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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that Mr. Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the honourable Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Marilyn Brick): 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Just with respect to the business of the House, I believe if you were to canvass the House, you would find that there's agreement to make the following changes to the House schedule: The PMR, private member's resolution, to be considered at 11 a.m. today will be the resolution sponsored by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik). The resolution sponsored by the member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead) will now be considered next week on Tuesday, May the 25th, at 11 a.m., and on Thursday, May the 20th, at 11 a.m., instead of considering a private member's resolution, we will consider second reading of Bills 223, 225 and 228.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is there agreement to make the following changes to the House schedule: The private member's resolution to be considered at 11 a.m. today will be the resolution sponsored by the member for Brandon West. The resolution sponsored by the member for The Pas will now be considered next week on Tuesday, May 25th, at 11 a.m.; on Thursday, May 20th, at 11 a.m., instead of considering a private member's resolution, we will consider second reading of Bills 223, 225 and 228? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Deputy Speaker, I think if you would canvass the House, you would find agreement to go straight to Bill 220.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is there agreement to go to Bill 220? *[Agreed]*

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 220—The Health Care Accountability Act
(Health Services Act and Health Services
Insurance Act Amended)**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 220, The Health Care Accountability Act (Health Services Act and Health Services Insurance Act Amended); Loi sur l'obligation redditionnelle en matière de soins de santé (modification de la Loi sur les services de santé et de la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Deputy Speaker, Bill 220 directly addresses some of the major problems in health care that we've had in the last 10 and a half years, with problems in terms of health-care service delivery, health-care accountability, and the importance of having what is essentially some critical rights for the ordinary person, for the patient. And these are things which have been missing in Manitoba and which need to be addressed.

First of all, this bill would amend The Health Services Act by requiring services to comply not only with the five fundamental principles of medicare nationally, but also with the sixth principle of accountability. This addition of the principle of accountability was first recommended in the Romanow report and has been widely supported in the general public, but so far, sadly, not supported by this government. Hopefully, today we will see a shift in that, but that waits to be seen.

This bill also provides Manitobans with the right to timely access to quality health care, and this doesn't mean that a person can get quick access to any form of health care. What it means is that timely access is required where there is scientific evidence that without timely access the disease or condition may progress while a person waits for care or that

may—complications may arise, or in conditions where a person is experiencing extreme pain or long-term chronic pain, there is a right to timely access to quality care. Quality health care is similarly based on scientific evidence, including evidence that providing the health care will improve a person's quality of life, will do more good than harm, and is the best care that can be provided under international standards. And the bill provides for corrective measures when a person doesn't receive timely access to quality care.

*(10:10)

It also provides all Manitobans with the right to be fully informed of their options for treatment, to participate in decision-making, to receive information on the qualifications of their health-care professionals, to receive considerate, compassionate and respectful care, and the right to communicate with health-care professionals in confidence and the right, where people wish, to have others fully informed.

This bill, as I've said, is based on the recommendations of the Romanow commission after consulting widely across Canada, including having meetings in Manitoba, and coming forward with the recommendation that we need to have accountability in health care. Madam Deputy Speaker, it's been quite clear that this is essential to have in Manitoba, and I will use a couple of examples.

The first is in the area of emergency room medicine and emergency room health care. As Manitobans know, there were well-known deaths in the emergency room, or as the result of care in the emergency room; Dorothy Madden was one. There was a very expensive emergency task force report with many, many recommendations. Another that's received quite a bit of public attention was the death of John Klassen, the father of Leslie Worthington. And, again, there was a review, and—with quite a number of recommendations—and these are not the only ones, but these are two of the significant, oh, problems that happened in emergency rooms which was realized that needed to be corrected.

Now, the problem, of course, was that the government didn't follow through. The government was not accountable. That—we then had the death, in September 2008, of Brian Sinclair, who had waited for 34 hours in the Health Sciences Centre emergency room. He had waited for care, and it became abundantly clear very quickly that if the recommendations of the emergency task force report

struck when Dorothy Madden—after Dorothy Madden had died—had been followed, including having a nurse who would check on patients in the emergency room and make sure that things were followed up—and there were other items in there. But if there had been that follow-up, the death of Brian Sinclair would not have happened, and so we had a lack of accountability.

It is also true, I believe, that if there had been adequate follow-up in the instance of Leslie Worthington's father and Dorothy Madden, that the death, the untimely death of Leslie Worthington's brother would not have happened. It was a tragedy. It was a very sad result of medical errors and misdiagnosis. And, oh, it is, you know, very sad when it happens in the same family twice, that the recommendations are not followed and, then, there is a second death in the same family, again, as a result of care that happened in Winnipeg and was related to care in the emergency room.

So that is why it is so abundantly clear to most Manitobans that we need this bill to have accountability in health care in our province.

I would add that in northern Manitoba, particularly in the last several years and in the last few months, there are many stories of concerns over the quality of care that's being delivered and the feeling that the people in northern Manitoba are not getting the kind of quality of care that they should be.

Now, as we know, there was a report on the Burntwood Regional Health Authority, but it obviously was not sufficient. It didn't adequately address some major issues, and we are back in a problem, in a situation with the Burntwood Regional Health Authority where there needs to be quality issues of care addressed.

So we are bringing forward this bill, today, at second reading, to make sure that we do everything we can on—in the Liberal Party, to follow through on our commitment and our desire to have accountability in health care in this province. And we hope that we will be supported by other members of the Legislature in our efforts to improve conditions for people in Manitoba and particularly conditions in terms of the delivery of health care and, as I've said earlier on, to provide for individual people—individual Manitobans, individual patients—rights that they would have and could be exercised to give them more assurance that they will get the care that they need when they need it. Thank you.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I'm also pleased to speak to this bill because health is probably—well, I know for our government—the most important issue.

The member is saying that—I guess I'm having trouble with reading, that it sounds like there is no accountability or timely access or right to be fully informed about their care. And I hope that's not what he's saying. I think the word "more" should be in front of everything. I think there's always room for improvement. You can't stop improving with health care.

But it seems to be broken down into three. I'm going to address the timely access to health care, as it stands now, from our perspective. The member from River Heights is simply trying to put onto paper the good work that we already have underway in Manitoba's health-care system. We strongly believe in the need for patients to have timely access to quality health care and have worked hard to bring down wait times in a number of areas, such as reducing radiation therapy wait times for cancer patients from dangerously long waits of six weeks in '99–1999—to under one week today, the best in Canada according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, 98 percent of level 1—that's urgent—cardiac patients are treated within the medically recommended benchmark. Hip and knee wait times are 18 weeks down—almost 60 percent from 44 weeks when we announced our plan to decrease waits in 2005. The median wait time for cataract surgery in Winnipeg is 12 weeks—that's as of February 10th—down from 45 percent from a high of 22 weeks in the 1990s and under the national benchmark of 16 weeks. Since 1999, we have expanded cataract surgery programs to Brandon at six weeks, Portage at 14 weeks and Minnedosa at five weeks, as of March 10th.

Last year's Wait Time Alliance annual report card released in June, 2009 gave Manitoba four A—hips, knees, radiation therapy and cardiac bypass—and one B—cataracts. The report notes that Manitoba is a strong performer on improving wait times.

We are also innovating within the system to improve access to care. This includes adding nurse practitioners and physician assistants to our health system. At Concordia, for example, innovative use of physician assistants allows surgeons to complete up

to eight hip-knee replacements per day compared to the traditional three.

Implementing the Advanced Access initiative in dozens of family doctors' offices to help reduce wait times to see a family doctor, launching on-line—launching an on-line catalogue of specialists' services to help family doctors refer their patient to the right specialist the first time. Other provinces are already starting to implement similar pilots based on our initial success, and CJOB praised this on-line tool by saying that Manitoba is, once again, ahead of the pack—December 16th, '08.

*(10:20)

The right to be fully informed about one's care—well, yes, I totally agree. There's certainly always room for improvement in that.

We recently proclaimed amendments to The Personal Health Information Act to ensure faster access to health records for patients. These changes, informed by the wise advice from patient safety advocates, will ensure hospital inpatients can have access to records about their current care within 24 hours, and outpatients and patients in other settings, like personal care homes, can have access within 72 hours.

Having faster access to one's personal health information will ensure patients or a person they designate has up-to-date information about their diagnosis and care, which will help inform their decision making and understanding of their health services.

Now—and I can agree to this. I have had this happen, and actually it was not our government in at the time, so it has been around for quite a while—that I was—felt—I was really very angry at not having been prepared for the procedure I was going to be having and was not educated enough to understand. And that can be more devastating, and I think that was just due to people not realizing how many of the little things that people need to know that they think everybody knows. So it wasn't a malicious mistake, but, nonetheless, there's always room for improvement, and I do believe that has improved today, because I certainly let anybody know, going through that particular procedure, to ask these specific questions.

This also helps patients provide informed consent, which is another right for patients in Manitoba. Patients have the right to provide informed consent about their treatment, ask for a

second opinion and involve loved ones in the decision making.

