

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

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Thank you and good morning, Madam Speaker.

Could you please call for debate, second reading of Bill 226, The Presumption of Death and Declaration of Absence Act and Amendments to The Insurance Act, brought forward by the honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield).

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will resume debate on Bill 226 this morning.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 226—The Presumption of Death and Declaration of Absence Act and Amendments to The Insurance Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call Bill 226, The Presumption of Death and Declaration of Absence Act and Amendments to The Insurance Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Tyndall Park, who has seven minutes remaining.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): This bill is a very supportable bill, considering that it makes it easy for families with missing persons whose members of the family have been out of commission for a length of time to be able to at least move on and settle the property rights and, of course, the obligations of the missing. And a presumption of death is one, where I might add, a legal concept that I also studied when I was in college.

I was in law school, and one of the better parts was how my professor explained it to me, or as far as I could understand. The main thing about the presumption of death is that there might be some common disasters as in an airplane crash, an airplane crash where there might be a fireball that takes all the lives of those who are in the plane when it crashed. It's just a matter of presuming that there are some who would have passed on earlier than the other ones in the same disaster.

For example, the one who is older is usually presumed to have died sooner than the one who is younger. And then there are some—at least in Philippine law—there are those who are already sick and those who are not. The presumption of death—I mean, in the way that succession sometimes is done is that the properties of those who are deemed to have survived longer than the ones who died sooner, there's that transfer of the rights, the property rights and obligations under the succession law.

That's the reason why I believe that maybe there should also be some sort of explanation in this bill as to how it is supposed to apply to the real world.

And one of the most, well, unfortunate circumstances is that where a certain Eduardo Balaquit is still missing, and his van was found right at the back of my office on Keewatin. And he is a 54-year-old guy and what amazed me was that, right off the bat, homicide investigators, including the lead detective, was already there at around 1 o'clock in the afternoon. And my brain usually accepts things as they are, but then my suspicions were raised that there might be something more than just a missing person because the homicide detectives were already there. And I was asking questions because of the nature of the scene where the van was found and I said, what happened? They said, we cannot tell you. And this law or this bill will help out the family of Eduardo Balaquit.

And it is one of those specific examples that I could think of and there are more in my life. I was, for three and a half years, a homicide detective. And there are areas where we cannot find the body, but we know that the person is dead. And it is one of those where the law helps, the law will suggest that if the circumstances are right, a judicial declaration will help the family and society as a whole to at least

be able to settle the questions and issues of succession, property rights and obligations, and also the insurance proceeds that are given to those who are presumed dead. The beneficiaries in all life insurance policies usually have that sense that at least even if the person were already dead, they were still taken care of.

And I will support this bill and I will vote for its passage because of the reasons that public good is usually served and public interest is usually promoted by a law that makes sense.

And I am very thankful for the member from Radisson for introducing this and—

An Honourable Member: Rossmere.

Mr. Marcelino: —or Rossmere, I'm sorry. Rossmere—Radisson—Rossmere—and I am thankful that I am allowed to speak to this bill and express my unwavering support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (10:10)

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): It's a pleasure and honour to rise today to speak to Bill 226.

I want to thank the member from Rossmere for bringing this legislation forward. I know that he's very passionate about this legislation. I believe it's the second time it's come to the Chamber for discussion, and, you know, I do want to put some points on the record in support of this very important legislation.

Madam Speaker, as we know this is the first time in 50 years that the presumption of death legislation is being updated—or will be updated if this bill does pass. Fifty years is certainly a long time and a lot has changed and I know the member from Rossmere has every intention to address some issues that are in the existing legislation.

I think that we can all understand and certainly have experienced a death in the family, but, you know, going the step further and having a missing person in the family, I know that there are some members in this Chamber who have experienced that and I couldn't even imagine how that is. Of course, we know that most people in this Chamber, I think everyone in this Chamber could empathize, at the very least, with that. And an already grieving family does not have to necessarily or shouldn't have to go through the process of having to—you know, they're already a grieving—in the grieving process and

I would suggest that anything that we can do to streamline this process and make it easier on the family would be much appreciated, I'm sure, from all the families who are experiencing a missing person, families, friends and anybody who's in their close circle or social circle, Madam Speaker.

I know that the member from Rossmere has consulted with a number of people on this—in his pursuit for this legislation. I know that he's spoken to Jennifer Bird from the commission's legal counsel. He's spoken with Sandra Delaronde from MMIWG, and I know that he is open to continuing to discussion with anybody who would want to chat with him or discuss any kind of issue that they see when it comes to having a missing person in the family.

Madam Speaker, I know that, like I said before, it is very sad when there's a missing person in the family, missing a person in the community. I don't think anybody here would underplay that—its importance or its severity and, of course, anything we can do to make the lives a little bit easier on a family who's experiencing this tragedy, I think would be welcomed by all Manitobans.

I do hope that, I know on this side of the House we as a team here do support Bill 226 and I implore our friends and colleagues on the other side of the House to do the same, Madam Speaker. I know that this is not a partisan issue. Anytime there's somebody goes missing it is an issue that's direct—that's—affects everybody, not just our community, the local community, but the province on a whole. And I think that it would be in the best interests of all Manitobans, particularly those facing and suffering from this lost member of the family would serve them best.

I know that this legislation, having not been updated in 50 years, that's, you know, half the century if you think about it. It's been a long time since it's been updated and I think this—something on this side of the House we've been doing a lot of, is updating legislation that hasn't been addressed in a long time. And I think this is one of the areas that not only is good legislation, but it touches the heart of everybody here in the province. And I think that if we as a Legislative Assembly work together to help Manitobans, and certainly help those suffering from the grievance and the loss of a family member not only through death but through loss of—or missing person, I think that we'd be doing a justice for everybody here in the province.

So, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to stand up and put a few words on the record showing our team and our PC team's tremendous support for Bill 226, and I implore our colleagues on the other side of the House from both Liberal and NDP caucus to do the same.

Thank you.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): It gives me great pleasure to get up in the House and put a few words on the record on Bill 226. I just want to congratulate, you know, and honour the member from Rossmere for bringing this forward again.

As many of you know, I have someone who's been missing for almost 11 years, so this directly impacts my family. At about five years, I guess, our family had considered—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Smith: —putting in the order to have my sister deemed dead. But that was very difficult as many of our family members had struggled with that, because as someone of a family who has someone who is missing, you know, you never want to give up that hope, right, that they're possibly out there. They could possibly come home. And we've actually seen that, in fact, in the United States, right, many loved ones have come home after 18 years. And, again, this is something our family is talking about and something—it's probably somewhere that we're going to go and have my sister, you know, presumed dead maybe next year.

But it's difficult for families because, as you know, you know, you don't have a body. You don't know where they are. You don't know what happened to them. So there's lots of questions around that and, you know, it's not just the legalities of it, but it's also the emotional turmoil that families go through in making the decision and, you know, having all of the family agree with that—and we have a big family. Like, there's 11 of us in our family. So I have, you know, 10 other siblings, and my stepmom, and we have lots of aunts and cousins, and we're a very close family and, you know, we need to make those decisions together. So, you know, it's difficult that way. It's easier, you know, going to the court and doing that part, but it's not as easy to do that with your own family.

So, you know, this is something I certainly support and will vote in favour of, and I've talked to other families. You know, I had said to the member from Rossmere that, you know, I had hoped that he'd

talked to more MMIWG, missing and murdered indigenous women and families across Manitoba about this bill and whether, you know, they were in favour of it and what some of the ramifications would be, and families for the most part were in favour of it. They've—they want to be able to have some sense of closure, but this bill is never going to bring full closure, right? Even though you go and you have them presumed dead, they're still missing. You still don't know where they are. You still don't have answers.

So, until your loved one's brought home, you know, you're never going to have full closure. So this does, you know, start the healing journey, but it certainly doesn't close that door.

You know, we—it'll help families in terms of their life insurance, in closing that and having the courts on their side to be able to do that. But I think about—you know, I think about that side as well, but I also think about the emotional and the human side, and you know how difficult that is for anyone who's going through this and if they'll have some support in being able to, you know, actually go through this.

