

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXV No. 24A - 10 a.m., Tuesday, December 1, 2020

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 1, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Acting Government House Leader): Would you please call Bill 208, The Wildlife Amendment Act with the member for Interlake-Gimli.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 208 this morning.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 208—The Wildlife Amendment Act (Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife Damage)

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call second reading of Bill 208, The Wildlife Amendment Act (Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife Damage).

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I move, seconded by the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), that Bill 208, The Wildlife Amendment Act (Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife Damage), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Johnson: I guess I want to start out by pointing out that there's a substantial administrative delay, you know, that was built up over the years, and we're chipping away with it as our PC government. We've been removing wait times and getting that down, but the request for the removal of beaver dams and lodges and debris that has been pulled into creeks and ditches and streams still turns out to be a pile of delay and work.

So this bill will help in the removal in a timely manner of these delays, and how it does that, Madam Speaker, is it allows the local authorities to make decisions. They're the ones that know where the water flows in the areas—watershed districts. They are—they know every intricate detail of their maps and how the water should flow, and when there's a debris put in the way of that, that—inadvertently, it harms farmland and drowns out our forests and stuff.

So I would like to—this will allow—to move for a quicker and more efficient remedy to the removal of these—this debris that accumulates and—predominantly from beavers. And it also empowers the locals, and they're the ones with the knowledge, the grassroots ones and the level—the local authorities, they have the knowledge of all the local issues in their area.

This also does not allow the local authorities to act outside their area. So, for example, one municipality can't go and give orders in a different municipality to allow debris to be removed. It will be within their authority area only and including the conservation districts—or watershed districts, as we know them now—they are the most hands-on of the watersheds in rural Manitoba. They pretty much know where every nook and cranny of every creek is.

As a matter of fact, this past summer, I toured a—well, I won't use the word abandoned—Ducks Unlimited project; I'll call it a retired Ducks Unlimited project. And when Ducks Unlimited left, you know, they put all the drainage in place, but when we toured it, there were dams everywhere, culverts plugged up, and you could visually see the amount of damage, that the fields were now filled with bulrushes. The trees that have drowned out, they were anywhere from 12 to 18 inches round, and that's—in the Interlake, that takes a long time for a tree of that size to grow, and it just takes a matter of a short period of time of a beaver to block up some of the drainage to cause this damage.

Now, in consultations with the local authorities, they're excited to be empowered to allow them to make the decisions of where they feel these dams and debris should be or could be removed. Not all of it, obviously, has to be removed. There's lots of space to co-live with the beaver in the Interlake. There's lots of areas that it doesn't inadvertently affect. But they are excited to get their fair say on the conservation

management of their communities, and they're excited to be empowered.

This bill will also save conservation officers an abundance of time. Currently, the way it's set up is a conservation officer has to traipse through and try and locate the trouble debris and then add their comments to the permit that's been applied. Hopefully, if they're fortunate enough, they can have one of the local authorities go with them to show them where it is. But a lot of time is burnt up from the conservation officer, where they could be concentrating out on enforcement, for example. And I think we all know how important it is to protect our wildlife and night hunting and different things of that nature that a conservation officer, I feel, from rural Manitoba, that their time is spent better doing.

And they do protect an abundance of our nature and wildlife, and I want to thank the conservation officers for doing this and focusing on illegal night hunting. But, you know, of course, this helps show that our government is committed to ensuring the sustainability of our environment and our wildlife.

I guess just a quick point that I want to make: when you see this many trees drowned out in an area, sure, there's now swamp there to—created for wildlife, but there has to be consideration of all the drowned-out vegetation that is there, that is now emitting CO₂. And all of our trees that have drowned out in these hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of acres of bush that has been drowned out, our trees aren't taking that CO₂ and converting it back to oxygen as much as they have in the past.

* (10:10)

And again, the conservation officers are—it's very important that they focus on what they're best at doing. And this bill also commits to empowering municipalities and local government, but we have to keep in mind that The Water Rights Act and The Wildlife Act—this bill does not supersede them. The watered life—Wildlife Act and Water Rights Act remain intact, and they—so somebody can't just go out and inhumanely get rid of a lodge full of beavers. The same rules apply. You know, you have to have the trappers come in and trap and then remove the debris afterwards.

Now, if you can nip a problem in the bud and allow local authorities—if they see something that's starting, they can remove that before it becomes a major problem.

I also want to point out, in the Interlake it's very, very flat, so many miles inland—I've seen fish spawning as far as 12 miles inland, and these beaver dams prevent the fish—it actually becomes a fish block and prevents fish from spawning. And along with other negative effects of beaver dams, it really does prevent our—you know, our favoured fish, walleye, or pickerel as we call it, from spawning and remaining abundant in rural Manitoba.

So this allows them to be proactive, as I said, rather than reactive, and prevent property damage before it occurs. And so this bill is about reducing red tape. And I think I will end, Madam Speaker. The time goes ever so quickly. That we need to be made aware of any removals, like this bill has to—the local authorities that remove it, they have to make the government aware of a removal within a short period of time.

So it's not something that just goes out willy-nilly and start tearing up beaver dams where not necessary. This is a protection of farmers and help fish spawning, and the watershed districts are in favour of this throughout all my consultations—local authorities, mayors, reeves, AMM—all those.

So, thank you for your time, Madam Speaker, and let's get this bill passed and moved on.

Questions

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

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I thank the member for introducing this bill, reading the details for the second time for The Wildlife Amendment Act.

I was just wondering why has the member chosen to exempt this bill from The Water Rights Act, and yet subject it to The Water Rights Act regulations?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Yes, as I mentioned in my preamble, Madam Speaker, this bill will not supersede either one of those. There is—it just allows local authorities—it empowers them to take care of their local issues.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Can the member please explain how this bill will make life

easier for rural Manitobans to protect their property from water and wildlife damage?

Mr. Johnson: This allows the local authorities to react quickly and—in the removal of debris and beaver dams or lodges, and that's the importance of it, is empowering the local authorities so they can react quickly and get the problem solved before it becomes a larger problem.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question relates to the impact on farmers downstream. I've seen instances in the past where beaver dams have been broken up and the water behind the dam has flowed downstream and flooded the farmer downstream.

I would just ask the member what his approach will be here.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, well that's exactly the point of this bill, Madam Speaker. It's to prevent a problem from becoming a disaster.

If you empower the local authorities to remove it when it's not holding tons of water back, as opposed to allowing it to build and build and then burst free and take out a whole bunch of homes and farms, that's exactly what this bill is about. And it will be done in a responsible manner as municipalities and conservation districts have always done in the past.

Mr. Brar: The member for Interlake stood on the shore near his house in 2016 with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) when the Premier announced that the Pallister government would continue the NDP government's work on the channel.

Does the member feel a sense of betrayal that the project has not been completed and, in fact, not even begun as the Premier promised?

Mr. Johnson: Yes, so I can appreciate the member trying to make a very non-political, non-partisan bill a political matter.

I will say that our government, including the Premier, supports farmers and the GDP and everything that they bring into this province, and this bill will allow—in an addition to that GDP—from preventing farmland from being inundated with water.

So I want to thank our Premier for supporting me in bringing this bill forward.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I want to also thank my member from Interlake for bring forward this great bill.

How will this bill ensure Manitobans are able to get a resolution to their concerns in a more timely manner?

Mr. Johnson: Yes, Madam Speaker, I think we can all agree that local authorities—the grassroots, you know, the mayors, reeves, councillors with their boots on the ground, there are watershed districts—they know the areas very, very well and they can get a response out and in a lot quicker manner than, say, somebody sitting in an office in Selkirk. And that's that point of this bill, is to get things addressed before they become a problem and ensuring that our farmers have viable cropland.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have a question?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I do—

Madam Speaker: Oh, sorry. I'm sorry. The member for River Heights, as an independent member, only gets one question.

Mr. Brar: I just wanted to ask this: How does the member see such actions being co-ordinator if decisions are being made to send water downstream exempt from The Water Rights Act?

Mr. Johnson: I think we all know that water is not a smart object. All it does is go downhill.

And if you block it back and allow a beaver dam—I've witnessed beaver dams, a two-stage beaver dam that each one is—one was eight and one was six feet high. And if you—the danger is, when you allow that water to pool and if that water is to get released all at once, it can be very, very dangerous.

As a matter of fact, at Lester Beach many years ago, a beaver dam broke, took out railroad tracks and washed numerous cottages into Lake Winnipeg. So this is designed to prevent issues like that.

Mr. Nesbitt: How will this bill result in allowing department staff to focus on other responsibilities under their mandate?