Now, improving accountability in our health system: The Regional Health Authorities Act already builds in several measures to ensure RHAs are accountable to the minister and, more importantly, to the patients and communities they serve. This includes having a board that is made up entirely of public representatives, appointed by the minister, engaging the communities they serve to provide advice about health issues and services and completing a comprehensive community health assessment every five years.

We have worked hard to improve accountability to patients by: improving the board appointments process to ensure there is more local community consultation; working with RHAs to add patient navigators, wait list co-ordinators and other staff to assist patients in assessing care; ensuring RHAs make their annual reports available to the public; and improving transparency by now requiring them to report their corporate spending publicly in their annual reports each year; amending The RHA Act to ensure critical incidents are reported and investigated to help improve the system while also ensuring patients and families understand what has occurred. We also created the Protection for Persons in Care Office to ensure any potential cases of abuse towards patients in hospital or PCH are investigated and addressed appropriately. We are also posting more information on-line than ever before about wait times and public health information to improve transparency and support patients in making informed choices about their care.

Just a few pieces of information that people might find interesting: There are more—there are 345 more doctors in Manitoba than in 1999, including 96 more doctors in rural areas and 148 more specialists. In the 2000 election campaign, we committed to hire 100 more doctors over this mandate. For the third straight year, we will welcome the biggest medical school class ever, at 110 students. In the 1990s, the Tories cut medical school spaces from 85 to 70.

There are 2,532 more nurses practising in Manitoba than in 1999. In the 2007 election, we committed to hire an additional 700 nurses and create 100 more nurse-training seats, and we have surpassed both commitments. We have already added 124 more nurse-training seats and added 943 more nurses since the election.

We were the first in Canada to have a Gamma Knife, a non-invasive treatment for cancers and tumours in the brain. Later this year we will also open the Artiste CyberKnife to treat cancers and tumours in the rest of the body.

We have expanded and modernized close to 100 health-care facilities in Manitoba since 1999. The \$135-million Health Sciences redevelopment is the largest health facility redevelopment in Manitoba's history. We are innovating by building a new women's hospital, a mental health ER, a first of its kind in Canada, a birthing centre in south Winnipeg, an access centre in—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't think the member from St. James and, quite possibly, other members have any sense of the real world in terms of what's actually taking place in the health care in the province of Manitoba today. One has got to question the terms of even the speech that was just delivered. If you take a look at the dream world, one would think that this is a speech that has been prepared by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to say that there's absolutely nothing wrong in health care in the province of Manitoba, and nothing could be further from the truth.

What does the government got to fear about a bill that if, in fact, passed would ensure more accountability in health care? What does the government got to fear? I'll suggest to you that the past number of years you can clearly understand why it is the government does fear this legislation. The reason why they fear it is because they do not believe in accountability; they do not believe in transparency, Madam Deputy Speaker. You know, there's issues that have come before this legislature on many, many occasions affecting health care that often make one wonder why it is that the NDP would even be close to having any sort of a moral high ground on the issue of health care.

You know, the worst incident in the history of the province of Manitoba in terms of emergency was just back in September 2008, when for 34 hours, an individual, Mr. Sinclair, sat in an emergency and died, Madam Deputy Speaker. No one looked at him. What does the Minister of Health do? Well, typically, in true fashion kept her eyes closed, did nothing, in fact, many would ultimately argue she made the issue even that much more difficult

because she did nothing to prevent the spreading of misinformation. She, if—in fact, some, including myself, would argue that she ultimately fostered that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, the last number of days I've been asking the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) what is being done, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) what is being done in regards to Mr. Sinclair and his passing and the need for an inquest, and, you know, it was only months after the critical incident occurred, the passing of Mr. Sinclair, that there was, in fact, an inquest that was called. But, to date, that date has not been set. We sit and do nothing and are recognizing or not recognizing the things that led to Mr. Sinclair's passing. The government has done nothing to try to push it along to ensure that the inquest would be moving.

You know, yesterday, I asked the Minister of Justice, what's the holdup? The police are conducting an investigation. Well, is there something that they're specifically looking at that's causing this delay? Individuals are dying in our hospital in our emergencies. There are individuals that are being transferred that should not necessarily be transferred, because this Minister of Health is doing nothing, Madam Deputy Speaker, to address the urgent need to reform and bring in the changes that will save lives and provide better quality health-care service.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have brought the issue in regards to Thompson and what's been happening with the Burntwood Regional Health Authority and the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Health and the member from Thompson have been absolutely quiet and silent on this particular issue as they are quite content to let things unfold in whatever manner in which the Burntwood Regional Health Care Authority decides to allow it.

*(10:30)

Well, I believe that there are serious issues that are taking place today in the Thompson area. You know, the idea of not having a pediatrician, as an example that I raised the other day—why does Thompson not have a full-time pediatrician? A very good question. And the Minister of Health, instead of trying to address the issue, stonewalls the issue, and now talks about, well, we will get one at some point in time. There is no commitment. There is no accountability, ensuring that those 20,000 children up in northern Manitoba are—and their needs are, in fact, being met.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is, in fact, you know—I had wanted to be able to table a petition and, in fact, I'll table the petition now. But I want to read what it is that the petition actually states and then I'll tell you why it is I wasn't able to read this petition. And it reads:

The background to this petition is as follows: Manitoba's Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the NDP government need to recognize the need for more accountability in health care; (2) Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's incompetence has led to things like a reduction of emergency services at our community hospitals to an explosion of our health-care bureaucracy; (3) Serious concerns have been raised about the Burntwood Regional Health Authority's behaviour with regards to staffing issues and the need for doctors in rural Manitoba; (4) As hundreds of millions of tax dollars are being spent on our health-care system, MLAs should be allowed to question health-care decisions being made by politically appointed health boards.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows: To request that the NDP government allow for all regional health-care authorities to be questioned on an annual basis by a standing committee of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

There are many Manitobans that actually have signed this petition. In fact, I had six or so petitions that I was wanting to table but I stopped circulating the petition because it was deemed that there was one word that was inappropriate to be used and that word was "incompetence." Because I stated that the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's incompetence—well, I'm not going to change the word on this particular petition.

I believe, whether it's Burntwood Regional Health Authority, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, that there is incompetence and that needs to be recognized. That there are decisions that are being made—and this isn't just something in which I believe. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of Manitobans that recognize the need is there to reform the way in which we administer health care in the province of Manitoba.

To ignore it, not to be able to even read a petition of this nature, which captures the general feelings of individuals that we all represent I think is wrong and I think, quite frankly, is a shame. And if, in fact, it is deemed as being against the rules of this Chamber, then we need to change the rules of this

Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, to allow the expression of what people are feeling inside and outside of this Chamber.

There is a need for more accountability in the way in which we are spending health-care dollars in the province of Manitoba. To ignore it is, I believe, doing a great disservice.

It's doing a great disservice to the children in northern Manitoba. It's doing a great service to the decisions that are being made by Winnipeg regional health care that is denying individuals in North End Winnipeg good, quality, emergency general services at the Seven Oaks Hospital, something that used to be delivered. And it is this government, this NDP government, that has chosen to take that service out of the Seven Oaks Hospital, even though we have a Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) who, today, says, no, there's—everything our general hospital at Seven Oaks Hospital is doing is doing better; we have an expanded emergency service. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, you and I and the NDP know that that's not the case, that there was, in fact, a reduction. There is no emergency general surgery being conducted at Seven Oaks Hospital.

These are the type of reasons that we need to have more accountability in health care. You know, that's why I suspect the government doesn't have the courage to support this particular bill. It's because they're afraid of accountability. They're afraid to be able to have regional health-care authorities come before this Legislature, where they can be questioned by MLAs that are prepared to hold them accountable.

Because one thing I have learnt over the last number of years is that this particular Minister of Health does not have the courage to hold regional health-care authorities accountable for the types of decisions that they are making. And I say shame, Madam Deputy Speaker, because at the end of the day, the quality of health-care services in Manitoba has not been improving to the degree in which it should have, given that we have virtually doubled the expenses—the expenditures in health care.

So on the issue of health care, this government does not meet the grade. And, yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are areas in which there have been improvements but, keep in mind, you have doubled the care—and you have doubled the expenses, I should say, of health care. The greatest growth in doctors and nurses has been to feed a bureaucracy. That's where the greatest growth of it has been.

I talked to a gentleman by the name of Pablito Sarinas just yesterday, saying how long he had to wait in order to be able to see a doctor here, in the city of Winnipeg, just to be able to get some sort of a diagnostics, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's shameful. It really and truly is, for the amount of money that we spend on health care, for the quality of service that we are getting—and I applaud those health-care workers that are providing the bedside care but—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 220, The Health Care Accountability Act, brought forward by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). And while I can appreciate why the member would bring this bill forward to the House and bring this opportunity for us to speak to this, and to debate this in this Chamber, I really do take exception to his implication that this government doesn't find—feel that health-care accountability is an important aspect of health-care delivery.