And that was one thing that families had brought up, that, you know, being able to have Victim Services and access to Victim Services when they're going through this process. Because, you know, going and signing a legal document and actually, you know, saying that your loved one is dead is difficult. So I'm really hoping that, you know, with this that there'll be some support for families, Victim Services.

I remember when my sister first went missing in 2008, we had gone and tried to get some support from Victim Services, and we were told at that time that unless there was someone charged with a crime that you couldn't access those services; and we were, like, we've—you know, we were going through turmoil. We were in a nightmare, really, and I remember me being with the member from Minto and coming and speaking to him and telling him our story—and this wasn't only our story.

* (10:20)

This was many families' stories: that they couldn't—not access counselling because their loved one was missing and didn't have someone charged with a crime. And the member from Minto had said—he was the Attorney General at the time—he said, you know, I recognize that. I recognize that families need support and we will work to change that.

And I remember getting a call about 20 days later and saying that families could have access even if a family—or if someone hadn't been charged with a crime. And I remember feeling some sense of relief and being able to tell other families because at the time we were supporting other families who were going through this as well. We had started a coalition, and families at that time wanted to, you know, they had had their missing loved one missing for—I remember one for 15 years—and they couldn't go through the courts. They couldn't do anything. You know, their hands were tied. They couldn't even get counselling. And then when we got that call we were able to phone that family and say, you can access Victim Services now. So I just want to thank the member from Minto for changing that and allowing families to have access to, you know, the counselling supports that they need as they're going through this tough time in their life.

And I think we should all be clapping for that. I mean, that's a non-partisan issue. You know, families deserve to have this support, and, you know, that's what I would say with this bill is that we should go one step further in making sure that families have access to the support as they're going through. And having to sign that paper because that's going to be the hardest thing for families, you know, to go to the courts and have their loved one presumed dead when they don't have those answers.

So, you know, of course we're going to support this bill. It's come to the House second time, and it's something that I think families deserve and that they should be able to have that choice. And whether they want to do it or not—you know, it's not a forced thing, which is great, in saying that if your loved one's been missing for five or seven years that they have to do this. You know, so it still gives families choice in being able to do this.

And, like I said, our family has sat down many times and talked about this, and it's been difficult because every summer, you know—as you know, Jennifer Catcheway's family is out there searching actively. She's been missing for 10 years as well, and, you know, they've excavated garbage dumps. They've, you know, they've dragged lakes out in the communities where she was last seen by.

We also have Tanya Nepinak's family. You know, they searched our Brady landfill here. Every year my stepmom is out there searching. We've probably searched every corner of the city searching. And I remember a tip came forward, and this person

said that my sister was at this place, at this spot and that she was buried there. And I remember pulling a bunch of people together and my stepmom actually digging down into the ground looking for my sister.

So I just want people to know that, like, this is real for families. This is difficult.

And, again, I just want to thank the member, and, you know, I implore you all to support families and to do more to support missing and murdered families and keep women safe in this province. You know, as a woman, as an indigenous woman, I shouldn't feel that if I walk out of my house that I'm four times likelier not to come home. You know, I have daughters, I have grandkids and, you know, we all matter and we need to start showing that within our actions.

So, thank you again for bringing this bill forward. Miigwech.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Madam Speaker, you know, I often don't feel up to the challenge when I rise in this House to speak to any issues and—but I—after following my sister from Point Douglas, I have to say I feel utterly and completely inadequate to address the issue in the deep and meaningful and personal way that she just did. And so I want to honour her, honour her words and support them and for her to know that we love her and we care about her. And for every person who's in the same situation that she is, I think we all want to be there for them because frankly that's the kind of world we want to live in, the kind of community we want to live in. And so I say to her, well done and bravo.

And, in saying that, of course, then I need to say to the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), I think it's quite good that he's introduced this bill into the House today and for all of us to have a chance to debate it. I don't think that there's any doubt that there's a pretty strong consensus behind the intentions and purpose of the bill. And I think others have said it, that we'll be supporting it, though I do know that members do want a chance to speak about it because it's one of those issues that, while may not face us directly as in the case of my sister from Point Douglas, nevertheless has an interesting impact on the rest of us who haven't encountered such a terrible circumstance with such terrible choices in front of them.

And so we put ourselves in their position as humans are—often do and we say, well, what would it

be like for me if I found myself, or my family found themselves in the same circumstance? And then you would know, Madam Speaker, that you would want options, rational options, even though at the heart of the matter are remarkably painful experiences and remarkably painful decisions that have to follow.

So I do want to take my hat off to the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) for introducing this bill and to all members for putting words on the record in support of it. I think it is a rare—if you'll forgive me for saying—a rare moment of sensitivity from the government that often feels insensitive to the needs and aspirations of our neighbourhoods and families who live in them.

And so in this sense, I think it shows that every once in a while, every once in a blue moon, we'll see an act of generosity and an act of sensitivity on a particular bill or resolution from the government that reminds us that, in fact, there is sometimes goodwill to do good things. And if only we worked in that manner more often, we might find ourselves serving our constituents, our communities, our province in a much better way.

Now, in saying all that and in knowing that the member from Rossmere, I think, introduced this bill on the basis of the circumstances revolving around Thelma Krull—who, needless to say, was a beloved mother and a good person who out of nowhere suddenly went missing—and, as I said earlier, what it would be like if that was your family, if that was your mom, if that was your wife, your grandmother, your aunt, your sister, your friend. If you put yourselves in those positions, then you can only imagine the enormous sense of grief that would wash over you and a grief, I might add, that you can never, never escape.

And I think that was one of the most compelling things that my sister from Point Douglas pointed out today is that while the bill seeks to provide a sense of closure for missing persons, nevertheless closure never can fully be completed for the simple fact of the matter that that person is no longer a part of your life in a tangible way, although of course the intangibles survive for a lifetime.

I would suggest to the House as well that while there's a consensus to support the bill and to ensure its passage at some point in the future, I want to remind the government that part of the objective ought to be to ensure that incidents and circumstances like that never happen.

*(10:30)

And, of course, you can never guarantee anything and anything that we do. But it goes a long way to avoiding the circumstances if governments and if legislators ensure that we live in strong, safe and sustainable neighbourhoods. I often say when I'm out speaking, especially to young people, that my family is always stronger when my neighbourhood and my community is strong and my family is always weaker and more vulnerable when my neighbourhood and my community is weak and vulnerable.

So it's incumbent upon us as legislators to ensure that there are the kind of supports in our communities to do whatever possible to ensure that circumstances that lead to a bill like this don't happen in the first place. And I can appreciate if some will say, well, that—you know, no one could have known or what prevention could have happened for Thelma were she, no matter what, because of the very odd and painful circumstances by which she went missing, but our obligation, nevertheless, is to ensure that all of the supports, all of the investments in communities need to happen and that pruning around the edges in search of an austerity agenda will never actually provide the very kind of meaningful investments and supports for communities and families that we so desperately need in order to ensure functionality in our families and in our communities.

And so, you know, my—one of my kids works at Spence Neighbourhood Association. She is a manager there and she deals with enormously difficult issues each day, but they're not her issues. They are the issues that plague, frankly, the families that—and kids that she works with. And it's not simply good enough to take a program, for example, like Neighbourhoods Alive!, and prune around the edges and make it more difficult to do the very kind of outreach that needs to be required in order to support those kids and those families.

We have examples of the government making cuts to the North Point Douglas Women's Centre several years ago, I think, and that cut has remained in place. That's the kind of death by a thousand cuts that happens and it undermines the role of government and our collective responsibility to do whatever we can to ensure that everybody has the same opportunity and has a kind of an equality of opportunity about it.

And so I say that respectfully, and I hope with just some sense of the human condition. What we experience in debating a bill like this is to review the really awful, horrible, terrible circumstances that families have to encounter when having to deal with the fate, such as it is, of a missing loved one. And I can't imagine what that must be like. And so whatever we can do in a bill like this is absolutely important and we want to support it, but we also want to make sure and remind the government at every opportunity that every time they cut a budget that affects kids and affects families, they're doing a disservice to all of us in helping us try to avoid these circumstances in the first place.