*(10:20)

Mr. Johnson: Yes, this bill allows for the local authorities and municipalities or Northern Affairs to inform the government when they've removed an obstruction. So rather than the conservation officer, for example, having to traipse out and try and find the troubled area, and then go through a series of paperwork and stuff, this allows the local authorities just to—and they have to, by the way—inform the provincial authorities. So that really reduces the red

tape and allows the provincial authorities to focus on things like drainage, permits and other items at hand.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yes, I was just wondering, there isn't any funding attached to this. Isn't this just going to push extra work now to municipalities and create, essentially, an unfunded liability?

Mr. Johnson: Well, I'd like to point out to the member that—I don't know how many areas he's toured, but the liability is in not doing something. The municipalities are excited to be empowered to be allowed to do this. But currently, the lack of doing something and allowing these beaver dams to build up actually cause a massive liability, potential liability. As I mentioned in my earlier example, Madam Speaker, where the—multiple cottages were washed into Lake Winnipeg right around the Lester Beach area; it washed out railroad tracks. That's the true liability.

Mr. Brar: This bill also talks about the landowners' right to kill or take certain wildlife. And it has some exceptions.

I was just wondering about the wild boar, because this is a great problem in Interlake. So is that anymore exempt from it or not?

Mr. Johnson: The current legislation, as it stands, for species like cougar, deer, elk, moose; that all stays the same. This only deals with drainage and removing of debris. All the rules remain the same. You can't—technically, Madam Speaker, it's illegal to shoot a beaver while it's in water; it has to be on land. And these are rules that are in place. They've been in place for a long time. If it's in water you need to trap it. I maintain an active trapper's licence, in case I ever need to deal with an issue like that. But all the rules remain the same. This only changes for these removing—removal of debris.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I can remember growing up in a rural area and seeing a lot of the damage caused by beavers when they would dam up the local swamp or the water flow in our pastures.

Can the member tell me how this bill's an improvement to the current process for requesting the removal of these beaver dams or obstructions to water flows.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, there's numerous benefits that this bill has. One is freeing up conservation officers' time to focus on illegal night hunting or any other issues similar to that. But this also empowers the local

authorities. And they're excited about this. And they can prevent an issue from happening before it inundates a pile of farmland. For example, an alfalfa crop is very expensive to replace. You have to break up the land, reseed it. And empowering the local authorities gets a decision made quickly and proficiently, and they know—being grassroots, they know how the water is supposed to flow in their area, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill and put a few words on record. And I also want to thank the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson) to pretend that he is standing for the people of the Interlake. But actually, as per my conversation with people in the Interlake, he normally does not.

This bill talks about the wildlife amendments, and it talks about protecting property from water and wildlife damage.

We all know that drainage is a major problem among the farmers in the Interlake, but that's not the only problem. There are so many other problems. The government policy itself is a big problem for those producers. They're struggling. They're struggling with various things. And what they expect from the members who have been elected and sent to this Chamber, those expectations are not being addressed properly.

While this bill decentralizes some decisions and allows the local governments to authorize a person to clear the debris or to destroy a beaver lodge or beaver dam, that's something that would help in proper flow of the water, that would help improving the drainage, no doubt about it. But it has some implications, as during the question period we've been discussing about the impact on the communities or fields downstream. It seems like we are fixing a problem here and creating another one a few miles away. So, this bill does not clarify how these issues would be taken care of.

We're concerned about the livelihoods of rural Manitobans and most of the people in this area, they are renting Crown lands. They are dealing with predation, dealing with attacks by wild animals to their cows and calves. They are dealing with a lack of

funding for drainage projects and they are dealing with the latest changes to Crown lands, both the rent increase and the way the Crown lands are given to the producers, to the renters.

The member's bill seeks to address the concerns of his constituents and it's right that they want good drainage and they want to deal with predation for their livestock. I think working towards these problems and fixing these problems, or trying to fix these problems, is something good, but nothing could be done without the budget.

Madam Speaker, we know that this government budgeted \$65 million for flooding projects, including so many drainage projects, but they spent only \$17 million, which is just one fourth of the budgeted money. So I'm wondering how this member and this government thinks that, without proper funding of these projects, drainage issues would be addressed.

* (10:30)

It's not about the right of clearing a beaver damage—a beaver dam, it's actually about empowering those communities. It's about bringing new projects, funding these projects and actually spending that money to improve drainage. It's not just budgeting the money and not spending.

I would share a real picture with you. I'm in touch with so many producers in this area, and they discussed things with me, with each other using telephone and using social media. Two of the producers are talking to each other on social media. One from the constituency of Dauphin and the other from Interlake-Gimli, and they're sharing their experiences with their interaction to the elected representatives.

One of them says: My MLA from Interlake-Gimli told me to send the Crown land lease bills—copy of the bills for last three years. She did and never heard back from this member. And the other constituent from Dauphin, she shares her experience and she goes: Wow, you're MLA is way better than mine. And she uses some words that I can't even use here in the Chamber.

These members, they are leaving poor impressions of themselves. They're losing trust. They're not able to speak where they need to speak. These Crown lease holders who they are saying through this bill that they, as tenants of the Crown lands—renters of the Crown lands, they now have the ability to defend their property from wildlife damage.

But on the other hand, they're trying to contact these members and they're asking for help. None of these members who represent these people from the Interlake, especially, and Dauphin area—none of them stood up for them. None of them stood up in the Chamber and said a single word in favour of these producers. Those producers are really upset. They're having hard time paying their bills. And we all know that. It's not just a fraction that is added to their Crown land rents, it's up to 200 to 300 per cent increase. So when you're part of a government that puts this burden on your constituents, and you are silent—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak briefly about Bill 208, a bill that will have a huge impact on the lives of farmers and ranchers across the province.

The beaver is the largest rodent in Canada and is known worldwide as the symbol of this great country. There are estimated 6 million beavers in Canada before the start of the fur trade. During its peak, 100,000 pelts were being shipped to Europe each year, and the Canadian beaver was in danger of being wiped out. As the demand for beaver pelts declined over the decades, beavers have made a huge comeback. It's estimated today that they are between 60 and 400 million beavers in North America. Without beavers and their dams, much of the water in numerous small streams would flow unchecked through the landscape.

By impounding water and cutting down trees, beavers not only provide themselves with wood for their lodges and twigs for their food, but they also open up dense woods, creating opportunities for a variety of plants and animals. Because of this, they have been called a keystone species in temperate and boreal forest aquatic ecosystems.

However, with a short gestation period of three and a half months, and few predators, the beaver population is now out of control, and in many cases, beavers cause considerable damage to property with dams creating a backup of water, leaving many acres of land unable to be cropped or grazed by cattle each year. This costs producers across Manitoba millions of dollars a year and, of course, considerable frustration.

Madam Speaker, there is currently a procedure that landowners must follow to request a permit from Manitoba Conservation and Climate for the removal of beaver dams and lodges. This permitting

can prove to be very cumbersome and time-consuming, especially in many areas of the province where the problem is more prevalent.

Conservation officers have to inspect the problem area before issuing a permit. There have been documented cases where removal requests have taken over a full year to be acted upon. Each day that passes increases the risk of more property damage and takes monies—money out of the hands of farmers and ranchers.

This bill will give powers to towns, municipalities, watershed districts and Northern Affairs to enter the land in question to inspect the problem and issue permits for the removal of problem beavers or to destroy a beaver lodge or to remove an obstruction to water flow caused by an accumulation of debris if it adversely affects local water flow or land use.

Currently, a landowner has the right to kill or take any wildlife on their land in defence of their property, except for deer, moose, antelope, elk, cougar or game birds. This bill extends the same rights to tenants of private land or Crown land.

The provisions in this bill will allow for quicker and more efficient remedies for removal requests by empowering local officials who are knowledgeable with the land in question and know first-hand the damage that beaver and dams have caused or will cause if left unchecked.

The bill also provides local authorities with the ability to be proactive rather than reactive, which may prevent property damage before it occurs. Besides quicker approvals because local authorities are often aware of this problem, this bill will free up our conservation officers for other duties, such as stopping illegal night hunting, rather than writing out permits.

While our government is committed to empowering municipalities and local governments and reducing red tape, we recognize that The Water Rights Act and The Wildlife Act will still supersede local authority. Bill 208 will require the Department of Conservation and Climate be made aware of any beaver removal requests, so that they can work with local authorities to protect beavers and the habitat they create for other wildlife as part of a healthy ecosystem.

Madam Speaker, as an MLA that represents a rural riding that has many streams and plenty of bush, I have heard from many producers frustrated with the damage caused by beavers. Bill 208 will allow for quicker approvals to eliminate beavers and their dams.

Madam Speaker, I commend the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson) for putting forward such an important piece of legislation that will be very appreciated by our rural producers. My colleagues on the other side of the House often talk about rural Manitoba, but none of them represent the agricultural areas of the province and have no first-hand knowledge of issues facing our agricultural producers.