And, what I think actually is happening here is that the member for River Heights is actually simply restating some of the important things that this government already does, and has some ideas that are slightly different but, of course, are very much in the same vein as what this government has strived to do.

And just to speak a little bit, Madam Deputy Speaker, to some of the important examples of how this government finds health care itself a very important aspect, as was mentioned by my colleague, the member from St. James, the Hip and Knee Institute, which is in my constituency of Concordia and at the Concordia Hospital, has become a real jewel for the community, and a sense of—a space that we can be proud of. It's a state-of-the-art facility that, you know, helps to service the members in our community but also people from all over the city and all over this province.

And what we did was we—not only did this government provide the funding for the initial capital project, and to get the facility built, and to have that state-of-the-art equipment at the facility, and to be accessible to all, but this government also continued to—has continued to fund that facility and continued to put the best doctors that we can, and the best technology, and the best training that we can at that

facility, to ensure that it fulfills its role in the community.

And so this wasn't a one-shot deal, Madam Deputy Speaker. This was an ongoing—this is an ongoing funding agreement with the Hip and Knee Institute and with Concordia Hospital. And I think that this is one of the things that we can be most proud of in this government. We've brought down now—hip and knee wait times are down to 18 weeks, which is down almost 60 percent. This was 44 weeks when we announced our plan to decrease the wait times in 2005.

And in my own family we've—I've had the experience of knowing somebody—my father-in-law is somebody who had knee surgery late in life. He had an active career and, of course, that's difficult on the body and particularly the knees, Madam Deputy Speaker, and, you know, his quality of life has improved dramatically. And this is something that many Manitobans realize and appreciate, that this is a life-changing operation, and something that is incredibly important to the individuals who get the surgeries, and also—and to their families.

*(10:40)

This is something that we—when he was waiting for surgery it was quite a long process and I remember waiting—hearing from him. And he had nothing really to do, Madam Deputy Speaker, but wait and not be physically active and, you know, lay low and stay on the couch as much as possible, frankly, and until the surgery is done. Of course, once the surgery was done, you know, now he's able to be out in the park and enjoying life again and being—playing with the family, and so on.

So I think this is an important commitment that we made to this—in the—to the province, and that we have fulfilled, and, as I said, it's a real jewel in our constituency.

Likewise, Madam Deputy Speaker, the median wait time for eye cataract surgery in Manitoba is 12 weeks now, and this is down 45 percent from a high of 22 weeks in the 1990s. And it—we're well under the national benchmark of 16 weeks, and we've expanded cataract surgeries since 1999 to Brandon, Portage and Minnedosa. And I think this is an important, again, quality of life issue, where we are putting in the dollars, where we're making it a priority to bring down the wait times. And, you know, the difference in quality of life for individuals with—that need this surgery is just phenomenal, and

once they do receive it, I think it's—it changes their whole outlook—no pun intended—on life, especially to the elderly, who are the ones, usually, who appreciate this surgery the most. Of course, reading is one of the most important things for individuals as they get older, and I've seen that first-hand, as well.

Likewise, cardiac surgeries patients are treated within the medically recommended benchmark, as the—my honourable colleague mentioned, and the Wait Time Alliance annual report card, released in 2009, gave Manitoba four As. So—and this is in the areas of hip—hips, knees, radiation therapy and cardiac bypass, and also with cataract surgery. The report notes that Manitoba is a strong performer on improving wait times.

So I think it's very clear, Madam Deputy Speaker, and these are just, of course, a couple of—a few examples of how our government and our province has made wait times and accessibility for the public to health care one of our priorities. So I think that that's an important part of this—is to look at what our record has been and how our government has made it a priority.

Likewise with regards to accountability, and this is—really goes to the heart of what the member from River Heights is bringing forward. The member from Inkster was mentioning that he believed that the member from St. James was indicating that there was nothing wrong, and that there was—that there is no problem with accountability. And this is, of course, not something that our government has believed. We believe that accountability is one of the most important aspects, and I think this is why we've brought The Regional Health Authorities Act, which—it already builds in several measures to ensure that the RHAs are accountable directly to the minister. And, you know, I heard the member from Inkster chortle a little bit when this was brought up by the member—by my honourable colleague, and, of course, we come to this House, and the honourable member does have the opportunity to speak directly to the Health Minister and to ask her questions directly. And, of course, come election time, we're all accountable to the public as a whole.

So I think that this—I mean, right off the hop, the RHAs are accountable to the minister and—but beyond that, Madam Deputy Speaker, they're also accountable to the patients and to the communities that they serve. And this is in—this includes having a board that's made up entirely of public representatives, and this is, of course, a board that's

appointed by the minister. And it engages the communities directly—the communities that they serve—in order to provide advice about health issues and services and completing a comprehensive community health assessment every five years. And, again, I don't know that the member from Inkster believes that this is the correct system, but I can tell you first-hand that these boards are doing very, very good work and they are bringing the concerns from the community directly to the RHAs. And, again, the RHAs bring it to the minister.

So this is a system of accountability that's tried and true and not just in the Health Department, of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, but very similar to other programs that we have in other departments. And we've worked to improve accountability to patients by improving the Health Board appointment process to ensure that there's more community—local community consultation. Again, coming from a community with a major Winnipeg hospital in it and now the Hip and Knee Institute, you know, I know that there's a direct concern and there's a direct interest from my community in the health care that's provided at the hospital and, of course, in the city as a whole.

And other initiatives that we've brought forward is working with the RHAs to provide patient navigators, wait-list co-ordinators and other staff to assist patients in assessing care and ensuring RHAs make their annual reports available to the public.

So this improves transparency, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I see my time is running short so I'll just end it by saying that I do believe that our accountability is built into the system, and, of course, there's always room for improvement, but this is an area that we consider very important, and I believe this government will consider it important into the future. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'm very pleased to be able to stand today and put a few words on the record on Bill 220, The Health Care Accountability Act, because I think the word "accountability" is something that is missing from the health-care system in this province, and I've had the pleasure to speak to this bill before and I'm glad I have the chance again to renew some of the comments I have about the lack of accountability.

But, in my view, I think one of the biggest problems we have in this province right now—and it's largely related to how this government chooses to run its health-care system—is there is a serious lack of

accountability and transparency in what they do, and I think they don't adhere to it in many, many ways, and I'm going to talk a little bit more about that, but, also, when we see the way they spend money in a number of areas, we really have to look at where their accountability is in terms of spending taxpayers' money and whether they're getting the bang for the buck that they should be.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all across the board, this government has demonstrated that it refuses to be accountable, and we see it in other portfolios, too, but I'm going to focus today largely on health care. The ministers of this NDP government are actually masters of the blame game, and they refuse to accept that in health care the buck stops with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald). And we see, even after 11 years in government, we see this government standing and looking backwards at the '90s rather than sticking to their own slogan and looking forward.

When they have trouble defending their own track record, the first thing they do is blame somebody else. They have an excuse for everything rather than taking responsibility for their own actions, and that is not what a good government does. That is not what a mature government does. A mature government would be standing in this House after 11 years of being in government and they would be talking about their good record, if they sincerely believed they had one. But, obviously, the way they choose to behave and speak in here, I guess they don't feel that they have a good enough track record to defend so, instead, we see a blame game that goes back to the '90s, and it's reached the point where people are starting to laugh at them.

The media roll their eyes when they talk about the '90s. People are making fun of them when they talk about the '90s, and they sound silly, but they don't seem to understand that. It's a track they're on and it's one that they don't seem to want to get out of, but they refuse to understand that the buck does stop with the Minister of Health.

And, you know, Health is a prime example of an area in which this government has not exercised any degree of accountability, and it simply passes the buck in an attempt to rationalize the way it mismanages the system and mismanages health care.

You know, what they have done, Madam Deputy Speaker, instead of being truly accountable to Manitoba taxpayers, what they've done is they've cranked up the number of people around them to

help them spin their story. We see them spending in the vicinity of half a million dollars on spinners just to work the media, get the media to buy into their message, and they're spending half a million dollars of taxpayers' money in order to be able to manipulate their own message.

* (10:50)

They also—this Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has also doubled the number of ADMs in her office. This was a promise made in 1999 by Gary Doer, that he was not going to add to administration in this particular area of government. Instead, what we have is this Minister of Health doubling the number of Assistant Deputy Ministers in her office from three to six and doubling political staff. She now has six political staff in her office to basically politically interfere in absolutely everything that's going on within the bureaucracy and within RHAs. That is a terrible waste of money and that money could be going to other things.

You know, my colleague has mentioned the challenges in Burntwood, where they don't have pediatricians. Perhaps some of this money should go there. Perhaps some of this money should be going into cochlear implants. We see that this government doesn't want to put money into patient care, into front-line care. They have absolutely no trouble going back on a promise, breaking a promise to not add administrative bodies to the minister's department. And, in fact, that is exactly what they've done.