So I want to end where I left—I started, Madam Speaker, by to—again, acknowledge my sister from Point Douglas and my sister from St. Johns, who's done such enormous work for MMIWG, and, again, also to thank the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) for introducing this bill in the House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wanted to begin by acknowledging the passing of a very dear relative and acquaintance. This is my first opportunity to speak in the Legislature with a bit of time since this person has passed, so I just wanted to put on the record a few words in the loving memory of Isabella Sumner. Isabella is the mother of a good friend of mine—a few good friends of mine, Leonard and Nolan—and also is the, I guess, late spouse of our elder statesman, if you will, in our circle—Jerry.

Isabella was born in Fairford, also known as Pinaymootang First Nation, born under the maiden name Anderson. She was a remarkable woman, full of life, full of joy, happiness, very outgoing, very gregarious. And she embraced me as a son, even though we are not related by blood. She, you know, saw me enough times over the years to, you know, start calling me her boy. And she passed away suddenly, unexpectedly, just a few short weeks ago here in the city of Winnipeg after having been hospitalized both here in the city and in Ashern.

She spent the majority of her life in the Interlake area between Pinaymootang and the Little Saskatchewan First Nation which is where she lived. And so it was just a little over a week ago that we were there at Fairford and Little Sask. to say goodbye to her.

We brought her home in the funeral procession to her house right on the shores of Lake St. Martin, and when I first visited their house, a number of years ago now—going on two decades ago, I guess, maybe 15 years ago or so—they were on a little peninsula that was actually quite a—quite far from the banks of Lake St. Martin. However, during the flood of 2011, the flood waters engulfed their house, and they were actually—had water right up to their doorstep. And yet, they never left. Isabel and Jerry, they always stayed in their home in spite of the flood waters and continued to be very proud of the place in which they lived.

And so at the funeral service at the house of prayer in Fairford, there were many hundreds of people who showed up from all the surrounding communities, including Peguis and Ashern and other nearby towns and First Nations, and they all came together to send off this wonderful woman. And, in particular, my friend Leonard, her son, who's a pretty successful country musician—plays at a lot of festivals all over the place every summer—told a very telling story about her. He said he introduced her—they went out to BC for some festival. He decided to bring his parents. So he introduced his parents in front of the whole crowd and said, here's my dad. And then his dad kind of, you know, shrunk behind his seat and hid away from the assembled masses there. And then he said, and this is my mom, Isabel—Isabella, also, as she was known. And then, of course, his mom stood up, both hands in the air. She took a bow, and she's waving around to everybody in the tens of thousands of people in that crowd in BC. And that's the way that she was: full of life, super outgoing, super nice.

So I did want to begin just by putting a few words on the record to acknowledge the passing of this wonderful person that we loved so much and to send out my condolences to her family and to preserve a bit of her memory in posterity here in the Hansard record. But I also wanted to share this because I know that, you know, my friend and his family and his fiancée are now going through the very uncomfortable but necessary task of dividing up her belongings and settling her estate and concluding her affairs now that their late mother has journeyed on to the spirit world.

And I know that, you know, that process is ongoing. Checked in with my friend a few days ago and they're still going about some of those arrangements; funeral arrangements typically the first thing you go through, and then you get on to

personal effects and estate and all that sort of thing. And I, you know, I have a heavy heart, and certainly my heart goes out to my friend who's going through that right now. I had to do the same thing for my late father. I was one of the co-executors of his estate after he passed away near the end of 2012.

And, certainly, as somebody who's grieving, you know, you are attempting to process the emotions that you have at losing a loved one, somebody who's very important to you. And yet you do also have this other responsibility to look after those sorts of arrangements, be they financial, real estate or be they personal effects.

* (10:40)

In our community, as is the case my family, you know, we don't necessarily have a ton of resources. There's not a generational wealth, so we're not talking about—in my situation, anyways—we weren't talking about dividing up a estate or resources or things like that; it was more just about, you know, making sure that the bank accounts were being closed, you know, credit cards paid off, whatever, things like that that we had to do, just, you know, checking on—checking the checkboxes off the list—also, you know, vehicles and things like that, just disposing of those and making sure that we sorted out Autopac and insurance papers, proof of ownership, all those things like that, things that you don't necessarily think of when somebody's still around, and then after they depart this world you realize that there's a lot of paperwork and arrangements and affairs that need to be attended to.

And so certainly that personal experience, both watching others close to me and going through it on my own life has certainly given me some insight as to why this bill is necessary and how it may help a grieving family or a family or a family who is wondering about the status of their loved one, the ability to move forward and to perhaps bring about some closure in their personal business affairs, if not their personal emotional affairs, and so, certainly, I see the importance of this.

With respect to the application of this to people who have gone missing or who have been murdered, certainly, also, unfortunately, can say that I have some insight into what that is like as a family member. I have a cousin who, you know, died in mysterious circumstances. Many people in our family suspected that it was not—that it was perhaps foul play. But, again, the investigation was what it was and it was never—never really amounted to much

so we never really had insight into how her life was prematurely ended. But, again, her dad, her mom, her brothers and sisters had to go about making these sorts of arrangements.

Similarly, I also know a number of people that I grew up with and relatives on the reserve who were also murdered, including one earlier this year, a guy I used to watch playing baseball when I was younger, "Normanens," and a couple of my cousins, also my friend from childhood who were ultimately all murdered and including a friend here in the city.

And so that's never a good experience; obviously, it's tragic whenever anyone's life is cut short. But then to think about their family members, their moms and, you know, their siblings who had to make the arrangements and, you know, not just make funeral arrangements but call, you know, banks or to sort out property and title and stuff like that. It's all pretty disturbing.

So, certainly, I have a great deal of compassion and empathy for any family that has to go through a similar situation, whether it be for a mother, as was the case with Thelma Krull, or whether it would be with a child, sibling or cousin as I've kind of outlined in some of my personal examples of people I know whose lives were ended too soon.

So, if we here in the Legislature can take some concrete and clear steps to alleviate the suffering or perhaps to bring about some measure of closure to these families, then, certainly, I would support an initiative like that.

And I think that it's also important for us to note that perhaps there are future steps that we could take in this area, but, you know, being what it is, this is the bill that's before us here in the House today. So perhaps, you know, we should just move forward with this and then we can contemplate some of those other steps further on; other steps, of course, being things like supports for family members, additional resources for organizations like Palliative Manitoba that help people through the grieving process—mental health supports as an example—and other forms of assistance that are provided to loved ones of those who've passed on.

So, with those few words on the record, I would just once again like to reiterate my condolences to the Sumner family and a fond loving memory for Isabella Sumner.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Pleased to speak to the bill brought forward here today. We do deal in

this Chamber with a wide range of issues, of course, from life to death and all things in between and pleased to join with my colleagues in expressing support for Bill 226, The Presumption of Death and Declaration of Absence Act, which coincides with amendments to The Insurance Act as well.

Very briefly, of course, what this legislative proposal looks to do is it would step in and update some existing statutes to deal with very difficult circumstances so that Manitobans and Manitoba families can attempt to move forward in the case of someone who is presumed to be dead or a person who is presumed to be absent—declared absent. And, tragically, this does happen. It has happened in our own community, and as much as we wish very strongly that this legislation would not be used, would not be needed again, there's every possibility that it could be. And, if we can make these types of improvements and recognize that a good idea can originate from any seat in the House and that ideas deserve to be evaluated on their merit far more than the partisan stripe that may have introduced them in the Chamber, then I certainly welcome those moments.

And, indeed, there were several of those that I can recall which occurred when the roles were reversed and when we were in government and when the Conservative Party was in opposition. I believe the MLA for Charleswood at the time introduced a motion that was taking some strong steps to make sure that drinks could not be altered in a party or social or club setting, and we certainly recognized the value of that and the parties worked together to bring that into law and that was a commendable move, I think, by all involved.

I also want to remember quite fondly the former MLA—I believe his riding was Carman—Denis Rocan, former Speaker, who brought forward a motion that led to the banning of smoking in public spaces. And there have been some moments where we have brought forward ideas from this side of the Chamber—recognition of Orange Shirt Day, for instance, brought in by our leader, which has been adopted by members opposite.