Today is the day the NDP and independent members can actually stand up and show their support for farmers across rural Manitoba by passing Bill 208 on second reading and sending it on to committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Indeed, we are very happy to stand up this morning and talk about supporting producers throughout the province. And in fact, I just wanted to begin by acknowledging my colleague, the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar), who led us off today and I think brought up some very important points which I hope to touch on a little bit further this morning as well.

But I just wanted to mention his voice, because not only did he bring the voices of producers across the province to the Legislature this morning but, in fact, brought forward, from what I understand, potential constituents from, you know, the member who brought this bill forward, brought those voices here into the debate, and I think that's an important thing to do—always important to bring the voices of Manitobans forward, and especially if they are not feeling like that they are being heard. And so I commend him for bringing that forward.

* (10:40)

I also want to recognize the fact that he does have, not only the experience of listening to producers from across the province as an MLA, but in his previous life also worked in agriculture and—with the province, and actually has some experience in dealing with some of these issues. So we certainly lean on him for his expertise and his perspective.

With regards to this bill here this morning, Madam Speaker, I think this is an important issue. And this is something that we, on the side of the official opposition, will want to spend a lot of time debating and talking about because this is an issue that is very important to so many producers across the province. We know that producers are, you know, very in tune with the land; they're in tune with their local ecosystems, and they want to do what's right by the natural environment. At the same time, they also

want to make an honest living. And I think any time we can stand up in the Legislature and, you know, and recognize those two forces that they live their lives by, I think it's an important area to debate.

In particular, when it comes to water and drainage, you know, I was just reflecting before we came into the Chamber, with some of my colleagues, how, you know, drainage, especially when it came to communities in the Interlake, was a top-of-mind issue for the previous government and something that, you know, a lot of time, energy and actually funding went into supporting and enhancing in so many places, particularly in the Interlake and particularly when it comes to small producers and how we can help them make a go of it. And I remember very clearly being new to this Chamber and, you know, I'd come in; I had a whole bunch of issues that I wanted to focus on, and it was great to have those voices around the table that were bringing other issues like drainage. And really, you know, I got to say, it really expanded my viewpoints and made me realize how important this is to so many constituents.

And at every point when this was brought forward, you know, by members and, you know—and again, it was done so beautifully here this morning by the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar)—those issues would come forward. The first question we would ask ourselves is how can we support those small producers, how can we actually give them the funding and the support to actually make something happen. So, you know, that was our approach.

What we're seeing here this morning is the opposite—the opposite here, where the member for the Interlake wants to put words on the record, but he doesn't actually want to follow that with any kind of support or funding. And, in fact, what he is doing with this proposed bill, he's actually downloading the responsibility to municipalities.

Now, he says municipalities want to be part of the solution, and I will definitely agree with him in that regard. You know, we just had the AMM convention. I don't think there's an AMM policy convention that happens without talking about drainage, talking about how we can support municipalities. But at no time does the AMM or any municipality around Manitoba say, yes, give us the responsibility but don't give us any funding; don't give us any support to actually make this happen.

So what they're actually doing is they're actually just giving more responsibility without any kind of

support and any kind of funding to those municipalities. And that is a real shame, because these issues—as the member mentioned, you know, water flows downhill and it goes where it's going to go. You know, the reason that we have this provincial support and the provincial oversight over this is because different municipalities have different resources to be able to deal with these issues. And when you're talking about a for-provincial plan or provincial co-ordination, that's where there is a real role and a real responsibility.

And yet, you know, the minister—the member wants to talk about, you know, these watershed districts and with regards to the—you know, with regards to the co-ordination across, but there's no support to actually do that. So basically we're just leaving municipalities on their own, giving them the responsibility without giving them any kind of backup to actually make this kind of stuff happen. And that is, I think, not what municipalities are asking for. That's certainly what I've heard.

You know, in fact the minister—or the member started right off the hop, saying look, you know, there's a huge shortfall in funding for dealing with drainage issues. He said, you know, our government isn't doing enough. That's the way that he started, and then said, well, you know, but if we just free up our own resources—talked about conservation officers and, you know, we have a lot of respect for the work that they do, but to say that, you know, it's all about the provincial budget and not to worry about what the impact on those municipalities is, I think really misses the mark. And that's really where I think this could be improved.

This is an important issue, not just for producers, but I do want to address the fact that this is an important issue across our province. And, you know, the member talked about the situation in Lester Beach—got some of the facts wrong, we won't spend time on that. But I just wanted to put on the record, you know, this is a bigger issue than even just the producers or the homes: lives can be at risk because of the damage that beavers can do and other flooding issues.

The derailment that happened in northern Manitoba took the life of a worker up there not too long ago, Madam Speaker. That was because of the impact that beavers have, and that is a serious issue. That is a serious thing that we need to talk about. There was cuts that were made to deal with those sorts of issues and then, you know, you had the tracks

washed out, there's a derailment, and that's the impact that we saw, was somebody lost their life. So I think it's important to broaden out the conversation that way.

But at the end of the day, what we're seeing, Madam Speaker, is cut after cut after cut from this government. And, you know—and then they want to hide behind this idea: well, you know, we'll just leave it up to municipalities. And you know, again, municipalities aren't asking for that. What they're asking for is a partner at the table. There's a role for the provincial government to play.

Certainly, taking direction from municipalities to make sure that the investments that they're making are the right ones; certainly, listening to producers—not like the member opposite has been doing—listening to his own constituents on the issues that are important, talking to them about community pastures, talking to them about the cuts that have been made there—these are all impacts that the producers across Manitoba are feeling in real terms.

And to simply say, well, we'll just wash our hands of this issue, give all the responsibility to municipalities and not be there to back them up, I think, speaks to where this government's mind is at all times. And that is their own bottom line, their own cuts that they can make, and not worrying about the impact either on the small producers or on the municipalities. That's where they are failing once again.

So, you know, I think this is a bill that I know that certainly members of the official opposition want to continue to bring those voices forward. They want to be able to continue to advocate for them. And I know that there's going to be a lot of debate on this, but I do hope we get to a place where, you know, the government can understand that they cannot operate in—you know, by themselves. They can't simply wash their hands of these issues by saying, well, we'll get out of the way and we won't actually do anything about this.

They need to actually step up. They actually need to put, you know, money on the table or support on the table to co-ordinate this. And you know, we'd be happy to support any kind of move that supports communities in that way, supports those farmers. But when you're simply just washing your hands of it and saying, you know, this is good for us, this is good for our Treasury, our bottom line—I'm sure the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) is going to want to get up and say how good this bill is for his bottom line—for the producers, for the municipalities, for the communities

around our province, this is not the right way to approach it. And I hope the member reconsiders how this bill is brought forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, just a few words on this bill.

This bill essentially transfers the authority for looking after beaver dams from the department of conservation to the local municipality. This is a reasonable step. The local municipality is closely connected to what's going on.

I expressed some concerns about people being flooded downstream. The local municipal people can very quickly identify if there is a potential problem, and I believe that this will simplify matters.

* (10:50)

One of the government representatives talked about the fact that there were long, long delays in the department of conservation and climate change acting. Part of these long delays, of course, were related to the severe cutbacks to the department, which the current government imposed. But that being said, this is a sensible step and one that Manitoba Liberals will support.

I would suggest that some of the comments in terms of the impact of climate change, which could be complex for a variety of reasons—sloughs or swamps can be quite a significant store of carbon, in fact—that those concerns would have to be studied in some more detail to see whether there's a net benefit or a harm in relation to climate change.

But regardless of the climate change situation, this bill helps farmers look after their land and provide good stewardship. It is a bill which is reasonable with current state of the beaver population, and it—therefore, we support it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Merci. Miigwech.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): It gives me great pleasure to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 208.

But maybe before I begin my comments, I'd like to make clear and clarify and disagree with the member from Interlake-Gimli in regards to the water. The water is, in fact, not dumb, as he referenced that. Water, in fact, is the giver of life, much like the air that we breathe. So I do want to clarify that right from the get-go and have respect for the givers of life, which in this case and in regards to Bill 208, is water.

I try my best to look at legislation that's brought forth by this government. They make reference many, many times to—they bring forward as being non-political and non-partisan and that all members should be able to support anything that they bring forward.

And while as much as I want to believe that, as much, I'm sure, the members opposite want to believe that also—and this Bill 208 perhaps reference and brings forth a non-political, non-partisan issue—I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the fact that throughout the comments from members opposite in relation to Bill 208 and the protection of the landholders, they make reference of the fact that conservation officers are much better utilized by enforcing illegal night hunting. And that seems to be the only reference and the only two points that are raised on this matter.