They—and they have no qualms about doing that; they have no shame in going back on a lot of the health-care promises they made. Instead, what they do is they torque their spin, and they pay people a lot of good money. And I'm sure their spinners out there that make more than those of us that are sitting in this House are making—and I'll guarantee that—to torque this government's spin.

And, you know, that's not something that a good government should do. A good government needs to be more accountable to patients, to front-line care instead of to their own, you know, political agenda. But this is a government that has become so political in health care that they have lost the whole view of what accountability in health care is. And, you know, it's not truthful and it's not accurate and it's shameful. And, you know, they put a spin on all of their information like that. And we see it over and over again.

If I look back at the last 11 years, one year they fudged a Health budget. They fudged hallway numbers. They couldn't get rid of their biggest promise or the biggest promise—political promise in history in Manitoba, to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. So, then, what did they do? Well, Gary Doer invented some new language and said, well, he actually did fix hallway medicine, when, in fact he didn't. All kinds of things are going on in our ERs, but they have never, ever gotten rid of hallway medicine. But what they did do is they fudged the numbers to make it look better than what it was.

They've tried to fudge nursing vacancy numbers. They buried the WRHA corporate administrative costs in 2004 when the public was getting irate about what the corporate administrative costs in the RHAs were. If we look at administrative costs across all of the RHAs in Manitoba, they have gone up significantly. And what do we get from this Minister of Health? Nothing significant, in terms of holding them accountable at all.

They buried nursing overtime costs when we started to track nursing overtime in Manitoba. Instead of putting forward what those costs were, they buried them.

Their latest number to bury is the number of doctors that have left Manitoba. For the last 10 years, we have known how many doctors have left Manitoba. Right now, in this last year, we do not know how many doctors left Manitoba and yet, this minister, on record, on a number of occasions, has talked about the net gain. Well, how does she know what the net gain is when, in fact, they will not tell us how many have actually left the province. So she's obviously withholding information.

This minister has covered up the truth about Brian Sinclair's death, and that is probably one of the most egregious situations we probably have seen. She covered up the truth; she went missing in action. A Minister of Health should not go missing in action for a week. In other provinces, she would have been fired. And in this province, instead, Gary Doer did not do that. But in other provinces, that would have happened.

What happened to Brian Sinclair was an awful situation, and this minister should have stood up and tried to explain what was happening and put the truth on the record. Instead, she misled the public as she's misled the public in so many ways. They're now misleading the public about how they report

physician specialist vacancies. They've changed their numbers. She's called her health-care system stellar, hours after Brian Sinclair died.

So, you know, this Minister of Health has absolutely no credibility in health care, and their whole behaviour, in speaking about health care, has no accountability to it. There's no transparency to it. And what we really need in health care in this province is a truth and reconciliation commission. I think they have to bring something like that in here, so that, in fact, we can get away from the political spin and rhetoric and get down to what is really true and what is really happening in Manitoba so that, indeed, the patient becomes the centre of this universe—not what we're seeing today from this government, which is a total lack of accountability and transparency in this province.

So I'm pleased, Madam Deputy Speaker, to have a chance to stand up and speak today and, you know, support this legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): I rise to put comments on the record regarding The Health Care Accountability Act brought forward by the honourable member of—for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). The member from River Heights is simply trying to put onto paper the good work that we already have under way in Manitoba's health-care system.

We recently proclaimed amendments to The Personal Health Information Act to ensure faster access to health records of our patients. These changes, informed by the wise advice from patient safety advocates, will ensure hospital inpatients can have access to records about their current care within 24 hours, and outpatients and patients in other settings, like personal care homes, can have access within 72 hours. Having faster access to one's personal health information will ensure patients, or a person they designate, has up-to-date information about their diagnosis and care, which will help inform their decision making and understanding of their health services.

This will also help improve patient safety. This also helps patients provide informed consent, which is another right of our patients in Manitoba. Patients have the right to provide informed consent about their treatment, ask for a second opinion and involve loved ones in their decision making.

The Regional Health Authorities Act already builds in several measures to ensure RHAs are accountable to the minister and, more importantly, to the patients and communities they serve. This includes having a board that is made up entirely of public representatives, appointed by the minister, engaging in the communities they serve to provide advice about health issues and services, and completing a comprehensive community health assessment every five years.

We have worked to improve accountability to patients by improving the board appointment process to ensure there is more local community consultations; working with RHAs to add patient navigators, wait-list co-ordinators and other staff to assist patients in accessing care; ensuring RHAs make their annual reports available to the public, and improving transparency by now requiring them to report their corporate spending publicly in their annual reports each year; amending the RHA act to ensure critical incidents are reported and investigated to help improve the system while also ensuring patients and families understand what has occurred. We also created the Protection for Persons in Care Office to ensure any potential cases of abuse towards patients—

* (11:00)

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. When the matter is again before the House, the honourable member for The Maples will have six minutes remaining.

The time is now 11 o'clock, and time for private member's resolution.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 10—Bipole III: Keeping Routing Options on the Table

Madam Deputy Speaker: The resolution to be considered this morning is the resolution from the member for Brandon West on Bipole III: Keeping Routing Options on the Table.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): It's nice to see you in the Chair once again doing a very good job, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member from Turtle Mountain,

WHEREAS Manitoba Hydro requires a third bipole high voltage direct current transmission line, Bipole III, to transmit hydro-electric power from

northern generating stations to southern Manitoba; and

WHEREAS Manitoba Hydro is proceeding with a western route; and

WHEREAS there are other options that should remain on the table; and

WHEREAS an eastern route would be cheaper, provide economic opportunities for east-side residents and have a smaller environmental footprint.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to consider an east-side bipole line as a viable alternative to a west-side route.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), and seconded by the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen),

WHEREAS Manitoba Hydro—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Borotsik: Now I can congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the fine, fine job you're doing as the alternate in the Chair, and I do thank you for that. I'd also like to just start off by saying that the city of Brandon right now is in the throes of a wonderful event called the Memorial Cup, and I do invite anybody who wishes to join us in the city of Brandon over the next numbers of days to do so.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, this resolution—and I do hope that the members opposite will actually listen to a logical argument and a logical debate, because this resolution is not saying that Manitoba Hydro should be forced to put a bipole line in any specific location. Manitoba Hydro should have the opportunity, as it says in the resolution—they should be allowed to look at other alternatives for a Bipole III.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, we all in this House recognize that a transmission line, Bipole III, is, in fact, necessary for reliability for Manitoba Hydro. We recognize that. What we do not recognize is that not looking at other viable alternatives really is an abdication of what we should be doing here as our duty here in the legislative.

On September 20th, 2007, a letter was sent by the then-minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro,

the now Premier (Mr. Selinger), and we have that letter under his signature. It was sent to Manitoba Hydro dictating and forcing them to change a decision that they had made some 20 years previously. For the past 20 years, Manitoba Hydro has been working towards that new reliable transmission line going down the east side of the lake, but there was a letter forcing them to simply look at one option, one alternative, and that was the east side.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do hope that the members opposite will listen to, as they say, a logical argument, because whatever we do in our lives, we look at alternatives. We look at other options. If the members opposite were going to go and buy a new vehicle, they wouldn't just simply be forced to go to one dealership and buy a vehicle. What they do is they go to other dealerships; they look at options; they look at colours; they look at features on that vehicle; they look at gas consumption. They look at all of those factors before they actually go and buy a vehicle.

The same is true if you buy a house, Madam Deputy Speaker. If you go out and buy a house here in this marketplace, you don't just simply go out and look at the one house on multiple listings and buy it; no, you have to buy something that's within your price range. Isn't that a thought, where you have to buy something within your price range. You're going to look for a house in a specific location that has schools if you have children. You're going to look at a house that's not perhaps in a heavily traffic area. So you look at different options; you look at different homes; you look at different areas. That's looking at other alternatives.

The same is true if you go out and buy a TV set, Madam Deputy Speaker. You look at all that's available in the marketplace. You look at LCDs, you look at plasmas. You look at different sizes. You look at built-in DVDs. You look at alternatives. You look at other types of options that are available. You don't just simply say, I'm going to go and buy that TV just because I'm told I have to do it by someone.

So, the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board has been told, directed by the Premier not to look at those options. Well, not to look at those options is really the wrong way to go, because there's a cost factor. We've recognized that there's the potential of \$1.75 billion more money to be expended on one side. We know that there's some environmental impacts. We know that there are more caribou herds

on the west side than there are on the east side. We know that there are other employment opportunities, Madam Deputy Speaker, on an east side versus west side. We don't know which is necessarily the best or the worst, but if you don't look at the options, then you can't make an honest decision as to which way to go.

And that's all this resolution is saying: allow—not force, not dictate, not insist—simply allow. Send another letter under the signature of the Premier to the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board. Send a letter and say, you now have the ability to look at other options for Bipole III.

That's a simple request, a simple resolution and simply logical, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this government should support that resolution. Not to support it is simply putting your head in the sand and saying, we will follow like lemming the Premier of this province of Manitoba, even though it's a wrong decision.