And it's a shame the public gallery, of course, right now is completely empty, as is normally the case for Tuesday—*[interjection]* Oh, maybe not completely empty—excellent, excellent. We have some die-hard fans here who bought their season tickets and going to make every last use of them. But it is normally the case that the public gallery on

Tuesday and Thursday mornings for private members' hour is not quite as well attended as, say, your question period would be, and even then, attendance can be sparse. And so it means the public doesn't often get to see moments of bipartisan or tripartisan co-operation. And I think when that does occur, the public appreciates it. I think the public's smart enough to know that we all come here with different political objectives and different priorities and different ideas about what we should be working on and how we should achieve it, but they also expect us to work together and in recognizing issues of common interest and that a good idea should be acknowledged as such.

* (10:50)

So to play my small part in putting these words on the record, certainly pleased to do so. And just to be clear, Madam Speaker, that one of the main improvements made here is for a circumstance when a person is declared to be absent. That is the new language and the—you know, the enormous confusion and difficulties that can surround the sudden passing of a loved one or a family member. There's even been circumstances—thankfully, not involving my own direct family—but someone who hasn't, you know, disappeared or been declared missing or presumed absent, but just family members, older members of a family who have succumbed to dementia or Alzheimer's—and they are effectively not there anymore to express their wishes. And the documentation may not even exist or may not be able to—people can't find it. And so children are left with the horrible task of trying to agree amongst themselves and figure out what is best for a parent. And it can be very difficult to move forward in a constructive way, in a loving way. And, tragically, when someone does go missing, is presumed dead but there's no physical evidence to confirm that, or someone is declared absent under the new legislation, you can end up in a very similar situation.

And what this—what these legislative changes will do, of course, is provide a new process and provide clarity so that certain decisions can be made so that the surviving members of a family can see that those issues are properly addressed and dealt with and try to move on with their lives as best they are able. I certainly would not want to wish that circumstance on anyone, but it seems absolutely unfair, just one of life's unfairnesses that surviving members in a family would have to go through extensive financial costs and burden on top of the

emotional stress involved simply because the legislation that we currently have on the books doesn't properly address this circumstance. And so moving forward in a constructive way, I think, is a really good thing for us to do and it can also really help with the nature of police investigations and how they are able to handle missing persons circumstances.

So my time is just about done. I'll leave—cede the floor for our next speaker.

But, again, I want to applaud the bipartisan partnership on this and look forward to this law becoming official law on the books in Manitoba to the benefit of any Manitoban or any Manitoba family that may unfortunately be in need of it.

So, with those remarks, I'll cede the floor. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 226 today, proposed by the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield).

And the fact of the matter is that we support the bill. It—the bill replaces The Presumption of Death Act with The Presumption of Death and Declaration of Absence Act. If certain conditions are met, the court may order that a person is presumed to be dead or declare that a person is absent. An affected person, an insurance company or the public guardian and trustee may apply for an order. The court may appoint a personal representative or a committee to deal with the property of a person who is presumed dead or declared absent. The distribution of a person's property to others is final even if the person is found—later found to be alive or no longer absent. The court may, if it's just to do so, order the property to be returned or the person to be compensated. A presumption of death order from another jurisdiction may be recognized in Manitoba and the bill also amends The Insurance Act—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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

Bill 207—The Manitoba Conservation Officers Recognition Day Act

Madam Speaker: In accordance with rule 24 and as previously announced, I am interrupting this debate to put the question on second reading of Bill 207, The Manitoba Conservation Officers Recognition Day Act.

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

An Honourable Member: Don't be so surprised.

Madam Speaker: I declare—yes, I hear an agreed all around. I declare the motion carried.

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): On House business, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Goertzen: Pursuant to rule 33(7), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Bindle). The title of the resolution is Recognizing the Importance of Mining in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Thompson. The title of the resolution is Recognizing the Importance of Mining in Manitoba.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, could you canvass the House to see if it is the will of members to call it 11 o'clock and move directly to private members' resolutions.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to call it 11 o'clock? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

Leave has been granted.

DEBATE ON RESOLUTIONS

Res. 6—Reducing the PST

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolution.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on reducing the PST, brought forward by the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), standing in the name of the honourable member for Concordia who has nine minutes remaining.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the opportunity to rise on this particular PMR once again, and it is—if—for those of—that were in the House when I had the opportunity to speak last, it was a truncated speech, and I did try to get as much as I could on the record in as short a period of time

as possible. So I appreciate the opportunity to expand a little bit on some of the points that I had made but certainly speak to this resolution.

I also do appreciate the fact that this is coming at a time where we all just have come off of constituency week. And so it was a week, for myself, that I spent as much time as I could out on the doorsteps of northeast Winnipeg, talking to constituents and listening to what their concerns were. And so it—I think that helps—will help shape the debate that we have here today, and I do hope that members of the government will put some words on the record to hear—or to tell us exactly what they heard from their constituents during this break week and whether they heard that this was the top priorities, was this the resolution that was the top priority.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Because I could imagine the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) going around, talking to his constituents, and I'm sure he did—I hope he did—because that hopefully will inform some of the debate, as I said, that will happen here today.

But I wonder if the member for Radisson, when asked by his constituents, you know, what have you accomplished in this House, what are the priorities that you've brought forward, I'm wondering if he brought this particular resolution to their attention. I'm wondering if he said, you know, in my one opportunity to stand before this Chamber, to bring attention to issues that are of concern to my constituents, and to really speak for my community, to be the leader that my constituents have asked me to be, whether he said, you know what, I brought forward a resolution that really accomplishes nothing, that speaks to something that we've already voted on as a House. We already voted on the PST, and we already voted on this particular government's BITSA legislation. We brought the budget here for debate amongst members. We've had this discussion; we've had this debate. You know, and now the member wants to spend his limited time that he has to bring issues forward to talk about something that has no consequence.

I'm wondering if that's what he brought forward. Because it is at budget time, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, the government gets its opportunity to put its priorities forward, to speak directly to Manitobans. And they pay attention. You know, it's quite a remarkable, to be honest with you, that Manitobans

do pay as much attention as they do to something like a budget, a provincial budget. But they were paying attention. And certainly they heard what the government had to say, and I'm actually surprised by the discussion that's come out of that.

Because sometimes I think there's a—for legislators, it sometimes makes us think that Manitobans don't understand what, you know, the provincial budget is all about, what our—what we do as legislators, to make sure that we're accountable for how the money is spent and where that money goes.

* (11:00)

And, certainly, when it comes to an issue like taxation, I think it's very clear that this government and certainly, probably, the member for Radisson went out on the doorsteps, and he thought he was going to be hailed as a conqueror of the PST, the 1 per cent and that's all that Manitobans would focus on. But, as I said, I think Manitobans are a little more sophisticated and, you know what, it's surprising because the discussion that's happened since then has certainly showed that to be the case.

Now, I don't find it all that surprising in our constituency or in northeast Winnipeg that Manitobans are seeing through what this government is doing with regards to the PST and the 1 per cent because they have a very clear example of this government's priorities; they see the billboards are up, they're all—big billboards everywhere. They don't give any real information about what this government has done in the budget, but they say 1 per cent is coming down on July 1st, again, thinking that this government, thinking that that was the be-all and end-all of what constituents in Manitoba wanted. But, when I talk to them on the doorstep, no, what they're concerned about is our hospital; they're concerned about our ER.

And, you know what, it's not even just the ER; it's not just health care in this province. It's education, it's housing, it's poverty, it's a whole number of issues, Mr. Speaker. They are—they understand that the government has made choices and they understand that they're making the wrong choices, they're making the wrong choices to cut those services and only focus on one piece of what they promised in the last election.

It is, as far as I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, the ultimate bait and switch. They have said—the government has said, well, don't worry, we're going to lower the PST and all will be better.

But Manitobans realize that's not the reality of their day-to-day lives. They see their MPI rates going up, they see their Hydro bill getting higher every month because of this government's decision and the decisions of the Premier (Mr. Pallister). They understand that taxes are going up from the city level because the government refuses to pay their fair share when it comes to municipalities, so they understand that their life is getting more expensive, that life is getting more unaffordable because this government has been single-minded in their austerity measures and in their drive to lower the PST.