And that really takes away from the good work that conservation officers do in our province, because they do much more than that. They do much more than just being able to regulate the beaver population and enforce illegal night hunting. And that seems to be the only two references that are made here.

So when we talk about this being an non-political, non-partisan issue, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) constantly talks about illegal night hunting in relation to First Nation and Indigenous communities. So that, by every effort that—and every time he mentions that, that is, in fact, a political and a partisan issue. So I did want to clarify that before I got into my comments about Bill 208.

So when we talk about supporting agriculture, it was also mentioned that we perhaps, on this side of the House, don't know what we're talking about because we have no agriculture and no members representing agriculture, representing farmers, which, in fact, is absolutely not true. We represent all of Manitobans in this regard. Whether they be farmers, whether they be in rural southern Manitoba, downtown Winnipeg, we all have an interest in agriculture in our area and the supports and the issues and the goods that are supplied by our agriculture industry here in the province of Manitoba. So when we have—when we talk about having an interest and perhaps not having an interest, that, in fact, is absolutely not true.

But when we talk about—and then when the member opposite, member from Interlake-Gimli, talks about who exactly is empowered—because that's also the words that he's using, is empowering local communities and empowering local landowners. But there's also a lot of other stakeholders at play here. In particular, Interlake: we do have First Nation

communities in Interlake, Indigenous communities, that are also affected by this possible legislation, that are also affected by flooding, that are also affected by beavers.

And it's not just in the Interlake, it's in all of Manitoba. As we mentioned—as was mentioned before, I mean, the beaver population has exploded over our province and over North America, so there is a—there is different categories of beavers, they also—highways, for example, Infrastructure also categorizes nuisance beavers and—in regards to the detrimental impacts they would have on roadwork and things like that too. And as my colleague from Concordia 'pinched' out, the railway line up north, which tragically took a life of an employee up there.

So those kind of things also need to be addressed. And in this legislation that's being brought forward in this private members' business, that's brought forward by the members opposite, it's much like all other pieces of legislation that are brought forward by this government; it just, in fact, falls short.

It's raised an issue so the member opposite can go back and tell to his constituents that, in fact, I'm doing something on your behalf. But if you really want to do something on their behalf, then actually bring forward all the issues and all the concerns that are raised and all the concerns that would be affected by this piece of legislation.

So when you talk about being able to empower locals and being able to take away and maybe have conservation best utilized to do other things—like I said, there is more than just illegal night hunting and that really kind of deters away and calls down the great work of conservation officers because there is more than that.

So, I think, when it comes to conservation and if we're going to empower local communities, local landowners, to be able to do—in this case, handling of nuisance beavers for—to mitigate flooding, then in fact, why don't we work in collaboration with—and the member opposite also talked about the knowledge that our—that the landowners have, the knowledge that the landowners bring. But there's also great knowledge that the First Nation communities bring and the Indigenous communities in Interlake bring to this.

So, when we talk about enforcement, why not talk about conservation management. Maybe that's something that we need to talk about, and we need to bring all of the stakeholders at play to be able to have a conservation management system in place, where

everybody has that say, where it's not top-down approach and a dictatorship-type approach, to be able to say, this is what we're going to do.

So in this case, when we talk about empowered, there's always the fear of, if you empower somebody or something, or an organization to do something, where's the dispute mechanism if that power gets abused? So, in this case, if there's a—it shouldn't be a free-for-all, to be able to say and to be able cite in the remotest way and just kind of go on a technicality, for somebody to go out hunting beaver for the sake of hunting beaver, whether it be on their property or not, and be able to refer themselves or get out of any kind of enforcement or any kind of legal responsibility that may come from conservation, just to simply say, well, I was handling a nuisance beaver so that's why I was able to do that.

So, where's the dispute mechanism for neighbouring landowners, neighbouring communities, neighbouring constituents, to be able to say that, in fact, well, when this was brought forward, somebody was—you know, X person or so-and-so was out there and they were just hunting for the sake of hunting, it had nothing to do with being a nuisance beaver, it had no impacts on their land at all; they were just out there for the sake of hunting and fooling around. And then that case—that's where accidents happen and, knock on wood, that we never get into being able to have to deal with a tragedy like that.

So again, if this piece of legislation is meant to empower something, then where is the dispute mechanism to kind of deal with potential abuse of that power or individuals that are acting under the guise of protection of the land? We see many cases in the United States, for example, where people are—have the right to bear arms. So you see people walking around with guns strapped to their hip, you know. Is that what we're—what's going to happen here, under the guise of being able to say that, well, I'm going to deal with a nuisance beaver.

So when we talk about being able to do that and do those kind of things too—it's been mentioned, and it's mentioned many, many times about what a beaver means to our country, to North America, to Manitoba and exactly—we can't always refer to beavers being a nuisance beaver. We don't know at this time, maybe some point in time, if we decimate the beaver population, what may come of it, what may happen, what we may realize—

* (11:00)

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

The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private member's resolutions.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 8—The Importance of Small Businesses in Manitoba

Madam Speaker: The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on The Importance of Small Businesses in Manitoba, brought forward by the honourable member for Turtle Mountain.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Turtle Mountain): I move, seconded by the member—honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko),

WHEREAS Manitoba, like the rest of the world, is dealing with the challenges of COVID-19 which has caused a great deal of stress and anxiety for Manitobans, especially those involved with small businesses who are feeling especially hard pressed by the effects of this pandemic; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has implemented programs to help Manitobans by creating the AbilitiCBT Digital Therapy program, which has provided 4,000 Manitobans free access to mental health resources; and

WHEREAS the province's small businesses are essential to a prosperous Manitoba and are the backbone of a robust economy; and

WHEREAS these small businesses are the first to step up to support minor sports teams and community events and the Provincial Government is now stepping up to support Manitoba's small businesses by providing almost one billion dollars of support; and

WHEREAS this support comes in the form of programs such as the Bridge Funding which will help small businesses that have been forced to close by initially providing them \$100 million dollars, and another \$100 million dollars in January if the province is still in a state of lockdown; and

WHEREAS another program that the Provincial Government developed is the Wage Subsidy Program which helped small businesses by covering half of the wages of employees they hired or re-hired during this pandemic which will also provide businesses with a cash advance of \$1,500 for each new hire or re-hire. In addition, this program has provided \$82.39 million

to 4,794 of Manitoba's businesses and helped covered the wages of 9,318 employees; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has adapted to the changing nature of this pandemic by evolving programs after listening to input from the business community. For example, the Gap Protection Program will distribute \$58 million dollars to 9,667 small and medium sized businesses. Although this funding was initially meant as a non-interest-bearing loan, after consulting with the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, retail councils, and businesses this loan was converted into a grant in order to best serve the needs of Manitoba's small and medium sized businesses.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognizes the important benefits of—small businesses provided to communities in the province and that they will continue to benefit Manitoba after this pandemic.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk), seconded by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko),

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognizes the important benefits that small businesses provide to communities in the province and that they will continue to benefit Manitoba after this pandemic.

Mr. Piwniuk: As a business owner when I—before I became an MLA, I've—actually had a business in the town of Virden and I continue to still have a business in the town of Virden. But I'm so honoured to represent the municipality of Turtle Mountain.

Turtle Mountain, you know, when we had this pandemic, I did my research as the 'panep' hit and all the businesses in our constituency were affected, and I came up with over 700 businesses just in the Turtle Mountain constituency. That's going from Notre Dame in the northeast corner to Pearson in the southwest corner. It's a big, long, vast area.

But this is affecting—there's many, many businesses—small businesses in Manitoba, throughout the city of Winnipeg to—through every—the northern part of the—Winnipeg—Manitoba to southern Manitoba, Interlake. Every region has small businesses. And they actually employ about nine out of 10 Canadians in our society. And again, our economy is made up of 60 per cent—close to 70 per cent of consumers' spending. And so, during

this pandemic, this is a big factor when it comes to our small businesses in our province.

And so, what I want to bring forward here is to understand that, with all the stuff that's happening with COVID-19, the lockdowns that we've had, the code red that we're going through right now, what we've had in the past April until about June when we started to open up our economy, many businesses have—had suffered.

And so what we have done when we were getting people back to work, we started with the Back to Work Manitoba wage subsidy program, which entitles the owners to put up to 20 per cent of their—20 employees to be signed up—to pay 50 per cent of the wages of the employees. And an additional that—with—this program also created \$1,500 eligible for—per hire under this program, so it's kind of an advanced payment to small businesses.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The other program that we also had was the gap program—the protection—Manitoba Gap Protection Program. This program—basically, we wanted to make sure—the Premier (Mr. Pallister) wanted to make sure that—with this back-to-work wage subsidy program, we wanted to make sure that businesses who didn't qualify for the Back to Work wage—Manitoba wage subsidy, we wanted to make sure that they weren't—they didn't lose through the cracks here.