Stand up. Make your position known as members opposite. Make sure that you can tell your Premier: We believe that we should be governing better for the citizens of Manitoba. We should be looking after the cost. We should be looking after the reliability. We shouldn't put a line in a place where, in fact, there's going to be more problems with line loss, where there's more problems with Mother Nature, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, just look at the options. That's not too much to ask. And that's a simple request, a simple resolution and one that should be supported by all members opposite. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): I am pleased to put a few comments on the record this morning with regard to this resolution. And I know every member on this side would wish to speak to it and make some comments on it, so I'll try to be brief and, hopefully, to the point.

Why Bipole III? Well, Bipole III is truly important for a couple of reasons: to improve the reliability of its system and to carry power south from new generation. Currently, 70 percent of Manitoba's hydro generating capacity is transmitted from northern Manitoba to the south via two transmission lines, Bipole I and III.

The western route is a better choice as it allows us to protect two of our great natural resources, the

east-side boreal forest and our clean hydro energy. It also ensures these two resources will be there for future generations.

The member opposite from Brandon West talks about keeping options open. And when you take a look at what exactly that means, you know, it talks about interest of flexibility, which is exactly what the west-side route of Bipole III guarantee Manitobans. In other words, by jeopardizing reliability, future exports, the possibility of a UNESCO designation, an east-side route precludes the very options that this resolution professes to value.

We committed to Manitobans to protect the east side in the 2007 election, and the decision to build Bipole III on the west side was made by Hydro in 2007, that I've been advised. We are pursuing this project in order to improve reliability, build Conawapa, Keeyask, expand our exports and to keep our hydro rates low. An east-side proposal would be held up and opposed and would likely be never built. The process of pursuing the west-side route is past the point of no return.

Now, when you take a look at some of the comments made by Bob Brennan—and I'd like to make some of those and repeat some of those comments and put them on the record—as I've been advised, Bob Brennan has said that reversing the course would delay the project at least another three years. Based on a 2011 decision, we could get the line in by 2019 and a converter station in 2020.

Also, Mr. Brennan said both sides provide the reliability of the system, which now is becoming a major issue for us. Making sure that we have that additional line, should the existing line go out, is extremely important to us.

* (11:10)

Also Mr. Brennan says: As we all know, we need this line really, really extensively for reliability purposes. And as a result of the sale we now need it to take power out with Keeyask and Conawapa and we'll also have some conversion equipment that will help the reliability of the system.

According to Mr. Brennan, the risk of not investing in new converter equipment is bigger than having 70 percent of our power transmitted through two bipole lines down the Interlake. The risk associated with the conversion equipment is way greater. The impact of losing the converter station is way worse than the line.

Now, what I'd like to also do is talk about the Leader of the Opposition's logic. The Leader of the Opposition's reckless pledge, to reverse course and try to force bipole down the east-side line, would waste years of consultation, tens of millions of dollars already spent on planning and consultations, engineering, legal work, environmental licensing, meaning years of delay and possibly ignite a confrontation with local and international opposition that could stall a project indefinitely.

In the 1990s, the opposition build a couple of casinos, let the genie out of the bottle, and now they want to roll the dice and gamble, and gamble with this—with not only the projects in northern Manitoba, with all of our—all of the purchases that—and the potential of purchases, millions and millions and millions of dollars, indeed, billions of dollars, and here they want to do—they want to roll the dice and gamble away—the Leader of the Opposition is totally reckless on this, over-the-top, extreme and Manitobans will see him for what it is.

And members opposite support the Leader of the Opposition's comments on wanting to stall, delay, delay, stall, stall, delay and put all of our sales at risk, Madam Deputy Speaker. So the members opposite claim—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to remind all honourable members that we do have loges. If people would like to have conversations, they can make use of the loges. So thank you very much. This is for all honourable members, so if you would like to make use of the loges, please feel free to do so.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know I touched a sensitive button when we start talking about the extreme views of the opposition and the opposition leader when it comes down to not only this particular issue, but there really is a gamble and Manitobans know it for what it is. The decision was made with regard to Bipole III in 2007, as I've been advised, and members opposite want to turn back the clock. You know, the Flat Earth Society doesn't want to see reality for what it is. And all of our trading partners and our partners in the United States that purchase our hydro-electric power want the reliability of that service.

Now they want to keep your options open. We know what their options are. The mothball party that

stopped everything in its tracks with regard to Hydro development, we know exactly where they're coming from, Madam Deputy Speaker, and so do Manitobans.

Our Minister responsible for Hydro has done this—has commented on this, I should say, and the comments that members opposite have made—our member responsible for Hydro—Minister responsible for Hydro has totally put to shame their arguments with regard to the so-called logic and keep your options open.

This is not—we're not talking about buying a car or television sets, as the member from Brandon West talked about. We're talking about the future of Manitoba with Keeyask and Conawapa and we're talking about the reliability of service. We're talking about, for example, the odds with regard to tornadoes hitting Bipole I and II, and if you add III, going right beside it or close to it, the odds are far greater by putting it on the east side as opposed to the west side.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know there's others that wish to speak and many of our members on this side would want to make comments on it but their resolution, which talks about keep your options open, and the logic of it's like buying a car and going out and testing and kicking a few tires and looking at television sets, you know, that's not what Manitobans want in a government. They want leadership and they have it through the member, and the MLA from Swan River, and the member who is the Minister responsible for Hydro, in taking a very prudent approach with regard to Bipole III.

And, you know—and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know other members are going to make comment with regard to Springfield, Lac du Bonnet, Steinbach, Emerson, and all those members want that Bipole III running through their agricultural lands. And I'd like them to stand up and I'd like to hear where they stand with regard to the line going right down the east side but I know other members are going to talk to that and speak to that.

But let me just conclude by just saying this, that Bipole III decision has been made. The Leader of the Opposition wants to stall and delay that decision, which is not only going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars, but, indeed, puts at risk our sales to the United States. It's truly rolling the dice, and we can see it for what it is. They let the genie out of the bottle by creating two huge casinos in Winnipeg in the '90s. They are rolling the dice again in gambling with Manitoba's future, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So with that, I just want to conclude my comments by saying, we are on the right track. Manitobans know it. They heard from us in 2007. They've heard from us about Bipole III since then, and, Madam Deputy Speaker, we're on sound, sound ground with regard to Bipole III, and it will go ahead. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is truly a pleasure to speak on this particular resolution brought forward by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) this morning, and I want to congratulate him for bringing forward a positive, good common-sense resolution to the floor of the Chamber.

It appears the NDP are pretty stuck in where they're going to go on bipole issue, and, as my colleague from Inkster just referred to in the last piece of legislation, he said the NDP government have lost touch with reality. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's exactly what's happened. The NDP government has lost touch with reality. They've lost touch with common sense. What they're doing is caving to the special interests of U.S. environmental groups.

Now, the Minister for Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) gets up there and talks about losing potential sales to the U.S. We've asked the government to prove that—prove to Manitobans that by going down the east side of Manitoba that we are going to lose export revenue. Will the Minister of Hydro prove to us that they are going to lose export revenue by going down the east side of Manitoba?—*[interjection]* And she can't do it. You're right.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if the government keeps throwing spin at this thing, as they have for two and a half years, it's starting to look like they're actually believing some of the spin they're putting out there. Manitobans should not be buying into that, and that's the role of opposition. It's our duty to tell Manitobans why this is such a bad deal for Manitobans, not just today, but for future generations. And I think it's also incumbent on us, as MLAs on this side of the House, to make sure that the members on the opposite side, in the government side, are asking themselves, is this in the best interests of Manitobans today and down the road?

Now, if they can look at their constituents with a straight face and say that this was a good decision for the long-term benefit of Manitoba, I'd be quite surprised. But that's really what it's about. We are going to take an extra \$1.75 billion that we don't

have, we're going to mortgage that for future generations and we're going to build a line on the west side of the province. And the scary part about that particular line is there's a lot of costs that aren't even encountered in terms of that \$1.75 billion. They're not even talking about the cost to buy agricultural land or to acquire right of ways for agricultural land. We're talking potentially hundreds of millions of dollars which is going to be found under operating costs under this particular line.

And we talk about operating costs; we've got ongoing maintenance costs for a line that's 400 kilometres longer. These are costs that are going to have to be bared and borne by Manitoba Hydro for years to come. Not only are we talking about serious issues in terms of line loss, we're talking losing revenue of several million dollars each and every year for the existence of that particular line.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister talked about reliability, and a lot of engineers have come forward and said, when you look at the reliability issue, the east side makes the most sense. West-side lines is in tornado alley. They'd be subject to more environmental issues there. The east side is a much shorter route; anytime you have a shorter line, you're facing less environmental issues.

And the government has to recognize they already have an existing hydro line running all the way to Poplar River. It's not a stretch to run a line in conjunction with that particular right of way. You know, we were up there two years ago. The bulldozers were there carving the trees out underneath those hydro lines. It's not a pristine boreal forest that the government tries to portray. In fact, we're going to be cutting down more trees if we go on the east side.

