many, many times with concerns about the health of seniors, with concerns about abuses which are happening to seniors, concerns about treatment which in some cases of seniors may be misguided or misunderstanding what's happening. And so I think it is timely that we have a Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act to lay out some of the needs for seniors in our world today, and I think that setting the principles down is a good thing.

There are—as we all know, we are in a world where more and more seniors are developing Alzheimer's disease and being able to care for those with Alzheimer's well needs a significant amount of understanding of what's happening with people with Alzheimer's, what they can't do, how you are best able to interact with people with Alzheimer's and help them, and understand that with their memory, as it deteriorates, that sometimes it can be very frustrating for them, and so that being able to be sympathetic and have an understanding and being able to have seniors who have Alzheimer's in environments which are calming and which are helpful, as opposed to environments where seniors with Alzheimer's have got a lot of activity going on around them, it can be confusing and disturbing.

And so I think that there are aspects of this bill which are really positive in the sense that they are putting forward the concerns about seniors and putting down on paper some rights for seniors. This is something that all of us in this Legislature should be engaged with.

It's my view that, as well as looking at rights, that we should be making sure that we are looking at what we are doing in terms of preventing abuse, not just being on top of it when it occurs, that just like with children, that it's important to have a major effort to support the optimum support, care,

treatment, of seniors and that this area needs, you know, significant—more attention. We need to have access, as this bill talks about, to home care and a good home-care support. Fortunately, you know, Manitoba has done pretty well. I think that, you know, there's always room for improvement in terms of the ability of home care to support seniors in their homes and something that we need to be working continually on so that we can support seniors even better in their homes. Often that support is cheaper than it is putting seniors in an institution. It is certainly much more friendly to seniors who are used to living in their homes and having an environment where they feel comfortable and, as it were, at home, is a much better situation than where seniors are in an institution where that's possible.

I also think that we need, when we're putting down rights of seniors, we need to think about what happens when those rights are not met, that there should be some consequences. Those—as this bill proceeds through committee stage is something that, perhaps, we could look at a little bit more carefully, what kind of consequences there should be if rights are not met.

I also think, though, it's a good idea to have an annual report on what's happening, that that annual report should specifically be involved in getting some people together to look at the situation and make recommendations about how we can improve because this is an area, as we have an aging society, and where, fortunately, many, many seniors stay very, very healthy. That some instances, in some places this is a need—there is a need for facilities so that seniors can stay healthy. And in some cases it is a need that where seniors develop conditions like Alzheimer's or others, that they're able to live in their homes where possible because we have more accessible homes and they're able to be supported in their homes, for example, or whether in an institution that they're treated well and supported well.

And so this annual report, as I would see it, would do well to have the ability to have recommendations, and those recommendations might acknowledge, for example, that there are areas of the care and treatment of seniors where we still have things to learn, where we have perhaps some research that needs to be done and other things. And so there is an opportunity, as we hopefully move this bill forward into committee stage and beyond that to look carefully at these various issues, and I hope we'll be able to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Bjornson (Gimli): It's a pleasure to rise in the House to speak to this resolution today because, first of all, I'm very proud to represent the oldest community in Manitoba by virtue of the average age in the home, my home community of Gimli is—the average age I believe is 56.8 if I'm not mistaken, somewhere in that range, and it is one of the oldest communities by virtue of the age of the population. And it is an area that I'm very proud to represent and have been proud to represent for the last 12 years.

And that area also has benefitted from many of the initiatives that we've brought forward as government. Gimli is an age-friendly community. And neighbouring communities such as Riverton, Arborg and Winnipeg Beach have also been beneficiaries of our government's efforts to ensure that seniors have appropriate housing.

In my 10 years as housing minister I had the privilege to visit a number of the homes in the area. Very pleased to be in Riverton to officially open the completely renovated and new build actually as it turns out, initially the idea was to renovate the buildings which had been built in the '70s through partnerships with the government and with community organizations; the Lions Club in Riverton had championed that particular project. But we, as a government through Manitoba Housing, have developed a beautiful new seniors housing residence which is, when I saw a resident the day of the official opening I said, how do you feel, and she said, I've died and gone to heaven, I love my new home. I was very proud to be there to open up phase 1 of that particular project and phase 2 is pending

And, of course, in Winnipeg Beach there was an organization that worked in partnership. I joke it was the home that the million perogies built because there is a fundraising organization; they raised thousands upon thousands of dollars and stated their case and worked with government to see that come to fruition. And the federal government, to their credit, had participated in that particular housing project as well. So it was great to see that particular project complete.

And, of course, my father has served on the Betel board of directors, and even though he's 83 years of age and many of the people who do live in Betel are that age or younger, he's still very active on the board and in good health and living home with my mother at—and at 83 years of age and 73 years of age, they're still out cutting the grass with

a push mower and bagging it and doing the gardening and all the good things that they are enjoying the quality of life that allows them to do. So seniors are certainly a very important part of my community.

Over 500 members at the New Horizons 55+ club who are very active in our community providing a number of different services, providing a lot of recreation opportunities, providing a lot of social opportunities for seniors, and, of course, they are the place to go on Icelandic festival weekend where they have a main fundraiser selling pancakes at pancake breakfast Saturday, Sunday and Monday of Islendingadagurinn, very active in the community and—

An Honourable Member: Should we call the question, Mr. Speaker?

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: I'm sorry, did the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon)—rising on a point of order?

* (11:00)

Mr. Graydon: Yes, I did, Mr. Speaker. Could we call the question?