So the—many of the businesses had applied, and apparently 120,000 Manitoba businesses had applied for the Manitoba Gap Protection Program, and we actually paid out over \$120 million to businesses in need, approximately. This was going to be a non-interest bearing—forgiving Manitoba loan, and now we've actually made it into—when it comes to December 31st, 2020, that loan will be forgiven and it'd—more of a grant that'll be given to our businesses.

Recently, when we had the code red, Manitoba bridge program was established and the government has developed the Manitoba bridge program for both small and non-profit groups. This grant provides up to \$5,000 grant—eligible for Manitoba businesses and organizations that require a full closure of their premises to the public as a result of the COVID-19 prevention orders effective on November 12th, 2020.

So now, they—these businesses, in the month—these last two months, until December 31st, will get \$5,000 as a lump sum and then when this—the lock-down happens—go into January, we will be allocating

another \$100 million to help with another \$5,000 into the future.

So this is the kind of program that we're creating. We also started some other programs that—Manitoba Job Restart program. Our government's created the Manitoba Job Restart program which provides Manitobans with—safely returns to work and volunteers—stopped collecting the Manitoba—Canada Emergency Response Benefit. And with similar programs, the eligible applicants can receive up to \$2,000 for returning to work for more than 30 hours a week.

And we also created another Manitoba future entrepreneur youth pandemic recovery program. This is going to help with our youth of trying new—starting new careers, new jobs, new businesses. This is what that program's is all about.

And then we also have—the B2B Manitoba is another program that our government's listed—a small business community in response to creating the B2B Manitoba. B2B Manitoba is an online marketplace that allows small businesses to buy and—supplies required to reopen safely.

And then we also had the Manitoba Commercial Rent Assist program that we've also established to help with our businesses when it comes to creating, you know, programs for their rent. You know, because a lot of times, a lot of—especially when it comes to a business in a small—let's say in a mall, the biggest cost to that business is not just employees, it's also the rent. You know, there's a substantial amount of rent that a lot of these businesses have incurred when they—their business can not be opened or they're reduced.

So what I would really encourage during this pandemic for small businesses is making sure that we shop local, we shop local for our businesses that are in our small communities, in our city of Winnipeg. A lot of them, you know, these are family businesses. We need to support those businesses.

I know in—just in our area, we try to support restaurants, for instance. We will buy—even though that—my wife likes to cook, I don't mind cooking, my kids are starting to cook—but what we try to do on a weekly basis, at least, is to order out to support our local restaurants, to make sure that they're there after this pandemic.

We want to be there for all our businesses. So that we know that once we—once this pandemic is behind us, we want to make sure that Manitoba grows and continue—grows with our small businesses.

Right now we're facing that—just listened to the news in the States that right now they're actually creating—this vaccine is going to be rolled out in the US by the 15th of December by some of the pharmaceutical companies. So that's sort of—that's good news.

And—but if everybody can, you know, the reason why we had to shut down a lot of our small businesses is because our numbers were growing. And we were listening to our chief medical officer for the province, Dr. Roussin, to make sure that we're doing everything possible to stop this virus, to slow it down, to make sure that it doesn't increase much more.

We have a lot of—we, as a Province, have a lot of responsibilities of paying for health-care costs when it comes to our COVID patients going into—you know, getting treatment. We want to make sure our health-care workers don't get overworked when it comes to the amount of cases. We want to make sure.

We see that in the States. I have a—we have a very good friend right now who actually works for disease tracing in the Bismarck hospital. And right now her job has really been moved to, you know, basically tracing of this COVID-19.

And what she's telling me what's happening right now in the US—I just talked to her last Friday and she was saying that they're converting beds in their hospitals from just ordinary beds to COVID beds, to ICU beds. And they—it's still out of hand where they're actually moving a lot of patients to Fargo, North Dakota, because they don't have enough room for COVID patients in the city of Bismarck.

So this is what we're asking our businesses to—you know, we're not telling them to close—totally close down. Like I know with a lot of, let's say, gift shops to retail that don't sell, let's say, essential goods, we're asking them to be creative. Go and to—create websites, if they haven't already. Most of them have websites. And sell to our—online to curbside pickup because there's a big opportunity there.

I know I have people who actually are in business that actually—they actually have a virtual business that they sell gift items, too. And they're going gangbusters because people don't want—especially in small towns of—where I represent, they don't want to go to Brandon or Winnipeg to shop, knowing that the numbers are everywhere.

* (11:10)

You know, they want to make sure that they support their local businesses. They're buying locally. They're having curbside pick up. We got to be creative. We got to continue encouraging all our residents of our towns, our cities to shop local, not to go online and buy something brown—from the States or from other provinces.

We need to make sure that these businesses that we actually have in our province, that we support them because, you know, time is going by very fast, even with this pandemic. I can't believe it's December 1st. Seems like it was just yesterday that we started this pandemic and—on March 20th.

But what really want to do here is making sure that we're not—we're so—we're not very far away from this vaccine and probably getting somewhat back to a normal, hopefully, by June. And we just have to stay the course.

We're all in this together and I know all Manitobans will come together—especially business owners—to come together to make sure that we battle this and we fight this virus and we come out even stronger than we did when we went into this pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Questions

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

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): My question to the MLA is: Do you feel that your government has done all they can to support small businesses during this pandemic and, more specifically, during the second wave of the new lockdown? *[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member for—I'd just remind the member that he does need to be recognized before answering the question.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): I should know better, being at the deputy—as the Deputy Speaker.

Yes, I want to thank the member for the question. I believe that we—I—we had—definitely did everything we have here to help our small businesses. We've had,

you know, we have, you know, different programs out there that, you know, make sure that we have the money set aside to help this—businesses who need to—if they have to close, to have all the resources, especially when it comes to the—getting people back to work when the first wave hit.

The second wave, we've given the bridge program, which is giving about \$5,000 to businesses that have to close down. And we'll be 'monirting' it and—going into the new year with that, in case we have to stay locked down.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the resolution that the member has put forward—the member for Turtle Mountain has put forward.

I wonder if he could outline for us the many benefits of small business to Manitoba and the whole economy, and Canada as a whole?

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member for Turtle Mountain—if the member for Turtle Mountain could unmute his mic, please.

Mr. Piwniuk: I want to thank the member for the—my colleague for the question.

And I just want to, you know, say that the amount of different programs that we have right now for—you know, we have the gap program that helped, you know, make sure that our businesses didn't fall through the cracks. We gave \$6,000, which is now unforgiving loan—which is now a grant.

We've also did the \$5,000 bridge program. We've also did the subsidy program with new hires or people coming back, new employees to businesses, up to 20 people. We've also created different options when it comes to, you know, we've put—we've almost put about a billion dollars of—worth of benefits out there.

And, again, the Bridge Grant program is \$100 million. It's a long-term—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wasyliw: Many Manitoba businesses have said that the Manitoba Bridge Grant program is too little, too late.

What would you say to the businesses who were forced to close for good because of a lack of financial aid from this government?

Mr. Piwniuk: I want to thank the member for the question.

The thing is what we're doing here was that we have these programs set aside for all these—for businesses that have to close. We got to make sure that they're there—going to be there for us when it comes to after this pandemic.

We have actually one of the—probably we have, right now, the—we're the No. 1 when it comes to—of all provinces, for all the benefits programs that we have, and, like I said, we have over \$1 billion worth of programs that—\$1 billion that we're going to be allocating to our businesses to make sure that they—they're there for—after this pandemic happens.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member for Fort—sorry, the member for Portage la Prairie.

Mr. Wishart: And I certainly appreciate the resolution that the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk) has brought forward.

The number of people employed in small business is significant. I wonder if he could outline some of the benefits and the number of people employed there.

Mr. Piwniuk: Again, I want to thank the member for that question, and, yes, right now, what I said in my pream., that we have actually nine out of 10 people who work in Manitoba actually employed by small businesses, and that's a big amount of numbers that are represented in this province.

We want to make sure that businesses can continue operating as close to normal as possible. I understand, like, restaurants, you know, they're still—there's take-out opportunities. Again, I encourage residents, ourselves, to support those restaurants.

We also need to, with small businesses that had to close, there is still curbside pickup. You know, right now, a lot of, you know, when it came to even Black Friday, they said Cyber Monday, they say that more and more purchases are being done—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I was just wondering, can we get a breakdown of that \$1 billion, because it doesn't seem to jibe. I know that there was a statement that—about a number of programs, but they were only subscribed by about 50 per cent, and there were a number of other expenditures that didn't really have anything to do with government.