* (11:20)

It's a matter of going to bat for Manitobans. Let's make a deal with the First Nations communities; they have a stake in this thing. There's tremendous potential for economic development. You're going to build a road through there. You're going to carve down some more of the boreal forest that you hold so pristine in your heart.

But the bottom line—the bottom line—there's no valid excuse for the NDP government not to run a line down the east side of the province of Manitoba. And what we're simply asking, in this resolution, is

that the east-side line be open as a viable option. We know it can be done. We know the east-side line is a shorter—has a shorter term in terms of construction.

This decision can be changed. It can be corrected, and we can do it in the best interests of all Manitobans if the government would just simply wake up and do the right thing and build the line on the east side, for the best interest of all Manitobans. Stand up for Manitobans and not bend over to the U.S. environmental action groups. That's your job as government and we hope, through this resolution, you will keep your options open in terms of an east-side bipole route.

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Before I begin to talk about the content of the resolution, I just heard the member opposite talk about—said that we should be keeping our options open. Well, I want to assure the member that we are, indeed, keeping our options open. We are looking at Wisconsin and Minnesota where we have agreements.

But we are also looking west, Madam Deputy Speaker. The west—we are having discussions with Saskatchewan. We are having discussions with Saskatchewan. We all know that western Canada will need more power and they are looking in western Canada, particularly, in Saskatchewan, for green energy. Our power is green energy.

So the members opposite may want to mothball and delay things as we have heard them do. We've heard the Leader of the Opposition talking about how, first of all, he would delay the line, and then, how he would speed it up by going to the east side.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the decision was made. The decision was made in 2007 after a lot of consultation, a lot of discussion and a lot of studies, that we would build the line on the west side of the province. Since that time, Manitoba Hydro has been out consulting. Manitoba Hydro has been doing studies. They are looking at, potentially, three different ways that the hydro line could run and Manitoba Hydro will make that decision soon and then we will know which path we will take it.

But I can tell the member opposite that I think he is far exaggerating the costs of this. When he says—when he talks about the costs, he refuses to recognize the fact that we will have to build a converter no matter which way the line goes. And, in fact, he

heard that at committee, when Mr. Bob Brennan said that we needed a converter and that we had to make that investment in order to ensure reliability of supply.

The demand for power in Manitoba is growing. Our customers in Manitoba alone need more energy and that is part of bringing the—development of the north. Reliabilities of supply for Manitobans, Madam Deputy Speaker, and, also, export contracts of \$20 billion over 20 years.

And the members opposite, just as my colleague had said, the members opposite are willing to roll the dice. They say just build it on the east side and see what happens; maybe you'll get a sale, maybe you won't get a sale, Madam Deputy Speaker. Well, that's the way the members opposite want to address these issues.

We are far more serious about this. There was over 80 meetings held on the east side of the province. We know what First Nations on the east side of the province are saying. East side of the province First Nations have said they want true economic development. They want to see tourism develop. They are supporting the UNESCO Heritage site, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And the members opposite, in their reckless comments, should think about what has happened in Newfoundland-Labrador, where Danny Williams, a Conservative premier, had to change his mind about where he was going to run a hydro line because of the issues that came out of dealing with a UNESCO site. There's a similar situation in British Columbia where a line had to be moved because there was not enough consideration or enough respect paid to the people on—the First Nation communities on that side of the province.

So I would say to the members opposite, they may want to play around and say, oh, let's roll the dice and let's look at options. We are looking at options.

The decision has been made on Bipole III. It will go on the west side of the province, and very shortly we will hear about where it will go when Hydro finalizes the route, and then, yes, they will have—there will have to be a compensation package for farmers. That's no different than what's happening up until now with hydro lines. When a hydro line crosses someone's property, they are compensated.

Not great news. If that didn't happen, there would be many places that people wouldn't have hydro. Hydro has the ability to negotiate. Hydro is there as a Crown corporation to work in the best interest of the province, to generate revenue for the province, to provide reliability of service and to look for export markets.

And I said to the members opposite, they want us to keep options open. We are looking in every—we are looking at how we can reduce our energy use through energy efficiencies, so that there's more power available. We are—we have been in discussions with Minnesota and Wisconsin. There is another state that has just made contact with us that said they are interested in power, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And as much as the members opposite don't like to think about Manitoba and Saskatchewan working together, the minister responsible for energy was here in Manitoba. He was here to sign a letter of intent with us to increase power—the reliability of power sales to Saskatchewan, and work is being done on how we can work together. *[interjection]*

I know the member from Brandon West is flapping his jaw right now, Madam Deputy Speaker. He had a chance to have his say. I would ask that he have a listen to what I have to say, because I have certainly—*[interjection]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable minister has the floor.

Ms. Wowchuk: The member opposite, I heard—I finally heard what he's flapping about. He said that we can't sell to Saskatchewan on a direct current line. Well, you know what, Madam Deputy Speaker? If we got a sale—and I believe we will get a sale—Manitoba Hydro has said they will build a converter. It's not beyond Manitoba Hydro's ability to build a converter. The members opposite don't like the idea of building another converter. We need another converter to ensure the reliability of our supply.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, as we build power dams and as we have new opportunities for sales to generate revenue for Manitoba and to replace coal energy in Saskatchewan, we will look at all of those options, because even though the members opposite don't believe in green energy, the government of Saskatchewan is looking at how they can bring more green energy into their province. This government has always supported an east-west grid.

Provinces west of us have said that they want to reduce their reliance on coal—*[interjection]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Just want to remind all honourable members that I know this is a topic that people are very passionate about and I appreciate their passion, but I just want to remind members that we do have loges if they would like to have conversations. It's not necessary to yell at each other across the floor.

The honourable Minister of Finance has the floor.

Ms. Wowchuk: And you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that that's the difference between us and the opposition. The opposition is the mothball party. They did absolutely nothing with Manitoba Hydro. They shut down the development of generation stations. They knew when they were in power that there was a need for another line for reliability of supply in the '90s. They ignored that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are looking to develop. We are looking for sales, and the line will be built on the west side of the province, as I said, and we will continue to work with provinces to the west of us. We will continue to work to try to get a east-west grid, because we know that the members—the provinces west of us tried to develop nuclear energy and found that that was not affordable. We know that there are five generators that are using coal that they want to have reduced, so all of those things are important.

* (11:30)

The members opposite, as I said, would—did nothing to secure our supply for Manitobans when they were in power, even though they were told by Manitoba Hydro that we needed another line for reliability of supply. We will get reliability of supply for Manitobans. We will ensure that we have power to sell to generate \$20 billion over 20 years from the U.S., and we will work with the states, the provinces to the west of us who have indicated they want to clean up their energy production, and Manitoba does have the green energy.

Manitoba has power that we can develop and we will develop, not like members opposite who mothballed everything. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): And I certainly appreciate the opportunity to rise today to put a few comments on

the line regarding this fundamental issue, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I want to indicate for several reasons that this is an issue that shows the distinction between the past, between fossils, between fossilized thinking, between old thinking, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the future, a future of green, a future of technology, a future of economic growth.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm in the midst of reading Thomas Friedman's book called flat, hot, and crowded. It's a discussion of where the world's evolving. As we speak, a oil rig off the coast of the Gulf of new Mexico is spewing millions of gallons of crude oil into the ocean.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what we know is that what the United States—our largest customer, 75 percent of our exports—wants is clean, green energy. We know that the legislatures of Minnesota and Illinois and Wisconsin all have rules about clean, green energy. They are our customers. They are able to provide us with \$20 billion in revenue. They're our economic generation. Therefore, we have to deliver clean, green energy.

Now, let's talk a little bit about the west side, Madam Deputy Speaker. Members opposite remind me of when the City of Winnipeg set aside parkland for Assiniboine Park around the turn of the century, and they said, why are you wasting all of this land to build a park? It could be developed for housing. You're wasting money; it's costing money.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, almost a hundred years later, the jewel of the city of Winnipeg is that green land that was set aside by those far-sighted city councillors, many of whom encountered the exact arguments that we are hearing today in the Chamber.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have in Manitoba and Ontario one of the last intact, contiguous boreal forest in the world. It's been compared to the Amazon basin in South America. We, in Manitoba, have a choice. Do we carve through it and develop it like they are doing in the Amazon, losing rain forest every day, or do we set up for the people of Manitoba, for our children, for our grandchildren, for the people of the world, a intact traditional boreal forest?

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, it involves choices, and like most issues involving the environment and involving energy, it means it will come at a higher, quote, financial cost. Yes, it will cost more, but it's always surprising, every time you

try to do something environmentally friendly which, of course, costs more, members opposite crow and complain.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will retrieve—not only will we retrieve that money back on an economic case easily, but in the years and decades and centuries to come, we will have in Manitoba and Ontario the last intact, traditional boreal forest, UNESCO World Heritage Site, on the planet.

What difference does that mean? What difference does it mean in a world dealing with a rapid depletion of energy, with a rapid depletion of ozone protection, with a rapid depletion of CO₂ sinks? It means part of the survival of the planet.