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Emerson, I didn't hear a reference to a particular rule that had been breached, so I must therefore respectfully indicate that there is no point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: And the hour being 11 a.m., it is—pardon me. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) will have six minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 10—Provincial Government's Failure to Stop the Spread of Invasive Species in Manitoba

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., it is time for private members' resolution. The resolution under consideration this morning is entitled Provincial Government's Failure to Stop the Spread of Invasive Species in Manitoba, sponsored by the honourable member for Morris.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), that

WHEREAS Manitoba is well known for its natural beauty which, in conjunction with its natural resources, is an important economic asset for the province in the hunting, fishing, tourism, recreation and energy producing industries; and

WHEREAS many Manitobans, including First Nations and Metis communities, depend on Manitoba's natural resources to provide a livelihood for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS Manitoba Hydro is gravely concerned with the spread of invasive species, such as zebra mussels, because of their ability to seriously interfere with the Crown corporation's energy producing infrastructure; and

WHEREAS the spread of invasive species, such as zebra mussels, are a serious threat to Manitoba's economic and ecological health because of their ability to invade, alter and threaten the existence of natural flora and fauna populations found in Manitoba ecosystems; and

WHEREAS the current provincial government has been well aware that invasive species, such as zebra mussels, have been present within the Red River drainage basin since at least 2009; and

WHEREAS the efforts of this provincial government have been completely inadequate and have failed to properly prepare and implement proactive protective measures to protect Manitoba from these invasive species.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge the spread of any invasive species, including zebra mussels, has the potential to cause economic havoc on the health of Manitoba's natural resources and ecological balance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this provincial government has failed to properly act to prevent the spread of invasive species, such as zebra mussels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the inaction and mismanagement of this provincial government has resulted in Manitobans being forced to live with the harmful consequences caused by the unchecked spread of invasive species.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Morris, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon West,

WHEREAS Manitoba is well known for its—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

The resolution is in order.

Mr. Martin: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise on what is probably one of the most serious ecological and environmental threats our lakes face here in the province of Manitoba, and that is obviously the introduction of zebra mussels in our waterways.

The issue here, Mr. Speaker, isn't that mussels exist in our waterways; that is an established fact. The issue really here is the NDP government's failure to properly address this situation.

Mr. Speaker, zebra mussels have long been established in the North American waterway systems, entering the Great Lakes in the '80s and obviously causing significant, significant consequences and environmental and economic consequences to those water systems. I think currently in Minnesota, as of April 2013, there is well over 100 lakes in the state of Minnesota that are currently infested with zebra mussels.

And, as of 2009, zebra mussels were found in the Red River basin. So there was no secret that zebra mussels would eventually make their way to the province of Manitoba, to our waterways. Apparently what was a secret was this government's action plan, and the reason maybe it might have been a secret, Mr. Speaker, is that there was no action plan.

But we need to understand the consequences of what happens when zebra mussels affect—or, sorry, invade a water system. I mean, you're going to get anything from an increase in water clarity, and maybe, Mr. Speaker, that is their end goal when it comes to Lake Winnipeg. But you're also going to see an increase in aquatic vegetation. You're going to get an increase in toxic algae blooms. You have a shift in the food web.

Obviously, native mussels find it challenging to compete against the zebra mussels, and in Lake Ontario you saw up to an 80 per cent decline in lake whitefish populations. Walleye was also, in eastern Lake Ontario, have also significantly declined, and those populations have never recovered even though

the numbers of zebra mussels have largely levelled off.

Reduced recreational potential, Mr. Speaker, reduced value in lakeshore properties, increased cost to taxpayers, clogged water intakes and, obviously, the severity and range of impacts can vary from water body to water body.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, around this time last year, the then-minister of Conservation was embarking on his bold plan of sealing off the harbours, four harbours at the lake and putting up silk curtains and—at the cost of approximately \$500,000 was dumping about just under 404 metric tons of liquid ash. And what's particularly interesting at the time is that subsequent to the dumping of the ash, and despite individuals like Lake Winnipeg expert U of W biologist Eva Pip expressing doubts at the time that the effort would be successful as mussels had actually been found on both sides of the lake, and said, and I quote: mussels are—zebra mussels are, quote, impossible to eradicate.

But the government, based on a single American study from Virginia where they treated a single self-contained pond, decided to spend \$500,000 dumping 404 metric tons of liquid potash into those harbours, Mr. Speaker. And then the minister got on the boat, the SS Minnow, and with the banner almost reminiscent of George Bush and the end of the Gulf War, had the Mission Accomplished sign behind him. And I'm quoting the Minister of Conservation: We've won. End quote.

The challenge, obviously, is, Mr. Speaker, and according to briefing notes provided by the department, zebra mussels were found almost immediately thereafter. And, of course, the government was very quiet about that. And I remember at the time leading up to the closure of the harbours and after the closure of the harbours, I challenged the government and questioned the government as to the status of their long-term strategy, a strategy that had—should have been ready years earlier and that still wasn't even the actual legislation, wasn't even introduced until December of last year. And then, of course, the NDP were side-tracked with their own internal issues. And the legislation still hasn't come up for any further debate. So it gives you an idea, obviously, where the NDP's seriousness or lack of seriousness lies on this issue.

But you know, recently, Mr. Speaker, on May 28th, the government finally acknowledged that they lost and are losing the fight against zebra

mussels, and that they are, quote, here to stay. Well, again, any biologist would have told you at the forefront, eradication is simply not a realistic solution or is not a realistic option when dealing with zebra mussels. The only realistic option is mitigation and containment. And as part of that mitigation and containment we need to look at decontamination units.

So it's quite unfortunate that the \$500,000 that the government spent on their failed science experiment, Mr. Speaker, could have purchased six additional decontamination units. The \$670,000 political payout could have bought eight more units.