Now, again, you know, members opposite are going to say, well, this is, you know, what we ran on, this is what we promised and we have delivered. And as I said, Manitobans I think, you know, across the board would say, you give them a tax break, no one's going to particularly argue with that tax break. What they may argue with, though, Mr. Speaker, is whether that was the best path forward for our province.

When you have a clear choice between keeping our Concordia emergency room open and cutting the PST, I would like this member to go out and to ask his constituents that question point-blank. He may not like the answer, but I think it's important that he is representing his constituents in this House and he does that and is honest about the results.

As I said, Manitobans are a lot more sophisticated than sometimes this government gives them credit for and they stay understand the decision that this government has made.

You know, it's interesting on—as I said, constituency week, a great time to talk to constituents, I heard feedback all week about the Concordia Hospital. I heard from nurses that I met on the doorstep, young nurses; actually, a family of a mother who was a nurse, her daughter is in nursing and hoping to get in the—into—get a job here in Manitoba; I met older nurses, nurses who have served at Concordia Hospital for years, just knocking on doors, just talking to random constituents.

And I also heard from people who have been to the Concordia Hospital now over the past couple of months and the feedback that I'm getting is is that it's absolutely chaos there. The damage that has been done by this government to our ER is significant and people are noticing that things are getting worse, they're not getting better, and that's certainly borne out by the information that we've heard elsewhere.

You know, the government now has said they're bringing in Dr. Peachey and that he's going to have his say when it comes to the future of health care but, you know, that's not the reality of why this government is now starting to waver. It's because if these members opposite were truly out on the doorsteps over this last week, they heard clearly, too. They heard clearly that they're on the wrong path, that they're going the wrong direction and their priorities are not the priorities of our community and not the priorities of any Manitobans.

And so, at the end of the day, we know, as it was when the decision was made, it still stands today that this decision is being made on the desk of the Premier and the Premier alone. No one else in his caucus, in his Cabinet, no medical front-line workers, no experts are going to change his mind. There's only one person that can make this decision.

And so it is incumbent on all of us as legislators, as members that represent these communities, to stand up—to stand up for our hospitals to make one last bid for that—for those emergency services, for all health care to be preserved in this province, and I simply point out that instead of talking about that important issue, that issue that he would hear, that every member would hear on the doorstep time after time after time, we are debating a resolution that has no impact and makes no difference in the lives of Manitobans.

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

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): It is an honour to stand in the Chamber this morning and put some words on record in favour of the resolution brought forward by the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma).

This resolution is one of importance to the people of Manitoba. Our PC government ran in the 2016 election with the promise to roll back the provincial sales tax from 8 per cent to 7 per cent, and we are going to keep our promise to Manitobans. On July 1st, 2019, the provincial sales tax will be rolled back to 7 per cent: a promise made, a promise kept.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, coming from a business world, I know how important it is to keep your word. Not very many businesses stay in business long when they break promises they made to their customers. Trust is important in life but trust is something that needs to be earned. It takes many years to build trust in a relationship, whether it be business or other, but it takes only one broken

promise to lose that trust, and once trust is lost, it is difficult to regain that trust.

Every member in this Chamber, including the members opposite, would not do repeat business with a salesperson that promised many things but delivered on none of them. So, in reality, members opposite should not vote for themselves come election time if they use the same analogy they would use in the outside world of not doing repeat business with someone that did not deliver on the promises they made. But, then, not many members opposite ever ran a business and have no idea how that works.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans work hard to support themselves and their families, but under the NDP government, that was getting more and more difficult because the NDP kept taking money from the kitchen table and putting it onto the Cabinet table. They were a tax-and-spend government that thought by throwing money at a problem, it would go away. But this is not the case. The taxes kept rising, but the results were not there. Manitobans were paying some of the highest taxes in the country with the poorest results.

Under 17 years of NDP rule, Manitobans ended up with the highest ER wait times in the country, the highest ambulance fees in Canada, higher numbers of children in care. They had more kids using food banks. And education results: last in the country in math, science and literacy. Not a very good record.

The NDP of today have not learned from the mistakes of their past. They believe in higher taxes for Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during a decade of decay—debt, decay and decline—the NDP never made a difficult decision. It was easier for them to throw money at problems, hoping the problems would go away, but that did not solve any of the problems. They did not have the guts to make the difficult decisions necessary to ensure the protection of sustainable and quality services for Manitobans. They made politically motivated quick fixes that resulted in unsustainable spending growth and massive debt. The NDP left our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren billions of dollars of debt during time of low interest rates.

* (11:10)

What happens when interest rates go up? We are already spending \$1 billion a year to service that debt. What will future generations have to give up

because of the poor spending decisions made by the NDP?

Our government believes Manitobans deserve a break and are following through with our promise to lower the PST from 8 per cent to 7 per cent. The reduction of PST will put over \$300 million back on the kitchen tables of Manitobans every year. By the end of our second term, the PST savings will reach over \$1.8 billion for Manitobans. This is the largest tax cut in Manitoba history. Compared to when the NDP were in power, they had some of the highest tax increases in Manitoba history. Our government believes that reducing the PST will make life more affordable for all Manitobans, but we are doing more to put money back on the kitchen tables.

Since coming into power in 2016, indexing the personal income tax will save Manitobans an estimated \$38 million. And eliminating bracket creep will save Manitobans an additional estimate \$38 million for a total of \$76 million by the end of 2019. Increasing the small business corporate tax threshold is estimated to save small businesses \$7 million in 2019 alone.

With the reduction in PST, municipal governments, school divisions, Crown corporations, post-secondary institutions, regional health authorities and other government agencies will benefit. All Manitobans will benefit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP failed Manitobans. They could not keep the promises they made in election 2011. Greg Selinger and the rest of the NDP went door to door and told Manitobans they were not going to raise taxes. That's total nonsense, said Selinger. He gave his word. He said, our plan is a five-year plan with no tax increases.

Well, Madam Speaker, with their first budget, they broadened what PST was charged on. With the second budget, they increased the PST to 8 per cent. So much for keeping their word. Today's NDP is no different than yesterday's NDP. They still don't realize that is not about how much money you spend; it is about how you spend it. They have not yet learned the valuable lesson because every day, all they ask for is to spend more money. The NDP may not be in favour of a lower PST, but Manitobans are.

And to answer the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), in talking with constituents over the constituency break week, the conversation was about fixing all the mistakes the NDP made when they were in government. He talks about Hydro rate

increases. It was their fault. They spent the money; that's why the Hydro rates are going up. They screwed up the health-care system. It was their fault that the Manitobans are in the condition they're in today.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Ironic that earlier this morning, we were able to come to an agreement on a good piece of legislation that had bipartisan support. This is not one of those. Let's just be honest. This falls quite squarely into the quite fundamental differences of opinion between the conservative Pallister government—the extremely conservative Pallister government—and where a far more progressive and hopeful vision for our province would come from.

The member who just spoke and the others in support of this motion should probably take note that in the upcoming election, it will not—it will be their record that will be on trial, not anyone else's. And their record is pretty much non-existent. They have almost nothing positive that they can point to. And to the member who just finished speaking, indeed, he may want to read his speech and imagine that I'm reading the first part of it, about broken trust to the voters and keeping your word. Because what did this member and all of the other Conservative members, led by their Premier (Mr. Pallister), do throughout the entire last election campaign? They made a false promise, which they knew was false even as they were making it, to every single Manitoban who asked what are going to happen to public services in this province.

And what was the promise from the Premier and all of the Tory MLAs? There will be no cuts. There will be no layoffs. And as soon as they got in the door, that's all that they have done. Every single cut that they have brought into health care, every single cut they have brought into education, every single cut they have brought, from one end of this province to another, affecting all Manitobans of all backgrounds, all ages, all political perspectives, every single one of them has suffered under this government.