So if you could just break down that \$1 billion.

Mr. Piwniuk: Again, Mr. Deputy Chair, I want to thank the member for the question.

I would love to give a breakdown of all the different programs that we have and the amounts that we contribute to. The Bridge Grant program is \$100 million that we're going to be putting towards the bridge program. That can also increase if it continues to be a lockdown for January.

The long-term recovery fund was \$50 million. The restart capital program is \$500 million. The gap protection plan is \$120 million. The wage subsidy program is \$82 million. The PST that we reduced for the PST on property taxes was \$37 million. The WCB financial relief is \$37 million—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wasyliv: I'm wondering if you could tell us what have you heard from small-business owners in your own constituency about the current government supports.

Mr. Piwniuk: I want to thank the member for that question.

For my own constituency of Turtle Mountain, I've been, you know, being a business owner, that's kind of my people. I've always been—always fascinated by talking to different business owners throughout the constituency. And, you know, because we have an agriculture-related base, which is essential service, we have an oil industry that's essential service, very few businesses had to really shut down in the Turtle Mountain area.

We even had a sports goods—sporting goods store, which sells a lot of, you know, equipment when it comes to safety equipment, like, when it comes to shoes, outdoor wear, that are provided to employers—employees of, let's say, Manitoba Hydro employees—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member's time has expired.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): And I want to thank the member for Turtle Mountain for bringing forward this important resolution. I think, you know, certainly we can thank him for his service as a Deputy Speaker in this House, but we should especially thank him for his work and advocacy on the behalf of his community and the small businesses there.

My question for the member is: Can he provide some examples of cost reductions that our government

have provided for small businesses and ways that we've made life a little bit easier for small businesses since we've taken government?

Thank you.

* (11:20)

Mr. Piwniuk: I want to thank my colleague for that question, and yes, we've actually did a lot of reductions.

I remember one of my best friends, who owns a good-sized business in Winnipeg here, said, you know, before I used to have to—I was scared of what was coming up—at this previous NDP government, what was coming at me next, and now that we've taken over and all the reductions in taxes and all the—what we've reduced costs for businesses and not coming at them all the time, they've—we've said, now we can focus on our business and concentrate on our business.

And this is a quote that came from one of my good friends, and he likes what the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) doing when it comes to going forward on our business program. We reduced the property—PST on property taxes, that—myself, I noticed—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member's time has expired.

The member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont). No, not the member for St. Boniface. My mistake, I apologize.

The member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Wasyliw: Now, do you believe it's important for the government to cap or remove commission fees charged to restaurants by third-party app-based food-delivery platforms, and is your government planning on doing this?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, I want to ask—thank the member for that question but, you know what, I've—the thing was, when it comes to businesses, you know, when it comes to third-party, they all have this in their business plan and what we're doing is that we're trying to, you know, work with all our restaurants and making sure that we've actually reduced the—making sure that, when it comes to Liquor & Lotteries, we've actually had programs where, you know, we helped out with the cost of alcohol. We've actually allowed restaurants to deliver alcohol.

We've done that and they—I know that we've got a really good response from our business owners who own restaurants in the constituency. We have to consider that, you know, this is a short term—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member's time has expired.

The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The debate is open.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): You know, you'd think a motion like this would be sort of a feel-good motion that the government could bring to the House, but what we've heard this morning is deeply concerning. The cynical politics of it is deeply concerning, and if anybody had any doubt that the Pallister government was not a friend to small business, they would be disabused of that after hearing the member from Turtle Mountain speaking.

He tells the Legislature that he thinks this government has done a great job with small-business supports and that there's nothing more to be done, and that they have the best programs in Canada and the most money being spent in Canada on programs; none of that's true. And it just shows, I think, how out of touch this government is and how much they don't value small business, because small business is in a crisis right now, and hollow words aren't going to keep businesses open.

And you can just drive around downtown Winnipeg and see all the shuttered businesses. We just lost Hudson's Bay, which shut down permanently now. Across the street was the shell of the old Staples outlet. And you go down Portage Avenue, it's just empty storefront after empty storefront, and they're growing by the day.

And this government's advice from the member from Turtle Mountain was be creative, shop local. That's great, but they need support here, and this government absolutely has shown no leadership on this and has abdicated their responsibility. And we see that in them basically saying to these small businesses, you're on your own.

Now, the problem is small businesses didn't create the shutdown. Governments did. Governments forced small businesses to shut down, and they did so willingly because they understood that they had to do their part in order to stop the spread of COVID and to keep their neighbours and their customers safe. And they gladly did it, but they made sacrifices by doing that. Many of them went out of business because they made those sacrifices.

The government needs to step up and show leadership and accountability and responsibility and actually compensate these small businesses—not just because we want them to stay open and to keep hiring people and keep our local economy going—because it's the right thing to do. It recognizes their level of sacrifice, and this government has not matched that. So every day now we're hearing and seeing our favourite local places closing down.

We have a minister—a Finance Minister—who admitted that there was no plan in place here, not at all. There was no planning for the second wave when it came to business and they hadn't done anything. And we can see from the government's response that it's all about playing catch-up at this point.

And it's interesting: when I talk to small businesses, they say the second wave is worse than the first because in the first wave, there was CERB payments going out, and people actually took that extra money that they were getting and they spent it at local businesses, including restaurants. Those same local businesses and restaurants—and one of them I'm even talking about in Brandon area—they've seen a dip and that this second wave has been much harder because there is less money in the community and less people going out and spending it.

And, of course, there's no recovery plan with this government. They have—they're this rudderless ship, and what the member from Turtle Mountain has offered the Legislature amounts to hopes and prayers, but nothing else. So if you're a business person and had the unfortunate—you know, heard the member speak, you would walk away from that going: I'm on my own. My government doesn't back me. They don't support me.

One of the things that I don't think this government understands, because they don't talk to small business, is that business confidence after the pandemic is going to be a real issue, that there are going to be significant changes in how people have—are doing business. People now are getting accustomed to delivery services. They're now getting accustomed to ordering online, where before they may not have been, and it may be very difficult for people to change their patterns back.

And one of the unintended consequences that I'm hearing from small businesses is about immigration work permits. Manitoba is a province that's built on newcomers and immigrants, and there are many of them who work in these types of small businesses that are being directly hit that have work permits, and

these work permits require a set number of hours a week that you have to work.

I heard from multiple business owners that, even though their business was struggling, even though they couldn't afford to keep these people on, they did it because the consequence of not doing it meant these good people, who will eventually become Manitoba citizens, will be deported. And the government is silent on this.

And of course, not everyone has been hit the same in this pandemic. We know the hospitality industry, the retail industry, tourism, arts, sports—those are sector-specific areas that have been hit the hardest, and this government has taken a one-size-fits-all approach, and this inevitably has compounded the problems. We need sector-specific supports.

Many of the sectors hardest hit have female entrepreneurs or have female employees or students or newcomers. Many of the small businesses are newcomer-business-owned, and the most vulnerable people in our society are getting hit the worst from this.

And of course, this government has done nothing on platform fees for delivery or retail platforms. Many businesses tell us that they're actually losing money when they send food or sell things online because the companies that own the platforms take such a huge percentage. This government's been silent on that and has done nothing to help them.

My friend said, well, you know, they could sell liquor online now. Well, I've been hearing from business owners that the markup is so much that they have to sell it at a loss, and the rules are so strict that they can't even raise the price on the liquor to take into account the markups. So that hasn't helped anybody else.

So the programs have been designed to fail and, to make matters worse and—sort of, the truth of this government's absolute contempt for small business is the absolutely—shaming and naming small businesses and trying to blame small businesses for the bad COVID numbers. I mean, that is insult to injury. That's somebody who is trying to deflect blame from this government's absolute inept, you know, lack of response to COVID.

Now, lucky for Manitobans that we have a strong official opposition that's ready to govern, and I wish—I think many Manitobans, especially with the poll today, wish we were in government.

* (11:30)

We would help small businesses transition to online sales, delivery and marketing. We would provide interest-free grants to create and maintain websites, advertise online and develop sustainable business models. We would help restaurants 'avide' restrictions by capping fees charged by food delivery services and waiving fees on liquor licensing, including reinstatement fees and lapse fees.

We would allow freelancers and businesses without a storefront to apply for financial help and we would work with the hardest-hit sectors, listen to their needs and put a plan in place to help them recover, and we would provide rent relief for businesses who are not covered by federal support.

But the other thing that we would do—and this is the part of equation that the Pallister government just doesn't get—we would be supporting laid-off workers, including rent relief, affordable child care, and we would get people back to work.

Because a small business can be creative, like the member from Turtle Mountain wants them to be, but if their customers don't have jobs, if their customers have no disposable income, then their businesses will have no business at all.