So here we are today, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Manitoba, I believe—and the minister can correct me if I'm wrong—but I believe there's only six decontamination units in the entire province to deal with watercraft coming in and out of our lakes, of which, I believe, actually, the Department of Conservation has only actually purchased one. The remaining decontamination units have simply been donated by, whether it's Manitoba Hydro who are concerned about the impact on their own infrastructure, or through the fish enhancement fund by fishers who obviously recognize the seriousness of this issue. But again, I mean, the government—or the NDP's own lack of awareness of the seriousness is reflected in the fact that they purchased only one unit.

* (11:10)

And then, of course, the minister the other day paraded around one of the detection dogs, Mr. Speaker, and detection dogs have long been used, again, south of the border and, actually, in western Canada in their fight against zebra mussels. So it's quite something, again, that again, despite knowing since 2009 that zebra mussels had entered the Red River basin, that we find out that we are finally training a single dog. And while I have no doubt that that dog will prove itself useful, I just—I question the ability of that dog to cover, obviously, the geography that it will need to be covered.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look again at the inability of this government to take seriousness this issue, an issue that is—will have long-term consequences, again, on the ecological and environmental impact and a problem that should've been recognized from the outset, of which eradication was a fool's game. But, again, this is a government more interested in flash, more interested in these big bold announcements, of which they should've known and

fully knew at the time would have little to no actual consequence to the problem at hand. And if the government and the NDP had only put that same level effort all those years ago to actually containing zebra mussels, perhaps we wouldn't have to speak to this resolution.

And even today, Mr. Speaker, we are left with an understanding or great—or an unfortunate example of the lack of seriously the NDP take regarding zebra mussels. And only just recently, just this—just last week, an individual is—was fishing and they were launching a boat at Selkirk Park, and there was Conservation staff on hand with the zebra mussel decontamination units, and the fisher said we looked forward to coming out of the water and seeing first-hand how these units works. And, unfortunately, when these fishers got off the water at 4 p.m., they found that they had already—the 'decontamination' units had already left for the day. So, again, it speaks to the lack of seriousness that the NDP have towards these issues.

So I have no doubt that the members opposite will—I look forward to hearing their comments, and I look forward to their passage of this resolution. Thank you.

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the resolution introduced by the member opposite.

Once again, I'm stunned by the conversion on the road to Damascus that is so typical of members opposite. You know, the member made reference to Bill 12, which is before the House as we speak and, you know, I await the opportunity to debate that and have speedy passage of it, one would hope. But, you know, as we all know, as we're all well aware here, the—their leader is determined to extend this session indefinitely, to Christmas or beyond, I think, is his desire. And as we have seen in years past, that typically means delay of passage of all bills until that time. So as much as we would like to have this passed in as speedy a manner as possible, if history proves itself once again, then this bill will probably pass sometime after freeze-up because of the delaying tactics, the stalling and so forth that is so typical of members opposite, to politicize events here rather than address the needs of the people of Manitoba.

And, yes, zebra mussels are here and they are a crisis. They are a significant threat to our infrastructure. You know, whether it's Manitoba

Hydro infrastructure, whether it's sewage drainage lines or water intakes or what have you, these mussels are very damaging, not to mention the impact that they can have on our fishery, which we're well aware of; we're aware of the impact on fisheries elsewhere.

So, yes, this is a crisis, but we lack the enforcement mechanisms that are in Bill 12. Right now, if that fisher the member was referring to wanted to, he could drive right by that decontamination unit. He's not obliged under the law to participate in the program. So passage of the bill, I think, is the first point that needs to be made sooner rather than later. So I'm hoping possibly later on today that our House leaders can maybe get together and strategize, expediting this bill through the Legislature as soon as possible, which we have the ability to do. But somehow, I have my doubts that the will will be there on the other side to make any moves such as this. But I remain hopeful.

The member opposite made reference to the previous minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship, now our Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), and the good works that he actually did do last year. Thank him for that, the effort that he took—an unprecedented effort to contain the mussels that were detected in the four critical harbours—you know, the harbours around Gimli, for example, a good example. You know, that is the kind of containment effort that will be necessary in the years to come and, once again, I acknowledge his actions. He set the bar, frankly, to a new level in terms of addressing this challenge, and we will continue in that same vein as we go forward into phase 2 which, thanks to the member—again—opposite, for mentioning the fact that yes, indeed, this government is engaged in phase 2. I know he'd asked a question a short time ago; it was the very next day, as a matter of fact, that we had the decontamination units out behind the Legislature on display, and I got to meet Fauna, the detection dog, myself.

So, you know, the members opposite, well, they were nowhere to be seen at that time, I guess, when it actually comes to, you know, looking at the equipment that is out there, that is available. That wasn't important to them. It was more important to try and politicize the event instead. You know, rather than that, you know, I would hope, given the crisis situation, that maybe members opposite would join with us instead as we've asked them in the past in crises in the past. And yet, that has never been the

case. It's much more fun for them, I think, to politicize an issue and try and make political hay out of it rather than act as a unit within the government here to try and address crises.

You know, awareness, quite frankly, is one of the most important components going forward, and each and every Manitoban has to play a role in this. You know, there are actions that individuals can take when, you know, they're moving their boat out of an area that potentially has zebra mussels, and, you know, that's what our responsibility as legislators is to get that message out to Manitobans so that all of us together as a society can play our role in this regard. The—again, the former minister, the campaign that he introduced, don't move a mussel, I think, is a good message to get out across our province, and that is precisely what we all as legislators should play a role in. Rather than trying to politicize it, let's all work together. And the fact that that individual that found a zebra mussel attached to the underside of his portable dock and reported it, brought it to our attention, proves the fact that the awareness campaign is actually working, you know, and that our citizens are engaged and are willing to play a role in it.