And I can't help but notice that while this resolution is claiming to be about numbers and improving the lives of Manitobans through this decision, I have to take issue. And let's just explore this a little bit, Mr. Acting Speaker, with a particular line brought in by the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma). I think there's a very strong

possibility that he is actively contributing to the ongoing misperception perpetuated by the Pallister government, that they are actually speaking accurate facts when they discuss finances. And the line in particular I want to highlight is the claim that a family of four, in five years, from a single point reduction on the PST, is going to save \$3,000.

Let's explore that just for a little bit, shall we? If it's \$3,000 over five years, that's—the claim would then be \$600 per year that a family of four would save from a 1 per cent sales tax reduction. You with me so far? That means you would have to spend, as a family of four, what amount to save \$600? Any volunteers? Sixty grand; you would have to spend \$60,000 in one year, as a family of four, to save \$600. How on earth can you possibly presume that the average Manitoba family is spending \$60,000 per year on items where the PST is even applied, because the PST doesn't even apply to the largest costs that families have. There is no cost on your mortgage. There's no cost on your groceries. There's no cost on the gasoline. There's a huge amount of things that people buy every single year which do not have the PST assigned to them, right? But you're going to say that the average family of four is spending \$60,000 per year on things that have the PST assigned to them.

That means the—let's say their family income tax, about a third roughly; that means the family is earning 90 grand. Is that the median income level for Manitoba families? No, it is not. Not even close. Come to the inner city. Go visit, I mean, any part of Manitoba that is suffering under your decisions. You will see first-hand there's no way the median income in Manitoba at a family level is \$90,000 and there is no way that a median family is spending \$60,000 a year. You got to go out and buy a boat every single year to be paying that amount of money on PST that they are claiming.

The MLA for Radisson is fundamentally flawed in his numbers, same as this political party is fundamentally flawed in its political direction, its economic priorities and the perpetual myth that they are actually governing for the best interests of our province.

Who actually paid for this PST cut? It was anybody who works in the health-care system, anybody who's trying to access the health-care system. They're paying for it. They're paying for it with all the cuts that have been imposed on health care. They're paying for it with the extra wait times

that we are now seeing increasing in ERs and for specific medical procedures.

* (11:20)

University students: every single time you talk to a university student or family members who might be supporting a university student in the years ahead, if you are a Tory candidate and you are being honest, you will tell them, yes, we told you last time there'd be no impacts on you, and instead you are now going to pay thousands of more dollars—thousands of more dollars—to access the education that previous generations had a much easier time accessing. Heaven forbid you were actually looking to access the ACCESS programs that were attached to universities, targeting specific demographics, specific people who have systemic barriers to even getting into post-secondary education. If you're a Conservative government, that's one of the first things to go. We don't want people like that accessing education same as everyone else. They paid for this PST increase.

Cuts to infrastructure budget, that paid for the PST increase. You hit a pothole and you end up taking your car in to get fixed. Well, you can thank the Pallister government for that because infrastructure spending is way down, as my honourable colleague from Elmwood has demonstrated time and time again.

And this doesn't even get to the big issue of climate change, which is going to cost so much more, not just in money, Mr. Acting Speaker, but in lives, in jobs, in communities. We are all going to suffer enormously because of the climate denial coming from members opposite and the complete lack of any inclination to listen to climate science and to act accordingly. They are actively making the situation worse.

And for any Conservative candidate who wants to try to come to my door and tell me they care about finances, I will laugh in their face unless they have gone to their Premier (Mr. Pallister) and said, ditch the carbon tax lawsuit. That's a colossal waste of money. How on earth this government can pretend that they have any legal justification on the basis of having a carbon plan when under their first full year in office, what happened to carbon emissions in this province? Did they stay the same as they had four years previous? No. Did they actually go down, which is what climate science is telling all of us we have to do if we want our kids or grandkids or even ourselves to have a shot at a decent future? No, they

did not go down. They went up by 700,000 metric tons of carbon in the first single year. How can you possibly look a judge or a jury or the public in the eye and claim to have anything close to a lawsuit? But no, no, even after it's been thrown out in Saskatchewan, even after their own track record completely undermines their argument, they are going to waste more public money on a lawsuit and also try to claim they care about the public purse. Give your head a shake. It's not true. It's a complete and utter myth.

So, needless to say, I don't support it; I don't believe it. There's a much better and much more hopeful path forward, and that's what I'll continue to work for on behalf of all Manitobans in this fine province.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): The member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker. Had a little trouble with name recognition, I see. It's something about that chair, I think, that when they look over here, they can't quite place just what seat I represent, but I'm okay with that. That's all good.

I—you know, I follow my friend from Wolseley, and I just want to say, well, ditto.

An Honourable Member: Okay, you're done.

Mr. Allum: Because that—and I know that—I know the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), who's only got another year here before he's doing something else, would like me not to say anything. And I appreciate that, but I think I'll take my time, if it's okay with him, and say a few words about this particular PMR put forward by the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), who was all gloating and all happy when he put it on the—introduced it last week. And you could see him dancing on the clouds, feeling really good that he delivered a great big matzo ball to the people of Manitoba.

And I'm disappointed with that. His—he keeps letting down his constituents, and then he keeps letting down the people of Manitoba at the same time. That's a one-two that you wouldn't want to repeat too often in this business, Mr. Acting Speaker. But I have to say that the amount of gloating and—that goes on with the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Cabinet and the Conservative caucus on this particular issue, is remarkably astounding. And the troubling part of it, of course, it's also dangerous, because they happen to be the government party.

And so the damage that they have done, are doing, and will continue to do through their austerity agenda is something that will probably take—like it did once before—at least to my knowledge—take a decade to dig out from after the damage that the Pallister government's doing to the Province of Manitoba through its austerity agenda.

You know, I want to say that this whole thing about the PST and the Tory grandstanding over it is so strange to me, given that one of their most iconic members of their party, and an iconic 'preever' of this province—the one and only Duff Roblin himself introduced a sales tax for the very purpose of building the floodway, which, I think, I'd be surprised if any member in this House—although you never know what members across the way are going to say, or do, or think—but be surprised if any member didn't regard that as a very wise investment, something that has saved, quite literally, probably, billions of dollars in damages during the times since the floodway is opened. It's protected communities and neighbourhoods and families, and, as I finished saying on the last debate we had just a few minutes ago on a quite different matter, this is what we're elected to do. This is what we're supposed to be doing, day in and day out.

And so historians in the House—and I have my friend from Elmwood, who is my seatmate and also my historian mate, reminded me just a few minutes ago—about former Premier Roblin's courageous and bold initiative to introduce a sales tax. And not just merely one cent on the dollar. I think my friend from Minto would probably remind me it was three or four cents, or maybe even five cents on the dollar at the time, all for the very purpose of building a floodway, investing in Manitoba in order to not only protect neighbourhoods, communities and families but, in fact, to strengthen them.

Now, we know what Mr. Roblin's fate was. He was immediately unelected, voted out of office. Taxpayers—these godlike figures that the Tories always point to—were, I guess, upset by it.

But wouldn't it be great, now, Mr. Acting Speaker, if we had the benefit to look back and to see in fact the very important and profound impact that a small amount of taxation provides for communities. In fact—and for families. In fact, the CCPA estimates that through the taxes that we all collectively pay through income taxes, through sales taxes, through property taxes, amount to somewhere in the order of about \$40,000 per family in supports each year.

And so the math of that would be that if you deduct taxes, less services, meaning less supports for families. Like, why come here and why govern if you're not interested in actually doing things that make a difference in the lives of the very people that we represent?

And I have no doubt, when all members go knock on doors, I doubt that one of them is ever hearing about the cut of one cent on the dollar. And they're obviously hearing about—instead—cuts to health care, cuts to emergency rooms.

I know in my own area people are still trying to come to terms with a cut to the Victoria emergency room and turned it into an urgent care. And there is room for urgent care in the system, I don't dispute that. But there's no room for urgent care if there's not a sufficient emergency care in the first place.

So it's something that members on the government side need to remember, when they're knocking on doors. They're hearing about health cuts, they're hearing about cuts to education and not only in the K-to-12 system, as important as that is, Mr. Acting Speaker, but at the post-secondary level as well, where the tuitions are going up at an astounding rate.