So this government needs to take a holistic approach and not only support all the struggling small businesses, but they also need to support the customers of that small business. And this government has failed epically on both accounts.

We see PR campaigns from this government: \$75,000 government online marketing campaign that's on government websites that nobody's ever going to see. You want to compare that to \$450,000 spent this summer on mission-accomplished banners across this province. What a garish and narcissistic waste of money.

That money could have gone to—kept many businesses open or could have kept people from being evicted from their homes, but that's what you get with this government. It's government by press release and what's missing is the actual sincerity of action to support Manitoba small businesses.

So I want to thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to put a few words on record in support of small businesses in this province. And I think the small businesses know very clearly which government has

been supporting them, not only during the COVID-19 situation but before that: a government that has been in place to help encourage them to develop their businesses and to provide them with support, not to load them down with extra fees and hidden costs and extra regulation.

We certainly had heard many, many times from small business people who were near their wits' ends with the number of regulations that had been coming down from the previous government to interfere with them doing business.

It is a challenging time for all Manitobans, with COVID-19 right now having an impact, and not the least of which is the challenge for small business. It's interesting that the large businesses tend to get way more attention when they're impacted. You hear quite a bit about, well, you can't sell non-essentials in some of the larger stores, but yet you don't hear nearly as much about some of the smaller stores that have been able to adapt and keep themselves in business.

But there are also a number of businesses that have had to close their doors for—on a temporary basis earlier on and then they were opened up again in many cases. And now, with the movement back to orange and then to red, we're seeing the same situation there.

And we're pleased as a government to give support to small businesses across the province, and there've been a number of programs and I know the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk) did mention a few of them and put some numbers around some of them but it—they're very important programs, and not the least of which is the Back To Work wage subsidy, which had a broader impact than just the business because it keeps the employees back in the workplace.

And there's been not only support for that in several forms but there's been the gap program that we have seen which has provided interim support for a number of businesses earlier on. And now, we have the Bridge Grant that's recently been developed when things have gone on here now. But the Job Restart program also helped get a number of people back into the workplace as quickly as possible.

The federal programs have had a significant impact as well and we have partnered with the federal government in a commercial rent assist program.

But I think it's important that we take a minute to think about what this has meant for all of the small businesses. And it's certainly important that we try and support local business and small business as much

as possible. But whether we do that with curbside business opportunities, as has been mentioned, or whether we find online opportunities—it's a challenge for many of them to develop that, but they have shown a lot of creativity in that regard. And it's good to see that people can do things for themselves, as well.

There's been some additional programs to help with entrepreneurs moving forward. And also programs—I know a number of small businesses initially found it very difficult to get the necessary PPE that was—that they needed to keep their business in place and all of the structures that they wanted to support them. And the B2B personal protection equipment marketplace has been very useful for a number of them. And I know a number of comments—I've talked to a number of small businesses—as had, I'm sure, all of my colleagues—many of them do appreciate the support that they have got and they've put it to good use.

It is a difficult time and everybody's looking forward to the end of this type of problem, whether it is—whether we have lowering of the level from red or whether we have vaccines that help reduce the problem moving forward into the future. We have to take our time and make sure that that is right, because it's an important part of support for small businesses.

But it is really important that we all make that extra effort to support small businesses. I know in my own constituency, Portage la Prairie, we have a lot of construction going on with both the completion of the Simplot expansion and also the Roquette development that is going on and just getting to the stage now where they're start to process peas into products, which has been a shot in the arm. And there's up to 1,000 workers on that site.

But around that, there has actually been a number of other businesses that have sprung up in support of those. And those are small businesses, they're community-based businesses, they're individuals in our community, and they have been fortunate enough to move forward.

And I shudder to think, you know, how the previous government would have dealt with both of these expansions when they come as an opportunity for Manitoba. I know that the previous government was great with putting regulation and barriers in place and discouraging businesses from coming and developing in the community. And we've been able to work with our economic development process and the special committee of Cabinet to make sure that we can

move forward quickly in a co-ordinated manner and encourage business to come to this province.

Whether they're larger business or smaller business, they both benefit when we move forward. And this is going to be very important as we move forward past COVID-19 into our future. We're all looking forward to that. There will be opportunities that are there to reopen some of the closed businesses, and other businesses to expand, to take advantage of.

The member from Fort Garry is actually right on one thing: there'll be a shift in what people do, impacted by some of the thinking that took place during the COVID-19 era. And people will make a shift in businesses. And I suspect that we're going to see some new initiatives in many different areas. I think that's very important that we encourage that and put in place what we can to help facilitate that.

I think these are positive moves by our government, and I think it's positive moves by small business to encourage better access to the marketplace. It's going to be a challenging time for all.

It's certainly not been easy for Manitobans and not been easy for small business during COVID-19, but they have risen to the challenge, as we have heard. They have made changes to the way they've been doing business and they have continued to move forward and continued to stay in business. It's going to be a challenge further until we get to the end of it, but I know that most small business people have that kind of creativity in them to be successful in that.

Now, with those few comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do know that many of my colleagues want to go on record in support of small business. I know that Manitoba legislators support small business, in our party in particular. And I certainly know that Manitobans want—themselves, want to see small businesses across the province succeed and continue to grow post-COVID-19 pandemic.

* (11:40)

So, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I'm happy to stand this morning in support of our small business, especially here, because as I'm sitting in my office here on Regent Avenue in Transcona, right at the—right in the core of our community, a number of small businesses here are being greatly impacted, especially during this second wave.

And, you know, what they're looking for is some real tangible support from their government, and right

now, what we seem to have is a government that says they have the best programs in the country, the best per capita pieces, but, unfortunately, there's very little uptake.

And I want to thank the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), who brings voice to small business. I recall when, in August, when we were enjoying some very low COVID numbers, we were at a gathering, having an education town hall in south Winnipeg, and the member from Fort Garry, before it began, was walking around and not only just commenting on the number of shuttered small businesses there, but actually going into the ones that were remaining open and, you know, doing some research and asking questions.

And a common theme that came throughout those pieces was that there weren't enough sector-specific supports that many small businesses at that time were able to access. And that's something that needs to be added to a bill like this, right, a recognition that not all small businesses are the same, that many serve different clients, different customers, and we have to create programs that are able to pivot and flex on those different needs and different specific supports that they work in.

And so what we, you know, as MLAs, you know, we do want to do right by small businesses, and when we create these programs or when we have programs that are funded mostly by the federal government, you need to have an infrastructure in place to actually get these programs out to the people that they're supposed to serve.

It's become evident in especially some of the work that we're doing here in my office in Transcona, that—I'll just take an example of a program from over the late spring and early summer, the Risk Recognition Program. I had a manufacturer in Transcona, in my riding, and with employees providing services, right? And one employee on a Risk Recognition Program puts down the name of the place that they work at. The other one right next to them puts down the holding company that was the actual owner of that particular establishment.

Well, the person that put down the owner of the holding company was able to get the risk reward recognition piece. The other person wasn't. When we knew of this, we immediately informed the Finance Department of this particular issue, but they couldn't pivot to rectify the situation because so many people have been cut from government departments that they couldn't get enough people to actually rectify some of

those errors and get money into the pockets of people that support the very small businesses that we say we do support.

These are the kinds of things that—talk about some of the 'disingenuineness' of some of these programs, right? We don't have enough people to administer them and to get the supports to the people that require the supports. Then it becomes exceedingly, exceedingly difficult to make sure that these monies get out, right? So then you end up having, at the end of a program, unspent money, unspent funds that are meant to support people to get through the pandemic.

And as anything that this second wave has proven and shown is that it has been particularly devastating to that small-business owner, usually a family organization or enterprise, that requires a government that is nimble, that is able to pivot.

But like I said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when government departments in this area have been cut, who is there left to administer these supports? It certainly can't be a minister's office, because they will be inundated, of which I can guarantee they have been, because we sent a number of letters from this particular office to get the Risk Recognition Program pieces rectified but to no avail.

And usually, who does this impact the most? Not only that small business but also the very vulnerable person usually working in low-wage jobs that require the very supports this government says they're providing, but then end up not spending what they say they're spending or what they say the budget for that particular program is, and those are pieces that need to be rectified, right.

If you look around here, I look around in the Transcona BIZ area and in talking to people that are right around my office—because they come and they see me here sitting virtually and, you know, they're knocking on the window and they're asking, you know, what's going on down on Broadway? Why is the northeast always targeted with cuts, especially to the services that require—especially in medical services? Why? Why isn't the northeast been targeted for supports, the very supports that keep this economy rolling?