* (11:20)

So, you know, that's, in essence, the message and, you know, as much as I appreciate the opportunity to have this debate today on this resolution, you know, I would, again, just hope that we could be debating the bill as soon as possible and pass it in an expedited manner possibly so that we can actually have some teeth and go out there and enforce the law, if necessary. But until that happens, until that passage has occurred, then, you know, we'll have to basically depend on people to participate in a voluntary manner.

So, you know, we've got the detection dogs out there, others are being, you know, considered trained. The—Fauna was at the Emerson border crossing, which is critical, I think, because, as all of us know, we have a very robust tourism industry here in Manitoba, and a lot of American clientele come over across our border to participate in fishing, recreational activities in the 100,000 lakes that we have in our province.

And, you know, the veligers have been spotted in Lake Winnipeg. And veligers, for members opposite, those are the microscopic eggs—not villagers; maybe members opposite are confusing it as in the Village People—these are actually veligers.

So, you know, I hope they maybe are aware of the terminology here.

And, you know—and I've been a member of the tourism sector myself. My brother currently owns a fishing lodge, so I personally realize how important it is to prevent the spread from one lake to the other, and containment is critical at this point. Actions such as were taken by the former minister, another very relevant point as well, but awareness is what matters most of all, and each and every individual Manitoban or boater, for that matter, in our province, has to play a role as well.

So I would just hope that, you know, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that, once again, I invite members opposite to try and play a positive role here rather than just politicizing the event, as they're so prone to do, and help us to pass Bill 12 as speedily as possible. That's what is critical at this point in time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to the member's resolution, and I'd like to thank the member for Morris (Mr. Martin) for bringing this forward.

Living in a constituency that has a major waterway and a major lake as part of my constituency, this is an important issue and one that we see, yet again, this government has failed to act in a timely manner on. They've known since 2009–2009—that there were zebra mussels in the Red River system, and it is inevitable that boats would—moving down the river or being moved along the river would move this, and we should have been in a position where we were dealing with decontamination units far sooner than this.

Saying that we're holding it up now when they've held it up for four years—five years, is just cynical on their part. If they really wanted to deal with this invasive species, they need to get out in front of this. And even the six decontamination units that are there now, of which they have only purchased one, when you divide that by the over 100,000 lakes in this province, it's a ridiculously small number.

And it was interesting to see an article in the paper the other day—a fishing article—and I know that the Speaker enjoys his fishing, and I certainly do, too—commenting on the fact that they went out on the Red River expecting there to be a decontamination unit there when they got back because there had been one when they went out and they had spoken to

them, and, lo and behold, they're gone. Here we have the national parks already with a decontamination process in place, a robust one to help protect their waterways, and we haven't really even got past square one here.

It is, frankly, quite embarrassing, and, you know, we're hearing from people that on the Red River that there are docks already showing signs of zebra mussels along the Red River. So clearly we're way too late in regards to this, but we do need to keep it from spreading across the province as far as it will, because it is going to have a very significant impact on the ecosystems, the aquatic ecosystems in this province. And government will probably face many consequences both through hydro and through other industries. I suspect it's going to have a significant impact on the Lake Winnipeg fishery, something that has been fairly successful of late, and it's probably drag it down and will cause many people a lot of grief and many people the loss of their—of income and perhaps even their living, because this government failed to act in a timely manner.

It's an embarrassment, Mr. Speaker, and I think, you look across North America, many places are far ahead of us in terms of dealing with this risk and prepared for it. And it may be inevitable; maybe people cannot be trusted to do the decontamination well enough and that it will eventually move to all jurisdictions. But I suspect we'll still be talking about some parts of North America that are still fighting this battle a generation from now, but it won't be us because we will have already lost the battle thank—because of this government's unwillingness to ask—act in a timely manner.

I hate to say I told you so, but we've seen past examples of government not acting on other invasive species that have already moved into the ecosystems in Manitoba, some of them aquatic, some of them weeds— invasive species which have had significant impacts across Manitoba, leafy spurge being one that has followed virtually every aquatic system across the province now and is everywhere. Purple loosestrife probably started here as well as anywhere because originally bought into—brought into the country as a flowering plant. Lovely little flower, it just invades everything and it interferes both with aquatic side of things and land-based side, so it is certainly a weed with a lot of complications. The only good news with that one is the honey bees love it, so at least somebody benefits from that. But it's upsetting the balance in the ecosystem and there are consequences to upsetting these ecosystems.

We don't always foresee them, but very often it results in a loss of someone's income, a loss of certain species. You see other species that are—now can't compete with the ones that are there, and so they dwindle in number and sometimes will be lost altogether. There's often consequences to everything we do in the ecosystem, and this failure will—probably we'll not know the full scope of the impacts of this until sometime in the distant future.

One of the short-term benefits that some researchers have put forward, as well, they take the phosphorus out of the water—maybe they will—as a filtering organism. Maybe they'll improve the quality of Lake Winnipeg in the short term, but the beaches will definitely not improve, because these are sharp little shells and they will certainly start to accumulate along the beaches in fairly short order. And I suspect that, if you want to get into a business, I would get into the business of selling swimming shoes, because I think people are going to need them in vast numbers as this moves forward.

We're going to make significant changes because of this species, and I just laughed when I heard the plan to treat small bodies of water, the bays, to try and kill a few zebra mussels. If they were thinking that was the only location that they were to be found, they were certainly poorly informed. And that, too, has been a factor, and it's they don't seem to be aware of what's going on.