* (11:30)

The tuition rebate as we know, again, was cut and so that—and so not only was there lower tuition but, in fact, once you got the rebate you almost paid no tuition during the course of your academic life. But that positioned you to go on and get a good job and to stay and live here in Manitoba.

So I know that members are hearing about those kinds of cuts. We have 26,000 signatures on petitions that we get up and read every day. And I want to say this isn't just from our own constituencies, these are from all across Manitoba, of parents and citizens concerned about the state of child care in this province and the do-nothing attitude of the government of Manitoba to address that very important part of our—both our educational system of our economy and supports for families.

I have no doubt that when members go out they're—on the government's side—they're hearing as our folks do about the lack of investment in housing, the virtual rip-off that's happening when it comes to vulnerable folks in terms of the supports in housing or income that the government continues to raise rents, lower supports and benefits. It all results in a—terrible circumstances where in fact as—we're not

going forward at all but we're going back to the Filmon government, back to other Conservative governments that have simply abandoned the people of Manitoba in order to support an agenda that is focused only on a balance sheet and therefore misses the point of governing in the first place. And it's a huge disappointment.

I know my friend from Minto and my friend from Elmwood will remember when we were debating the PST and the last—when we were in government and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was the leader of the opposition at the time—would get up and say, oh, this is going to cost Manitobans \$1,600 each. Remember how he said that? Sixteen hundred dollars each. They just torqued it, which is what this government does in all of its manners because it's easily the most hyper-partisan government I've ever encountered, ever.

But, of course that was never true; it wasn't true then, it's not true now and it won't be true in the future. And, in fact, I think estimates I've seen that the individual will get over a hundred bucks as a result of this cut and then have to balance that against the enormous cut in services that has occurred as a result of this government's austerity agenda.

It's worth pointing out that, I think as the member from Wolseley also did, is that the PST, while it's a sales tax, has a list of exemptions as long as your arm, and those exemptions were built in to ensure that the things that people rely on—groceries, for example—would not be subject to a sales tax. And so, in fact, it represents a tax that's intended, really, to deal with other consumer purchases and not specifically with the needs of life, which are exempted from the sales tax.

I welcome this debate, but I for one, never going to turtle on taxes, Mr. Acting Speaker. They are the very indication of a civilized society. Without them, I can't imagine that we would have progressed past the Stone Age; I know that we have many members on the opposite side that think of themselves as Fred Flintstone.

Much better that we build a world where all of us thrive, develop—

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

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): It gives me great pleasure to put a few words on the record on Resolution 6, Reducing the PST.

I have listened intently to a number of speeches this morning. And some are full of hope that we offer Manitobans and some of them are just a little bit resentful, I guess, of the success that our government has achieved, certainly in this realm of reducing the PST. We kept our promise, and that's quite a unique thing to happen in this province, considering there were a number of promises broken for the 17 years previous to us coming into power.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to give a little bit of a background of a personal experience; having raised four children on one income, there certainly were some very tough decisions that had to be made when it comes to budgeting and financing to support four growing young children. Many families face this. There are no guarantees that prices are going to stay, you know, relatively the same, so setting that budget you also have to have contingency plans for unexpected expenses and a number of costs for families, contrary to what the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) believes, and I'm really not sure that he actually has any experience budgeting for his own family if he doesn't recognize some of these high costs and how PST relates and increases those costs for young families.

But, back in 2011, when there was a number of comments and chatter and what was called fear-mongering that, oh no, the NDP are going to raise those taxes through the campaign period, I was reassured at the door. And, as a young mother at the time, I had four children, ages 13, 11, nine and five years old. When I heard that promise at the door saying, oh, that's ridiculous, we're not raising the PST, we're not going to raise taxes, we would never do that to, especially a family like yours, I believed that candidate who came to my door who represented the NDP. I trusted that that was the truth because it was said face to face that we are not going to raise any taxes. I had no reason not to believe the candidate who came to my door, who had been the MLA for a number of years previous. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, at the time, had no political affiliation. I was going by what I was told at the door, who visited me, and I actually voted for this candidate because I believed she was telling the truth.

You can imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when, little over a year later, that promise was broken. I know that I am no different than a number of people in this province that felt betrayed by that. It was not only a broken promise where they went and raised that PST. It was after telling us to our face that it

wouldn't happen. And I haven't forgotten the feeling of that broken trust. And so I value and understand how important my word and the word of this party is when we speak to those who will put their ballots in the ballot box and choose who is going to represent them, that when you tell them you are going to do something or not do something, you follow through on your word because in the end, after politics, that's all you have is your word, your reputation, how you conducted yourself when you were in a position of leadership.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the various costs that a family will incur that will include PST is buying clothing for their children. I happen to be the first one in my family to have children, which meant that there weren't a heck of a lot of hand-me-downs so I didn't have a lot of options. So yes, we shopped at thrift shops some days, to just add to the wardrobe, you know, because kids can get messy and their clothes, you know, can get ripped and torn and they grew fast and with four children growing fast, you couldn't always just reuse and share these clothes. So, yes, clothing was a huge expense for us, and although we're not a family of four—we were a family of six—that only increased our costs and certainly the PST, we were paying into that.

There was sports equipment. We couldn't really afford the cost of sport teams, but my children still enjoyed playing soccer so we would buy them soccer shoes to go play in the fields with their friends. So even though they couldn't be on a team when they were really young—we just couldn't afford it—they still could participate in sports on their own time, in their own effort, but that did cost us money and that did also cost extra PST taxes.

Manitobans are really one of the highest taxed jurisdictions all across Canada, and that's unfortunate because it really limited—it limits growth. Our government has come in and reduced these burdens and has encouraged the economic growth so we have more investment in this province, more people contributing to the tax base, and so we were able to reach our goals a lot sooner than what we had predicted because we've become a welcoming province for these businesses that not only bring their businesses here but they hire Manitobans to work for them. So more people are making a salary and money now who can pay back into the economy.

* (11:40)

So it wasn't just a—well, let's get to this reduction of PST, come hell or high water. This was a function

of very strategic, smart, wise investments and decisions made all along that have allowed us to be in a position where we're able to fulfill a province—promise.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've 'soken' a little bit about the struggles of a young family, and the costs, and the importance of setting a budget and sticking to a budget, but we also have senior citizens who are on limited income, and they do feel the effects both of raised taxes or lowered taxes.

And I can tell you, you ask a senior citizen, would they prefer we raise taxes by 1 per cent—or 4 per cent, which is what I heard what the previous government was considering at one point—or would you prefer us to reduce at least by 1 per cent as a starting point?

We increase our personal income rate—

An Honourable Member: Personal exemption.

Mrs. Guillemard: —personal exemption, thank you very much, we're a team here, working. That also allowed them to free up some money, some discretionary money, that they can now put towards their own activities. I will tell you, those senior citizens will appreciate every effort that we make to make their lives easier, and give them back choices of where they would like to spend their own money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP, when they were in government, they didn't understand proper budgeting or negotiation. I spoke with a number of people from the health field, who no longer are in the health field, but they told me this story where they heard the people appointed to negotiate for various new contracts in the health system, they arrived to negotiate with the NDP government.

And, of course, the basic understanding of negotiation is if you are negotiating a new contract, you come with a pretty high number. You start at a very high number, which you don't expect to actually achieve getting that particular number of salary, but you start there, and then you negotiate back and forth, and you know that you have that bottom number, where you just are not going to go below that negotiation.

Well, they arrived prepared to negotiate, and knew where they'd like to end up. And they presented this number to the government at the time, which was the NDP government, and what happened was the government said, sure. Where do we sign?

There was no negotiation. And, of course, their negotiating party is not going to say, well, whoa, whoa, that's irresponsible. You're dealing with taxpayer money, you might want to counter. No. They just wanted to have it done. And here, we'll give you everything you want, in hopes that you're going to vote for us and look favourably upon us.

So, sure, that might have been a nice gesture, you know, for a few people within the health care system. However, that was taxpayer money and the taxpayers expected proper negotiations to happen. The taxpayers expect governments to sit down and say, this is a fair amount; this is not a fair amount.