So when the member from Fort Garry says this government needs to take a holistic approach, he's absolutely correct. He can't just favour one part of the populous and let a whole range of others try to fend for themselves and try to figure out what program they can apply for and this and that. I've got some Chinese

restaurants right next to me here. Boy, I tell you—and we support these areas that are very—and restaurants that are very close to us here in our office, but man, are they struggling.

I think a very unique piece may be something where the provincial government actually goes out to these BIZ zones in Winnipeg and throughout the province and talks to the BIZ to find out, okay, where are the sector-specific supports that are required so that when we bring forth a bill like this, as MLAs, we can make sure that we will have the supports that are necessary for these very small businesses that right now are being hammered.

And we need to do better. We can't have a government that operates in a vacuum and only talks to a few people and then comes up with bills that they say are supporting a bunch which clearly, right now, even just walking up and down this strip here on Regent Avenue, they would get an earful from what's required by small business. And they deserve the targeted help that research will provide you with, right?

I'll give you an idea of what small business, small enterprise requires. So just a few things. What would they require? Grants and interest-free loans, especially those that are facing cash-flow issues; a wage subsidy for workers so business can continue to meet payroll, so that there are actual customers for our small businesses; adjusting lease and mortgage rules; allow businesses to defer payments for rent, mortgage and utilities and taxes.

Tax time's coming up. A lot of the—we already know that this pandemic is going to take us well into 2021 and we have to be forward-thinking and be able to pivot so that we can anticipate some of the pieces that they're going to require, right?

* (11:50)

We have to get creative. As Manitobans, we certainly have it within us to be creative, to make sure that we can provide the supports that are necessary for small business. And that means supports for ordinary everyday people: rent relief, affordable child care, so that people will have money in their pockets to support the very small businesses that we say are important.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): Time has expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It is a pleasure to put some facts on the record. We are facing a very

serious situation as far as the survival of many small businesses in Manitoba who have been forced to close their door by public health regulations. This is not about a drop-off in interest, a change in tastes or a recession, this is—entire thing is, in one sense, an act of nature or a natural—it's like a natural disaster.

But I really have to say that I've been talking to people from my own constituency and across Manitoba who have had no—who have not been able to access any provincial supports whatsoever. And I do think it's really unfortunate that the government keeps patting themselves on the back for their—for what they've done.

I'll just—as a couple of examples, when it comes to the stuff that they're claiming that helps, you know, talking about things like the Workers Compensation Board or MPI rebates, those are not targeted, those are not rebates or—the same is actually true for PST on insurance. These are all money that is going to people whether they need the help or not.

And to add those to what's happening, this government's efforts at small business, which have really been minimal. They have not—they're not the best in the country, but what's happening is that in this resolution, as with so many—and as we hear every day, that we hear from MLAs and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself, that we hear what they promised but not what they actually spent.

So just to be clear, when they talk about the—Manitoba being first or the Parliamentary Budget Office—I had this exchange with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding). The fact is the Parliamentary Budget Office admitted that they were not accurate, and that this government's own fiscal update says that the Parliamentary Budget Office's estimates of assistance to Manitobans was wrong. That generally speaking, more than 80 per cent of all assistance, individual and business and other organizations in Canada during this crisis, has been federal. Which means that the contributions from provinces have been much, much less.

If you look at the Gap Protection Program, that is a program that deliberately excluded people who took federal help. So instead of adding to federal assistance, it said you can only apply for it if you do not qualify in any way for federal assistance.

What was the uptake? One hundred and twenty million dollars was promised, but \$52 million of it had to be repurposed for new programs because it couldn't be used. The wage subsidy program is—\$120 million

was promised, but \$74 million of that was going to be repurposed. If you look at the restart capital program. The restart capital program, some of it does not apply until the next fiscal year.

Government–businesses need help now. And this government has continually refused to do it, especially for people who are self-employed. There are lots of people who run businesses on their own who cannot access help, and this has been true for the grant program. We asked for changes because there were people with events, programming and more. And I'll just add, this—the proclamation very specifically mentions the fact that small businesses are the first to step up to support minor sports, students and community events. This is true.

But what happened a couple of years ago when this government decided to take a contract for personal-care homes that used to be handled by local rural pharmacies. It was handed to a company that's owned by Shoppers Drug Mart. And as a result, \$60 million that would have flowed directly into rural communities, isn't. It would have gone to employ people in rural communities. And that money would have gone into the communities to—and those businesses would then have been able to support hockey programs and whatnot. That didn't happen.

We have another example with Amazon. We have an Amazon warehouse that's coming in. Amazon is not known for its friendly labour policies, and there are lots of small businesses who are concerned because they think this is absolutely going to destroy them.

So this government is actually—pays lots of lip service to small business, but through their lack of support and through lots of other policies, overwhelmingly favours big business and will overwhelmingly—we're looking at seeing the collapse of hundreds, if not thousands, of businesses across Manitoba because this government won't step up and do what it needs to do.

It is not—one of the reasons why we have the terrible situation we do in—with COVID is because this government refused to do what it needed to do, which is to make sure that governments could—that people could afford to stay home and stay safe and that businesses can afford to stay closed.

Instead, they said, well, you're going to have a choice: you can either risk COVID and go out and work and stay open, or you can follow the rules and we'll fine you. The fact is, is that the costs to

businesses are colossal and to individuals. People are—people have lost their businesses and now they're facing, in many cases, enormous personal debt for a business that failed because it was driven under because of public health regulations.

This is—and it is incredibly frustrating to me because there were people who are not covered by the Gap Protection Program. I talked to people who've not had a paycheque since March. There are businesses who don't know how they're going to survive and people who've talked about losing their house.

So the fact is, is that—and there needs to be much, much more support and essentially needs to be revenue replacement and income replacement. It needs to be as simple as that, because there are companies that cannot possibly function. They cannot possibly function in code red and the losses they will sustain for being forced to close cannot be recovered.

This is one of the things that we need to understand, and it's over—it's going to affect small businesses in Winnipeg, it's going to affect small businesses all across Manitoba. And we're looking at losing local retailers, local manufacturers. There are some people who are doing very well.

And part of the problem, too, has been that programs have not been aimed at assisting people who need help. So sometimes we're—end up financing businesses that are able to stay open, that are already profitable and can become more profitable in the meantime.

So this is not—and, I will say, I've said this a few times but for this—when people talk about this being an unprecedented crisis, that's—I've said this many times, that's not entirely true. We don't usually have as many crises piled on top of one another as we do right now.

But back in March, I said that we're facing a mammoth debt crisis because Canadians' and Manitobans' debt is so high that, had the pandemic not happened, lots of people would likely be going broke anyway because they simply cannot pay their bills because their debt is crushing them.

So the fact is that COVID has, in a sense, pulled a pin on a grenade, and we need to be doing much more to support people and make sure that they can stay open. There are practical things that can and should be done and haven't been done. It would be great if this government would actually step up with help for individuals and help for businesses in a way they haven't before, and certainly to supplement and

not just try to fill in gaps when the federal government is concerned.

Thank you very much.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member for Radisson.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak—Point Douglas.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): I have recognized Radisson, and it is a government member next scheduled to speak today.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): In the few seconds left to me, I just want to say that the NDP is not the voice of small business in this province; they are the voice of big government. They've always been that.

They've always found ways to make business harder on—or, to make things harder for small business. Our government has always worked to make things better for them. And what small businesses want is not another handout, what they want is the ability to get back to normal. It's what we all want.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's clear that we are the voice of small business in this province, that we have small businesses' interests at heart. And I'm grateful for the ingenuity and creativity of small business.

And at that, I will conclude my remarks and ask if you may call the question.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

An Honourable Member: I wish to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member for Point Douglas.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I'm honoured to put a few words on the record.

So, it's nice that this government, you know, wants to recognize small businesses, in a midst of giving them a 2.9 per cent—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): Order, please.

The hour being 12, when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Point Douglas will have 10 minutes remaining.

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

My apologies. My mic had fallen off. Let's try that again.

When this matter is again before the House, the member for Point Douglas will have 10 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 1, 2020

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Resolutions	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Res. 8—The Importance of Small Businesses in Manitoba	
Second Readings—Public Bills		Piwniuk	1158
Bill 208—The Wildlife Amendment Act (Protecting Property from Water and Wildlife Damage)		Questions	
Johnson	1149	Wasyliw	1161
Questions		Piwniuk	1161
Brar	1150	Wishart	1161
Johnson	1150	Lamont	1162
Nesbitt	1150	Teitsma	1162
Gerrard	1151	Debate	
Morley-Lecomte	1151	Wasyliw	1163
Lamont	1152	Wishart	1165
Debate		Altomare	1166
Brar	1152	Lamont	1168
Nesbitt	1153	Teitsma	1170
Wiebe	1154	B. Smith	1170
Gerrard	1156		
Bushie	1156		

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>