There are lots of people in the wildlife federations and the fishing groups and even in conservation officers themselves—certainly, I've had casual conversation with conservation officers that knew full well that their efforts this spring—or, sorry, last spring—to deal with the potash treatment were just a joke. There was simply no way that that little chemistry experiment was going to work.

Yes, it did—I actually looked up the research—actually did work for about four seasons on that little pond that it was done, and after that, they just quit monitoring. Doesn't mean it continued on into the future, whether recontamination was an issue, but for four seasons there was certainly no identifiable zebra mussels found in that little body of water. Doesn't mean that that was a long-term success, and it was certainly quite different than dealing with a bay and a lakeshore.

So, Mr. Speaker, I continue to be disappointed with this government when it comes to environmental issues. They have shown very little leadership. I have argued in the past that the impact

of the 2011 flood on Lake Manitoba and the continued high water—it's probably one of the biggest ecological disasters that this province has ever seen.

* (11:30)

I frequently go out along the lakeshore. I know it has changed visibly in the last three years, both with channels being cut through the sand ridge and the vegetation along the shore, some of which was actually endangered species, the vegetation. We had five species of trees found along the southern shore of Lake Manitoba that were found nowhere else in Lake Manitoba—or in, sorry, in Manitoba, though they do occur again in the US as far south as Georgia, so they were fairly unique and probably brought in by migratory birds at some time in the past.

They are almost now all eradicated, simply because the high—continued high water, which as recently as two weeks ago, was cross the ridge again with the big wind. The lake was too high and it drove, in some places it drove the water as far as three kilometres inland in two days. People—and it just destroyed everything in its path, as I know the Speaker is familiar with and other people in this House should be familiar with.

So we can see continued ecological disaster from this government's inability to manage even what resources they have available in terms of water management. I am really not surprised that they are too late to this show, too late with no plan and no one to dance with.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity for speaking on such a serious topic.

And I commend the Minister of Conservation, who is up saying the different steps that are being taken. The former speaker, I couldn't believe how he was saying there's nothing we can do, let's just give up.

I—we are the can-do party over here, Mr. Speaker, and we will do everything within our power to try and come to some eradication of zebra mussels, and also the carp. The carp are a problem in Lake Winnipegosis in the Red River, and I think what we have to do is work together. This is a serious problem, and like the member from Morris brought up, there's many things that we have to look at. And the former minister of Conservation was looking at different ideas and

trying different things. His campaign, don't move a mussel; it's basically putting the knowledge out there what can happen.

And coming from the North—where you like to fish, I know at Reed Lake, yourself—that's what worries me. What worries me is, like, the member from Beausejour, when you have float planes that are loading up in Beausejour or Flin Flon or whatever, that—

An Honourable Member: Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Pettersen: —Lac du Bonnet that have zebra mussels going to these isolated lakes. So it's a very, very serious problem.

I myself had experience with invasive species when I paddled the overflow river which starts up by Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan, and Ducks Unlimited have made some ponds there and that, and they have a dam where the river—where the ponds are drained into the start of the overflow river. Well, right at the dam we were amazed to see carp. I mean, carp, all the way from Lake Winnipegosis, all the way up the overflow as far—like I say—right in near Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan.

What do carp do? Well, like I say, they can destroy the plants, but they can also destroy other species of fish, and that worries me. What worries me is I was watching a documentary on carp in the United States, and they were showing different species of carp that are already in the Mississippi River that could come into the Great Lakes, and it's scary. Some of the species—one species of carp, when it gets scared, jumps out of the water. And they were showing boats going along the river and these fish just jumping up, and you're being slapped at. It's unbelievable.

So we have a chance, we're early in, I guess you could say, in the crisis, and we have to try everything we can. And when I think of the former minister of Conservation trying different things, I'm proud of that. We don't pretend to be Nobel-prize scientists like the minister of—*[interjection]*—Morris is talking about. We are a can-do party that will look at different ideas and try to come to some solution.

We want to work as a team, because I know some of the ridings in the opposition lakes are very important, and the health of those lakes. So we've got to make sure that, you know, the lakes and rivers and that are not polluted, whether it's by sewer lines or whatever.

And I just have to say that Bill 12 looks at this. And the opposition has an opportunity coming together with us, voting on our budget and clapping us on the back and making sure that we can move forward on this. And I know common sense will prevail because I know common sense was brought up a few days ago. So, hopefully, common sense will actually prevail with the people that are here.

The fight for zebra mussels, like I say, there's—everybody's trying everything they can. There's scientists around the world that are looking for a way to stop them. There's—like, what we're trying right now, I guess you can say, is mitigation and containment, but they're also looking at trying to get rid of them in different ways. So scientists are working on them, and we're trying to do the best we can.

I think it's important that we have to recognize, though, that we're—we've got concerns in our own ridings, whether it's float planes, whether it's American tourists coming up with their boats, whether it's just people from the south coming up to the north or whatever to do some fishing. And we've got to make sure that those boats and that are cleaned, but not just clean; like they say, they have to be hosed down with 50°C water. You know, this is something that we are not used to.

And are we starting late, are we starting early? Well, no one can say. All's we can say it is a problem and it will get worse. We're not going to give up on this side. We're going to look at every alternative we can. We're not going to sit back like the former speaker said and, well, that's it. No, we are going to work. We're going to work to make sure you, Mr. Speaker, have a clean lake at Reed Lake so you can go wherever they're at, you know, for a master angler, which I know you're working towards. I think it's in the perch field and not the other species, but we know that you'll work hard to—*[interjection]* Oh, okay, something, you know, bigger, yes.