These are taxpayer dollars that we are responsible for, and so we're going to spend them wisely, invest them in proper areas that are going to help Manitobans.

That is just one example of many, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that shows there was a lack of understanding or effort when it even came to negotiating or understanding the true responsibility that we have to manage taxpayer money and dollars.

Now, the previous government did their best before leaving. They saw the signs on the wall. They heard the disappointment and the rejection from their own supporters over their decisions over 17 years. And they did their best, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to try to put in obstacles so that we couldn't fulfill our promise of reducing that PST by 1 per cent.

So I completely understand why members opposite are nervous and a little bit embarrassed that we were able to succeed, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's never too late to apologize for their mistakes that hurt Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): My throat is pretty sore today. Actually I—it comes from watching Sunday's episode of Game of Thrones, where I was screaming too much when the dragon got killed. And so now my throat is really sore, so you'll have to bear with me.

So I don't know if I'm pleased to get up on the record today—or to get up in the House and put some words on the record. It seems really, in respect of all that we could be doing today in the House, on what is really limited time for private members' business, to be discussing a resolution brought forward by the member of—for Radisson in respect of something that we've actually already voted on and dealt with. So it

seems pretty redundant and it seems pretty—like a waste of time to talk about this but to the best of my abilities, I will put a couple of words on the record.

I do want to share with the House, you know, I know several members on the government side have talked about, you know, opportunities to speak with—miigwech—to speak with folks in the community. I want to share a story with the House that one of our members recently shared.

One of our members was recently, just a couple of days ago actually, or last week, was at Costco, and one of the fellow shoppers came up to this member of our NDP caucus and said, are you so-and-so? And this individual said, yes, I am. And they said, oh, well, we just wanted to say, you know, we really appreciate the work that you're doing in the House and, you know, we're constituents of the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), and we just want you to know that while, you know, the member for Radisson, you know, tries to be charming and, you know, we see through that. We actually see through the member for Radisson trying to charm us. We know that the member for Radisson hasn't once stood up for Concordia ER and, you know, our member was, you know, obviously a little caught off guard that somebody, you know, would so blatantly talk about the member for Radisson, but that is what those of us on this side of the House actually do hear quite often about members opposite sitting by and sitting on their hands while their government, your boss, dismantles the health-care system here in Manitoba.

And so, you know, I share that with the member for Radisson because his constituents know that he has not once stood up in this House. He has not once stood up to his boss that, you know, from what we understand, everybody is scared to say anything to their boss on that side of the House, and said, why are you closing Concordia ER? And constituents see that and I would suggest to the member, every member opposite, but certainly to the member for Radisson, I would suspect that using private members' business, the very limited amount of time that we have for private members' business would be wisely used actually standing up for Concordia ER and the closure that this government, his boss, his ministers are moving towards in the very, very near future.

Now we know that, you know, just in recent days, in recent hours, the Minister for Health has attempted in a way to walk back maybe the decision

in respect of Concordia ER, which let me just put on the record here and now is fundamentally based on the community grassroots activism of constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): I would just ask the member to draw her remarks back to the PMR under consideration.

Ms. Fontaine: That is precisely what I'm talking about, Deputy House—or Deputy Speaker, and I know that the PMR is about PST and in order to reduce the PST respectfully, it comes at a cost. It comes at a cost to programs and services in Manitoba which we have seen for the last three years slowly but surely, methodically and strategically that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and every other member across the way have allowed to happen. The reduction of a 1 per cent PST comes at a cost to our health-care system.

* (11:50)

Where are you going to make up that money? Well, I suggest to the House today, you make up that money by closing the Concordia ER. You make up that money by closing the Seven Oaks ER. So it is fundamentally connected to what we are discussing here today. And so I will continue once now that I have clarified that for everybody.

We've seen that the minister in the last couple of hours has tried to—and again, you know, it's pretty transparent that the Minister for Health is attempting to walk back or slow back or divert attention from the impending closure of the Concordia ER in an attempt to, you know, sway voters for when their Premier, their boss decides to break the fixed-date election laws here in Manitoba and call an early election, thinking somehow that Manitobans are not going to know what this Premier and every member opposite are attempting to do.

And should members opposite and the Premier succeed in a second term, we know definitively that they will just absolutely pillage—continue to pillage our health-care system which would include (1) the closure of Concordia ER, and (2) the closure of Seven Oaks ER.

And what is anybody on that side of the House doing? Nothing, including the member for Radisson who brings forward a PMR touting and celebrating the 1 per cent reduction in PST, even though we already dealt with this a couple of weeks ago.

Which I think it bears noting, yet again, that when we all stood in the House in respect of the vote

to reduce the PST, there was only one individual who did not vote in favour of it, and because of House rules, I'm not allowed to refer to when a member is not in the House. But, certainly, you know, the one member who has been touting in respect of a 1 per cent reduction in the PST couldn't even find the time to vote in support of it.

So I know that members opposite think that it is a slam dunk reducing the 1 per cent PST and immediately breaking the fixed-election date law and that somehow Manitobans are going to be fooled into voting for them again, but I would suggest ever so respectfully, Deputy Speaker, that the member for Radisson certainly should be concerned, should be very concerned that we have citizens, we have Manitoba citizens that are coming up to us on this side of the House and saying that they're not fooled by his false charms, that they are fully aware that he has not once stood up in this House—he's not the only one; I don't want the member for Radisson to think that I'm only—but certainly this is his PMR but not one single member of members opposite have stood up while they have allowed their boss to just dismantle the health-care system.

Not one single member has stood up opposite while they have dismantled, you know, reproductive health services and programs for Manitoba women. They've all just sat by while their boss chooses, you know, what is important and what isn't. And, certainly, to the Premier of Manitoba, their boss, it is quite clear that if you are a woman or a girl, your health care doesn't matter. It is quite clear that if you're a woman or a girl, certainly your reproductive rights do not matter; in fact, we're actually going to thwart that. And every member has stood by and allowed that to happen instead of standing up to their Premier, their boss and saying, hey—

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

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): It gives me great honour to stand up and put a few words on the record on this PMR, reducing the PST.

You know, the member from Rossmere brings this forward—

An Honourable Member: Radisson.

Mrs. Smith: —or Radisson, okay, we're mixing the two up—from Radisson—which, you know, he looks—

An Honourable Member: The most diverse caucus in the history of the—

Mrs. Smith: So they say. And touting that they're, you know, reducing the PST by 1 per cent. That's great, Manitobans deserve that 1 per cent break.

But they also deserve to have quality health care in their communities. You know, that member represents constituents from Concordia ER. Has he stood up in this House and fought for that ER? Has he been listening to his constituents that I'm sure have been sending him a barrage of emails about, you know, we'd like to keep our services, when is this going to happen? You know, and it's 1 per cent to Manitobans. And, you know, they want the services. They want to be able to keep the services they have.

And, you know, our caucus has already voted in favour of this 1 per cent reduction. I don't know why

we're here talking about this again. It's been voted on. You know, it's going to happen July 1st. The member doesn't have anything, you know, more pressing in his constituency, or for Manitobans, that he can bring forward?

You know, there's been cut after cut after cut. You know, we just learned from some constituents in my riding that they no longer have access to the ACCESS bursaries. You know, and we heard from—

The Acting Speaker (Andrew Micklefield): Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) will have eight minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Debate on Second Readings– Public Bills

| | |
|--|------|
| Bill 226–The Presumption of Death and Declaration of Absence Act and Amendments to The Insurance Act | |
| T. Marcelino | 1643 |
| A. Smith | 1644 |
| B. Smith | 1645 |
| Allum | 1646 |
| Kinew | 1648 |
| Altemeyer | 1649 |
| Maloway | 1651 |

| | |
|--|------|
| Bill 207–The Manitoba Conservation Officers Recognition Day Act | 1651 |
|--|------|

Debate on Resolutions

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Res. 6–Reducing the PST | |
| Wiebe | 1651 |
| Smook | 1653 |
| Altemeyer | 1655 |
| Allum | 1656 |
| Guillemard | 1658 |
| Fontaine | 1660 |
| B. Smith | 1661 |

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

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