I know members opposite think small, but I want to urge them to think of the larger picture. Think of your grandchildren living in a province where people will come—ecotourism—to see a boreal forest, to see traditional forest, to see traditional wildlife, to see traditional ways of life that will be unlike anything on the planet. That is what they're putting at risk.

Even if you do not talk about the economic case, if they—any of them were to pick up a book, Thomas Friedman's book, flat, crowded, and hot, he would—Thomas Friedman is not a New Democrat. Thomas Friedman is a free enterpriser to the max of the word. And he is suggesting in this book that we do everything possible, not today, but yesterday, to preserve—to preserve—our sinks and to develop clean, green energy immediately across the board.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, aside from that, think of us going down to United States, which is so acutely conscious of green energy and has it in its legislation, and saying, by the way, we've got First Nations who are against this; we're going through an intact boreal forest. We wouldn't be able to sell our—we would not be able to sell our hydro, our biggest asset, to our biggest customer in the United States.

Not only that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I've had a little bit of experience with law. Do you think that we would ever get out of the courts to get a transmission line through the last intact boreal forest in the world? The Premier of Newfoundland recently spent \$100 million to run a transmission line around a provincial park because objections to running a transmission line through a provincial park. The Calgary to Edmonton transmission line has been blocked—Calgary to Edmonton—Calgary to Edmonton

line has been blocked in the courts—blocked in the courts. They can't do it.

Let's talk about the Alaska Pipeline: 20 years of litigation. When's the Alaska Pipeline going to be built? Twenty years of litigation, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's what we face trying to even suggest a transmission line through the last intact boreal forest on the planet. So you're putting at risk—you're putting—*[interjection]* Well, when they build the Edmonton-Calgary line, we'll put a line through the east side. And I'll tell you, we'll have our west-side line done before they get their transmission line built, and we're not even talking about going through difficult ecosystems.

They just don't get it. That's why there's been no transmission line built in this country or in the United States over the last 20 years. You can't get it through environmental approval. You're locked in the courts, and that's exactly where we'd be if we even attempted to go through the east side, never mind putting at risk \$20 billion in revenue from hydro exports that helps Manitobans have an advantage—an economic development advantage, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So I prepared—we went last election. We made it very clear. It was on the ballot. Members knew. The Leader of the Opposition argued, oh, they're blowing money on the east-side line, and there is an election. And funny thing, Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't want to read too much into elections, but we won more seats that election from the election before, and on the ballot was east side and west side. And the members opposite haven't given up.

Now, the members opposite haven't given up. Now, they're adding more money and trying to make more controversy about something that could never be built, Madam Deputy Speaker, regardless of cost. Regardless of cost, it could not be built. How much does preserving an environment and a planet that's livable, where the prognosticators say, we could, perhaps, hit a 2-degree increase in temperature across the planet by 2040, maybe now down to 2020? How much is it worth for us to do our contribution? And it would be significant by preserving an intact boreal forest.

We don't—we would be foolish. We would be irresponsible. We would be not leading edge if we dared to put hacksaws and to put blades and to cut up that intact boreal forest. Years from now, people

would say, Manitoba had a chance to make a contribution to technology, energy and global warming, Madam Deputy Speaker, and they did not make that decision. It would be a tragedy. It would probably be the biggest tragedy, economically and ecologically, in the history of this province.

* (11:40)

As members opposite flooded thousands of acres of lakes to develop hydro, we're not doing that anymore. We're trying to do it with the First Nations, with the communities. And the benefits? The benefits are \$20 billion in clean energy revenues from United States of America, which is going green. Sorry to say, members opposite, the world's going green. We ought not to take that risk. We ought not to roll the dice. We ought not to rip up the opportunity to have a clean energy flow to United States for decades to come and an intact boreal forest that will be preserved, not for 10 years, not for 20 years, but for eternity.

They—members opposite sound like people—if there is a legislature in Brazil, they sound like those that say, go in there and cut down the rain forest. It's the same issue, Madam Deputy Speaker—it's the same issue—and I'm proud of this government standing up to the inaccurate remarks put on by members opposite, and not only—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): It's my pleasure to rise to add my comments proposed—of the proposed motion by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) relating to the routing options for Bipole III, wherein he suggested in his resolution keeping the options open—keeping the options open. And I listened very clearly to the comments by all members of the House with respect to the options. The Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Hydro, of course, has indicated that government has and are continuing to keep our options open. So I'm not sure why the members opposite say that we're not keeping our options open, but we'll let the comments for the Minister of Finance stand on that respect.

I listened very closely to the comments by the members opposite and I have to, like my colleagues, question why it is that the Manitoba Conservative Party hates Manitoba Hydro. They hate any Crown utilities in this province, and that was very clear and clearly demonstrated by the sale of the Manitoba

telephone system. They hated the Manitoba Telephone System, so the first thing they did when they had the opportunity is they got rid of it. They said comments in this House that they would like to get rid of Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. They have said very clearly in this House that they would like to get rid of Manitoba Hydro and turn it over to their broker friends to sell to the—to their business partners in the world. It's very clear that that's—*[interjection]*

Well, apparently I've hit a nerve here, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'd like them to stand up on the record sometime, you know, during this session or in the—maybe in the future sometime, we'll hope that the Conservatives will stand up and say that, we made a mistake selling Manitoba telephone system. I'd like them to stand up and say you made a mistake. *[interjection]* You know, the rates did go up. We didn't—they said the rates would go down. The rates didn't go down. The rates went up.

This government and this party believes in keeping the Crown utilities in this province for all of the people of Manitoba, not just for the select few, the broker friends that the Conservative parties are so closely attached to.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that I've had the opportunity during my time in this Legislature to talk with various government officials of western Canada. And most recently, I had a chance to talk with some folks in the Province of Saskatchewan and folks from the government of Alberta, and they have said—well, I've asked them about their options, because you say that selling hydro-electricity to the western sister provinces is not an option, is what you're saying for the Conservative Party. And if you listen to the folks in Alberta and Saskatchewan, they're saying, we've investigated the potential for nuclear energy generation in our provinces and we found that it's been cost prohibitive, and they're not going to pursue that.

In fact, the province of Saskatchewan, as my colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has said, the environmental licensing requirements to go down that road would be horrendous and would be tied up in the courts to eternity. So that's another reason why they are not moving in that particular direction, not to mention the environmental cost with having to consume every drop of water that the North Saskatchewan River would produce to have to cool that particular facility. So nuclear is not an option for that—for the province of Saskatchewan.

As it is not an option, so that leaves coal, and everybody knows that even though there are certain coal interests in North America that say that's clean coal technology, you talk to anybody in my community, you won't find anybody that believes that particular argument, because they know that coal does create environmental problems and that that is not a way to go.

The clean, green hydro generation is the way of the future, and that's why this province is investing in clean, green technology for our Manitoba Hydro Crown-owned utility that is important to the future of this province. A few minutes ago, we had young people here, young Manitobans here, still school-aged children, that are listening to the debate of this particular resolution that we have before us today. They, too, know that hydro green generation is the way they want to go in the future, and that's why they believe that Manitoba Hydro investment in the water generation and in the wind generation that we have in this province is the way of the future, and that's the way that will provide for the future of our young folks in this province.

Now, I know that in committee—and I was a part of that committee hearings when Bob Brennan was before us in this building—and members say that we're not looking at the options. And Mr. Brennan says, of course we're looking at the options. The member of the—the members of the Liberal Party proposed running the Hydro Bipole III line under the Lake Winnipeg. Mr. Brennan says, well, we haven't ruled out that option; we will investigate that and we will report back.

And members—you know, having been involved in the electrical trade for a number of years, I know that the cost for running lines under the Lake Winnipeg can be cost prohibitive as the result of the costs of the electrical insulation that's required for those wires—to run them down the middle of the lake. And how do you repair if you have a fault in those cables? How do you repair those in the middle of the winter, when you got three or four feet of ice on Lake Winnipeg? Very hard to do. So the line that we're proposing on the west side of the province, I think, is the way to go.

The question that I—also comes to my mind, Madam Deputy Speaker—the other question I have in my mind—the members of the Conservative Party are saying, well, we shouldn't run the Bipole III line down the west side of the province. Well, you've got two other options, then. You could run under Lake

Winnipeg as the Liberal Party is proposing but, then, I've said a few minutes ago that that route is fraught—fraught with problems. And how do you do repairs to that in the future?

And the second option is down the east side of Lake Winnipeg—going to run through the community of Lac du Bonnet. How do you do that, then? You going to run it down along Beausejour? Are you going to run the lines because, obviously, some of that power is going to be used off to support the future expansions of the city of Winnipeg and other southern communities. You're going to have to run some of those lines, perhaps, along the—through the community of East St. Paul. So I'd like to know where the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) and the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) stand on having those electrical generation lines run through their communities.