Well, what we're saying—the PCs would gut our water—waste water treatment laws, putting at risk one of our greatest natural resources. That's wrong. And irresponsible to repeal the hog moratorium legislation enacted to protect Lake Winnipeg. That's April 28th; it was in the Brandon Sun. I can't believe that. I mean, here they are talking about the environment, but then they wouldn't pass things that would have helped the environment. You know, the Leader of the Opposition opposes the ban on cosmetic pesticides—cosmetic pesticides. Did you

hear that? Yes, and he's saying, that's okay; I'll put my weed and feed on there. And I don't know how far he is from the river, but the runoff—*[interjection]* He lives on the river. My goodness, Mr. Speaker.

And what we have to realize is that any time that you're using chemicals, it will drain into the creeks and rivers that end up going to Winnipeg. We've got to—*[interjection]* And I hear rumblings over here saying, I'm not going to use weed and feed. Go out there and pick your dandelions, that's what I'm saying. Go there, pick them up.

The other thing, in the last election, they recklessly promised to cancel urgently needed replacement of Winnipeg's new North End sewage treatment plant that dumped—listen to this—427 million litres of untreated raw sewage. How can they vote against that? My God. This is something that—they stand up about the environment: well, I won't do that.

We've got the TransCanada pipeline: well, I don't care. We want to make sure that all Manitobans are safe whether it's from the zebra mussels, the carp, oil spills, we look after Manitobans. We care, because we know that Manitobans want us to look after them. They don't want to have a laissez-faire attitude. We're a can-do party, and you can look around Winnipeg and see what we've done.

And I know when we fight, when we continue fighting on the zebra mussels, it'll be just like Churchill's saying when he talked to the people of England in 1944: We'll fight them in the ditches, we'll fight them in the lakes, we'll fight them in the rivers; they will not go any further. Now, I'm not saying that's a direct quote, but what I'm saying, we are going to take his attitude and we are going to fight 'til the zebra problem is cured, and we will never surrender. *[interjection]* Thank you, the member from Dauphin. So, yes, you know, I'm almost feeling sorry for these beaver emblem—*[interjection]* Yes. I won't worry about that, no.

* (11:40)

But thank you, Mr. Speaker, for letting me put a few words on here. It's very important to the people of the North. It's very important to your lake, your private siesta lake up there in Reed Lake. And it's very important to all of us. But it is a serious topic. And what we got to do is work together. And I think Bill 12 does that. It's a start. We need more, yes. And we got to make sure that we realize that it's just not the zebra mussels, it's the carp that worries me. And

this is just local people letting their goldfish go or whatever.

An Honourable Member: Cut the carp.

Mr. Pettersen: And you know what, I'm not going to cut the carp. I am going to make sure that we fight the problem of invasive species.

So thank you very much. Thank you for the support I have over here.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm pleased to rise to speak to this resolution.

I think I almost heard the member speak in favour of it. I'm not quite sure what direction he was going. But, it's—it was—he was all over the map, and this from a government, Mr. Speaker, that has the worst environmental record of any province in Canada. Appalling.

For years, Mr. Speaker, I have been very fortunate to be a member of the lake group that helps to manage the Riding Mountain biosphere. And this lake group encompasses governments, stakeholders, park staff, a wide variety First Nations groups, a wide variety of individuals to help manage the Riding Mountain biosphere and keep the clear in Clear Lake. And it's very important that this group has been dealing with invasive species for years.

In fact, I distinctly remember the young provincial staff member coming up to visit us, oh, it'd be three or four years ago, actually, prior to the election, so it's about five years ago, and we discussed invasive species at length and we asked her, like, how big is your department? Who's in charge of invasive species? And she said, well, I am. One person—one person. We went right to the top. One person in Manitoba dealing with all of the invasive species that we are dealing with in Manitoba.

And there's a wide variety, Mr. Speaker. Not just zebra mussels, but the spiny waterflea that fouls fishing gear, the rusty crayfish that is very aggressive, and has been said that it's like clear cutting all the flora on the base—on the bottom of the lakes—water—the Eurasian watermilfoil that we know is in Lake Metigoshe. And when you back your trailer in, often you get some of this in the trailer. And those—some of those trailers of boats, they come into the Clear Lake biosphere.

So at least the federal government in this regard, in Riding Mountain, has been proactive. They tired of waiting for the provincial government to do

anything. So now they have set up a way to deal with invasive species for the park. They are inspecting not just trailered watercraft, as this government talks about, all watercraft, because all watercraft can bring invasive species. All watercraft, not just boats, not just ski boats, not just wakeboard boats, not just fishing boats, not just pleasure boats, sailboats, kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddleboards, all watercraft are inspected in Riding Mountain National Park every year, Mr. Speaker. They're inspected. If they need to be, they are decontaminated. They have been inspecting 100 'vesacles' a week. A utter failure of this provincial government to do anything to protect Manitoba. The national park has decided they need to work on their own.

Now, interestingly enough, they did work through a training session with provincial staff, because provincial staff know what do to do. But this minister is preventing them from doing their job, Mr. Speaker. The provincial staff know what to do. He's preventing them. No resources available, an utter complete failure of this department. And we had in that training group not just people from the national park, we had other individuals that are looking to decontaminate boats and water vessels from Brandon and many from the northern United States, that they are interested in this, of course.

It is sad to see the failure of this government on this issue: failure to start, failure to progress, failure to do anything to help protect Manitoba's lakes. And it's just so sad, Mr. Speaker, that we could lose the battle. They already have given up the battle on several fronts. Their failed spot-spraying experiment, some 400-metric tons directly into the water supply—did it kill a couple mussels? Apparently it did some, but they're still there. They're all there and now they're in the Red River; they've admitted that there are other invasive species that we need to deal with.

Other provinces deal with it at the weigh stations. If you are pulling a boat on the highway, you go into the weigh station, you have it inspected, nothing here. It's absent in Manitoba. The government is absent from this battle. They're absent from this fight and they need to be part of it to help protect Manitoba waterways.

It's very sad to watch, Mr. Speaker, because a lot of the boats now that we have are moving all over North America. They come up here to fish; they come up here for recreation. People buy boats from United States and other areas where these invasive species are, and some of the watercraft that come up

have live wells that need to be decontaminated. If it's a wakeboard boat, they have ballasts that you need to decontaminate those ballasts, to wash them out. A lot of areas that we need to deal with and the park staff in the Riding Mountain National Park are able to deal with that being trained by the provincial government. However, the government itself is not engaged in the fight.

So I encourage the government to support this resolution. They should know what to do; their staff know what to do. So if the minister will just allow the staff to do the right thing, we can help protect Manitoba lakes and waterways.

Thank you.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Always a pleasure to rise and put some actual facts on the record after the members of the opposition stand up and spew some crazy stuff that they spew all the time.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I just heard the member opposite say that the provincial government trains the staff at the lake up in the federal park, but he says that we don't anything. Okay. So we're training the staff to look at the zebra mussels, but we don't do anything. We've hired, we have now have the dog that sniffs out the zebra mussels, but we don't do anything. We have decontamination units, but we don't do anything. It's absolutely ridiculous when we hear from that side of the House about how we don't do anything.

Mr. Speaker, if they would like to listen for a minute instead of [*inaudible*] learn that some of the things going on around the world, you know, like with zebra mussels are that they are not able to be controlled once they're in the wild. And since the Red River—I know that they think there's a magical border at the border line, you know, at Emerson, that the, nothing can invade, nothing can come up through that river system. Since the species is transported through the river system that comes down from the United States where we actually see thousands of lakes in Minnesota that are, have zebra mussels in them, and we see the Red River system from down in the States that had zebra mussels in them. Actually, in the 1980s the zebra mussels were brought in through the Great Lakes, they figure in the bilges—of bilge water in ships. And you know, even though that the, you know, the department of, in the Wisconsin university—I mean I know only experts would say that you can't control them in the wild. The members opposite think that they can, you

know, put some magical border up in the river system and we can control them.

The fact is that they were discovered in the Red River in 2009 and five years later we were—we've—sadly we've seen them here, Mr. Speaker. But as the university and the research experts say, that you can't control them in the wild. We tried to do our best when we found them in a harbour by putting potash in, and we took them out of the harbour, but, unfortunately, they've invaded more into the lake system.

The member opposite talked about having set ups at weigh scales, Mr. Speaker. Well we do have contamination units that are mobile and they go around the province. But it's not just the boats being brought in on the highways. We have float planes that fly in and there could be zebra mussel on the bottom of those floats and then they land in the water system.

It's a very hard species to control and, unfortunately, it's happened and, you know, this resolution, you know, stating that our government has failed to do anything is absolutely false. We have a campaign going on where we see billboards. I—when I was out in West Hawk a couple of weeks ago, there's big billboards saying don't move a mussel. We're trying to talk to people and inform the public about this, about the zebra mussels. Because in the end it's not the government can't control the movement of zebra mussels, because it moves in the water system. It moves in the bilges of boats. It moves on the trailers and it can move on personal watercraft.

* (11:50)

And when the—when we had the announcement about the decontamination units, the personal watercraft people were at that announcement, and they're on board. They're on board with telling people hey, you know what, you've got to watch this. You got to decontaminate your units at high heat. You got to leave them out of the water for, you know, a period of five days or more so the mussels die and they don't get transported to other lakes.

It's not as simple as what the members opposite would like to believe, that it's all the government's fault why zebra mussels have moved in here. I have a map and I'm willing to table it if the members opposite would like to see that all of the zebra mussel infestation around the Great Lakes and into the river systems. Now, I guess this is also the

provincial government's fault that somewhere in, you know, I look down here in Louisiana and down in Kentucky and into Ohio and Oklahoma and all over the Great Lakes, that's all—that's Manitoba provincial government's fault that the—that these zebra mussels exist, Mr. Speaker.

This PMR isn't worth the paper it's written on, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely ridiculous. I'll table the map for the members opposite if they'd like to see that, you know, zebra mussels, as said by experts, are not controllable in the wild. Considering that they're all in the watershed system coming up from the United States to Canada would mean that we can't have that control. We do our best to mitigate it. We're going to continue to do our best, but all over North America, we have seen zebra mussels invade, and every time everybody tries to do their best to mitigate that, but it's not something that a government can control. And the fact that, you know, that the resolution is written that it has failed to properly act, we've done—for five years, those zebra mussels were not in Canada when they were in the Red River system down in the States, and, unfortunately, they've moved up, but we've had campaigns in place to tell people not to do—to bring their—to empty their bilges out, to bring their boats to clean them.

We've done our best. Unfortunately, it's just something that's beyond the control of any government. As you've seen with the map that I tabled, that it's all over the North America water system that these species have invaded. And it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. But to have the members opposite come out and say that we've done something wrong here is absolutely ludicrous. We put resources in place, but every time we do that, they vote against it. We buy new decontamination units; they don't want to fund it. We fund the campaign to put up the signs to inform the public; they don't want to fund it. You know, it's—it must be great for them because everything that they say they would do, they don't actually have to worry about doing because we actually do it. We actually put the money in place to do it; they get to vote against it every time.