I know the member for Springfield has said that he is opposed to having Hydro lines running through his backyard, so to speak, because of the EMF effects on the residents that are living in those areas, even though that there are many lines running along communities, residential areas, including my own community. I haven't had one phone call on it yet in the—in my entire lifetime, or no one's talked to me about having those electrical lines. People understand that you need them to add to the quality of life.

Now, the member for Springfield, perhaps, wants to stand up and say why his comments by his member—his colleagues in this House, the Conservative Party members, want to have the lines run through his community—

An Honourable Member: He didn't like it before.

Mr. Reid: He didn't like it before. So I'm not sure why they would say that the member for Springfield is going to be on side with this now.

The member for Lac du Bonnet says that he's not opposed to having it run through the residential area of Lac du Bonnet. Maybe that's his opinion. Maybe that's not the opinion of the residents in—that he represents in this Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The members of the Conservative Party want to run the Bipole III line through a World Heritage Site. That is not a secret. They want—

An Honourable Member: It's not UNESCO designated.

Mr. Reid: Of course, it's not. There's an application before UNESCO to have it designated as a World Heritage Site, and stay tuned for that.

Now, I asked the member opposite, and the member—especially the member for Brandon West—*[interjection]* The member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) says, you can't—you can run a hydro line through the World Heritage Site. If you can run a road through there, why can't you run a hydro line? That's the argument that the Tories use.

So let me point to an example of a World Heritage Site that I've recently visited in—during my travels of western Canada. You will see, in the World Heritage Site—UNESCO World Heritage Site—in Alberta, the Columbia icefields has a World Heritage Site designation. Most members of this House will know that. You will find in the middle of that World Heritage Site that there is a road running through it. In fact, it's a four-lane highway. That's not being proposed through the World Heritage Site that we're proposing here for the province of Manitoba through our boreal forest area. But, in Alberta, they have a World Heritage Site and a highway running through the middle of it. But you will not find hydro lines running through that site. So that goes against the designation, obviously, that the members are proposing for that particular area there.

You will also see that the other provinces have taken steps, in Atlantic Canada in particular, where they wanted to have the World Heritage Site maintained for Gros Morne provincial—or federal park, and that there was going to be some problems with that World Heritage Site, and that the Premier of Newfoundland decided that he was going to scrap that shorter line to avoid running hydro lines through that particular area, as my colleagues in this House have already stated.

* (11:50)

Now, I know that the Liberal Party is not supportive of the expansion of Manitoba Hydro in this province. In fact, their previous leaders have said and have called the hydro expansion—I believe it was for the Limestone generation station—they called it lemonstone. So we know that Liberals are not in support of hydro expansion in this province. They do not want to see that that occurs in this province, but there is going to be a considerable number of jobs that are created as a result of the hydro-electric dam construction in this province. It's already going on with Keeyask right now. Conawapa is proposed.

We know that the Conservative Party is the mothball party for hydro-electric development in this province and they want to stop all hydro progress in this province. But that is the future of the province of Manitoba and you're denying Manitoba's future if you say that we shouldn't be moving in the direction of hydro expansion in this province.

We know that, during the 1990s—and I remember quite clearly the debate in this Legislative Chamber that the Conservative Party stopped Conawapa. They didn't look for alternate forms of—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to start my comments by just addressing the member from Thompson's concern in regards to the Liberal Party's position in regards to—or Transcona—the Liberal Party's position to Manitoba Hydro.

In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, just so that the member from Transcona is aware that Manitoba Hydro is here today because of the Liberal Party. If it wasn't—because—if it wasn't from Liberal administrations in the past, we wouldn't have a Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro is something that was created within the Liberal Party and, as much as the NDP might not like that fact, that is indeed the reality of it.

In terms of the position, the Liberal Party, unlike the New Democratic Party, is approaching the issue with an open mind. Madam Deputy Speaker, if you take a look at the options that have been put forward, placed on the table, one would think that in representing the public as a whole, that the government has a huge responsibility to make a good decision. And to be able to make that good decision you have to have diligence. The government should be looking at what the viable options are.

And, you know, I was encouraged a couple years back when it would appear as if the government, through the Minister of Finance at the time, tried to give the impression that he was open to ideas. But I've grown to be of the opinion that the government has never really been open to any other alternative other than the west side.

The arguments have really changed over the years, I have noticed, in terms of why it is the government feels that it needs to go on the west side. It seems to me that if there is any facts that have come to the table it's been, in essence, all against

going on the west side. There have been very few arguments to legitimize the west side over the other two options. Unfortunately, I don't think that we've been successful at being able to communicate that message to the public as a whole because if the public, as a whole, was to truly understand what is it that's being done here, I think that there would be more concern, and the government would be responding quite differently.

You know, I've had opportunity to listen to representations on the hydro line. Even one of the most strongest advocates, Dr. Ryan, I believe was his name, advocated the under-the-Lake-Winnipeg option. And, best I could tell, he was a very strong supporter of the New Democratic Party, but he has put this issue at the side because, ultimately, what he wants to do is he wants to see a good decision.

The ramifications of building on the west side is significant, Madam Deputy Speaker. The impact will be well into the future. It's going to be the—you know, the member from Thompson made reference to youth that were inside the Chamber—the young people of our province and the impact it's going to have is going to be significant. You're talking well in excess of a billion dollars. You're talking about the future development of hydro lines.

You know, I can't remember all the details but I can tell you that the under-the-Lake-Winnipeg proposal, as I had witnessed it a couple of years ago, was fairly impressive in terms of not only could they do the one line but in the future demands could also be done where you'd have lines side by side which would, in fact, make the lines even that much more efficient.

The idea of the viability of having water lines underneath—or electrical lines underneath this body of water was raised in committee years ago in which the concern—and I believe it was the chair of Manitoba Hydro that said, well, the lines would leak oil or something of that nature, and it would appear and it became apparent that there was no investigation as that is a viable option back then.

Manitoba Hydro seemed to be focussed on going on the east side because they were looking at either east or west, and they tended to favour the east side until the government made a political decision, saying, no, that they preferred to see the west side, but the Lake Winnipeg option was, in fact, really overlooked.

We have—throughout the world, you can take a look at other examples where hydro lines have, in fact, been put under large bodies of water at much greater depths. The issue of how it can be done, I believe, is there, and if people were to approach it with an open mind as Mr. Ryan had presented not only to myself—we were so intrigued by the presentation that he ended up being a guest speaker at one of our annual general meetings, Madam Deputy Speaker, in which he presented the option to the Liberal Party, and, you know, I believe that is one of the primary reasons why we within the Liberal Party believe that the government has been negligent in not having an open mind in dealing with this issue and, you know, it's at a great cost.

I think most people, most Manitobans, would find it very hard to understand why it is government does not do the right thing when it comes to issues of this nature. You know, if we were to sit down in front of a group of intellects that have the expertise and the experience and were able to review the three options and see what could come of it, Madam Deputy Speaker, my best guess is that the west side would be the third option, that the first option, if under the lake water, Lake Winnipeg could be—demonstrate as feasible in terms of the cost efficiencies, and I would suggest to you that the way we need to look at the Lake Winnipeg is not just under the next few years but more so under the next 15, 25 years.

I think it had the potential to be the long-term answer to hydro lines because the lines could have gone down side by side. If the government wanted to show leadership in terms of protecting the environment and protecting, you know, the boreal forest, which I must say goes down both sides of the lake, on the east side and the west side, Madam Deputy Speaker, that if the government was to really have a fair analysis done—and, quite frankly, I'm not even sure if Manitoba Hydro—if I would trust Manitoba Hydro in terms of doing it, based on previous experience.

When you're going to make a decision of billions or hundreds of millions of dollars, I would suggest to you that we need to have the right decision being made, and it should be a decision based on the future much like the Liberal Party many, many years ago

saw the wisdom of creating Manitoba Hydro. We need a decision on that to that extent. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It's a pleasure to be here. What I find interesting is I've been here for a number of years, and I've never witnessed such a lack of support for a resolution by a political party. You know, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) raised it. He gave a few—couple-of-minutes speech, and another one of his colleagues stood up and said a few words and sat down. No other member from his side—no other member stood up to defend him—his position on this particular resolution. I find that to be quite embarrassing for the member, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (12:00)

You know, we've got the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) always chirping from his seat. He wouldn't stand up—he wouldn't stand up—he wouldn't stand up and support this resolution. You've got the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu); she wouldn't stand up and support this resolution. You know, the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), he wouldn't stand up and support this resolution.

So it's a little embarrassing, I know, for the member from Brandon West, to have such a lack of support for his position from his caucus, Madam Deputy Speaker, but that's besides the point.

You know what's interesting, and I think my member—my colleague from Transcona, he touched on this in his comments that, you know, the members in western—the MLAs from the Conservative Party and western Manitoba, they're opposed to this line going through their constituencies. But the members—the member from Lac du Bonnet, the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), other Conservative members, are more than happy—they're more than happy to allow their western colleagues to carry the ball on this issue because—

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

The time being 12 noon, the House is recessed until 1:30.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

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