You know, there's no magical border. If a float plane flies into one of our harbours and has a zebra mussel on it and it starts to spread within our province, someone with a little fishing vessel could easily have one attached to their boat. They drive to the next lake or they drive up one of our river systems, and then they bring that zebra mussel to the

next water supply. It's not like they're being—that we're going to have every single highway have a decontamination unit watching every single person. This is partially the responsibility of the public, and that's why we've gone about educating them. And as we heard the minister talk about, the people who actually found the mussel in the first place knew about it because of our education system. They brought the mussel to us and said, hey, you know what, we found this in the river system.

I know that they—you know, that the members opposite don't believe in science, but scientists agree that you can't control the spread of them once they're in the wild. All you can do is try to mitigate it, and we are doing our best with programs, with the dogs, with the decontamination units, partnerships with the watercraft industry and partnerships with the boating industry. You know, our department wouldn't have anything if it was up to them because they would cut them: \$550 million worth of cuts across the board. There wouldn't be a decontamination unit or six or more that we have. There wouldn't be any dogs because they would have the cuts to that department. There would be no dogs to sniff the zebra mussels. There'd be no enforcement. There'd be no signs because you can't fund those signs with all of the deep cuts that they're having and the education.

You know, the member opposite, the member for Brandon on the other side of the House there, wanted to talk about the federal government's initiatives. Well, let's look at the federal government's initiatives to protecting water supplies. Did you know that when they first came into government, their federal cousins, there was thousands and thousands of lakes protected in our country and river systems? Now there's only 97 lakes protected in the entire country and only 62 river systems protected because their federal partners decided to introduce a bill to gut environmental protection on the lakes and river system. I'm only bringing it up because the member opposite wants to talk about what Conservatives do. Well, that's what Conservatives do. They gut the environmental regulations, and the record shows it. If he thinks that his government is so good and the Conservatives are so good at protecting the environment, I'd like to see the member opposite stand up right now and put it on the record that he's against the cuts to the environment that his federal counterparts have made. Stand up and tell me that the Harper government and the Conservatives federally have made cuts to the environment and that he's against them, Mr. Speaker.

He won't do that. He won't speak out against his federal counterparts because they don't stand for the environment; they stand for cuts, that's all they stand for, Mr. Speaker.

On our side of the House we put things in place to protect the environment. We put in—we're putting in funding to the North End treatment plant. What did they run on when they were in—when they were running in the last election? They would cut the North End treatment plant upgrades. They wouldn't have upgraded it. Well, how is that going to help our water system, Mr. Speaker? They would've let the effluent flow into the river system. That was their plan in the last election. It's not a secret, it's on the book.

How about the south end treatment plant? We saw the biosystem fail and you know what we did, we said, wait, we've got to upgrade that plant and we're providing funding and the construction going on right now is providing a lot of jobs, but in the end it's going to protect the environment from having the biosystem fail again and having effluent pumped into our river.

One again, the members opposite voted against that very motion, Mr. Speaker. They voted against any of the funding involved. So for them to come forward saying that our government is failing to protect the province from zebra mussels, which is—all the experts say is not controllable once they're in the wild, and that they're out of our control because they come up through the river system and waterways. It's absolutely ridiculous, and I think that the members opposite need to be ashamed of putting forward such a bill in this House.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, a few comments on this resolution.

This situation of zebra mussels in Lake Winnipeg is serious. I'm one who agrees with the minister that this is a crisis, but the problem is that this government has not been adequate in terms of their efforts of prevention.

Zebra mussels were in the Red River in 2009, but there wasn't enough preparation, there wasn't enough readiness, there wasn't enough awareness, there wasn't enough activity to—at that point. And so last year when we got in a situation where Lake Winnipeg was found to have zebra mussels it was identified by late July of last year that a bill was needed to enhance the ability to protect our lakes and

rivers that really should've been in place before because—and as early as 2009 recognizing the situation in the Red River, but, of course, it wasn't, and this government was slow.

I called on the government to come back early last year in late summer or early fall to put this bill forward to get it passed quickly, but the government didn't return to session in September or October. Finally in late November we were back, the bill was presented but it was such a short session that this government planned that there wasn't an opportunity to take it further. We weren't called back in January or February or March to deal with this crisis, rather finally at the end of April we were given the opportunity to start looking at this and other bills.

The government controls when the bill is put forward but, unfortunately, this government did not put this forward for a second reading yet, even though we've been here, well, a month and a half. You know, it's obviously not been a priority for this minister and this government, so it's sad, Mr. Speaker.

But my time is close to being up and in a moment I will stop. The government should've realized, should've been much more on the ball here

and it's sad that it's happened because it is possible to contain it within lakes and within basins and this government hasn't been doing nearly enough, which is too bad.

Mr. Peter Bjornson (Gimli): As the MLA for Gimli, I'm very pleased to put a few words on the record with respect to this particular initiative.

And first of all, to hear the members outright dismiss our efforts last year with the potash I think is really, really unfortunate because I've lived there all my life. I know the fishers. I know the people in that community and they wanted us to try something to try and offset this invasive species from taking over our harbours, and they dismissed it as saying it did not work.

It actually was effective, but we're talking about harbours that have a very small footprint within the greater picture of the lake—

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 11, 2015

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Resolutions	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Res. 10–Provincial Government's Failure to Stop the Spread of Invasive Species in Manitoba	
Second Readings–Public Bills			
Bill 213–The Seniors' Rights and Elder Abuse Protection Act		Martin	1835
Graydon	1825	Nevakshonoff	1837
Crothers	1826	Wishart	1839
Stefanson	1828	Pettersen	1840
F. Marcelino	1829	Helwer	1842
Ewasko	1830	Gaudreau	1843
Gaudreau	1831	Gerrard	1845
Gerrard	1833	Bjornson	1846
Bjornson	1834		

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