

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

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

Vol. LXXV No. 60A - 10 a.m., Tuesday, May 11, 2021

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Piwniuk): 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 in which in accordance with Thy will, that we 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, everyone.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this morning for private members' business we call Bill 230, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (2).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) that second reading of Bill 230, the labour relations amendment act.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 230—The Labour Relations
Amendment Act (2)**

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I move, seconded by the honourable member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin), that Bill 230, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (2); Loi n° 2 modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: It is an honour to bring forward Bill 230, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (2), this morning.

Bill 230 will allow for union members who pay dues to choose to direct a portion of their dues to a

registered charity which was used for political purposes. This redirection of funds, paid by members, would not impact day-to-day operations of the union they belong to, such as any collective bargaining.

The portion of the dues that are being requested to be offered for charitable donation are those which are currently earmarked for political advertising. This percentage of union dues would support non-profits and registered charities, as they continue to offer much-needed relief to Manitobans, despite the many challenges being faced during COVID.

These dues are already being paid in full by members of Manitoba's unions. This bill would present a choice or option for employees or union members to either have the dues remain as they are and go to the union in full, or to allow the portion of dues that are designated for political advertising to go to a charity, not a political cause or body of any kind.

Deputy Speaker, this is not a new ask. This legislation had been in place before under the previous Conservative government of the 1990s, and it was subsequently repealed by the Doer government very shortly after they took power.

The change in legislation removed the opportunity of members who wanted to support charities of their choice. This was a benefit to many of the local grassroots organizations that were helping families and those in need of support. Manitobans benefited from this option. Manitobans are known for the generosity and want to be able to support a charity of their choice and to offer extra financial support whenever they can.

The ability to allocate this portion to a person's charity means that many more locally funded, resource-based and volunteer organizations will benefit. Deputy Speaker, it is at times—we are experiencing now that the benefit of this option is important. As I previously stated, Manitobans are generous, and this offers an additional opportunity to support the many charities and our most vulnerable citizens further financially: in other words, pay it forward.

With this legislation, we hope to increase streams of donations for charities who have been hard-hit by the pandemic. The money will assist with the decrease in donations because of these uncertain times. The

additional funding could be the difference between a support resource or community program being available and accessible to families in need, versus it no longer being an opportunity or option.

I have listened to many debates in the Chamber and have often heard members opposite speak to the word—to the work they do to help the homeless, families struggling to find supports, hungry people in our province and individuals who are leaving an abusive relationship. I could go on and on.

The list of individuals who are benefiting from the very programs that have been impacted by COVID would be the ones benefiting from Bill 230. Meal and hamper programs, resource centres and the outreach to immediate community and employment programs, parenting support programs are a few that I immediately think of.

I know our government wants to do all it can to support and assist families that are struggling. I am sure that those in opposition would want to as well. The other day, on Tuesday, April 27th, 2021, the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar) is recorded in Hansard as saying: "We want to stand together as a community, as Manitobans, to fight this pandemic." I could not agree more with the member.

Deputy Speaker, when the previous government came into power, they removed the option to pay the political purpose portion to a person's charity of choice and have the total of the union dues going directly to the union. The employee was not made aware of this change, nor provided an opportunity to continue to support their charity or offer support to an organization that they strongly believed in.

I believe this removed the voice and ability of many who would want to know that their hard-earned money was going towards worthy causes. Not all members share the same views as the leaders of the tops of unions, and so their voices should be respected as well. This is just one way that can be done, while at the same time providing support for charities in our province. This is a winning situation for all parties involved.

Bill 230 is a bill that benefits all Manitobans. I have worked in the social service sector for many years. In my role, I would seek out and network with clients so they could utilize the resources and supports for themselves and their families.

These programs provided a support that most of the families did not have in their current circum-

stances. Through advocacy and outreach with community and larger agencies, the extra food needed for that weekend, a safe place to connect with when life was unsettled and chaotic, extra support to assist with children, giving additional funds to the local animal rescue facility, accessibility to employment and education programs and life skills courses, to name only a few: all seeking support for their need benefited.

The allocation of funds further strengthens the donation base of agencies that provide the most vulnerable with much-needed resources. Our party recognizes that after consideration of the bill and during stakeholder outreach, not every unionized employee would choose to participate in a program like this. However, giving employees that choice is important and this bill does that, while also bringing immense benefits to some of the most vulnerable people and charities in our province.

I was a union member and, as a member, paid my membership dues. I was also a shop steward, and in my role, I worked to ensure the safety of employees and those accessing our services. The option to pay it forward, or donate the portion of my union dues, was not an option.

* (10:10)

Deputy Speaker, as I stated, I was not aware that this option had existed, and when I learned about this, along with other union employees talking to myself, I decided to investigate what options were available for those who pay union dues.

This was a nice surprise and a disappointment. I could not understand why a union would take money from community programs and keep it for themselves and still say they were there for the people. I was confused. This did not make any sense. How could the party who has always claimed to be there for the poor, underprivileged and struggling be the same party that removed the option to pay it forward through this portion of their union dues?

Through our meetings with community members, we learned that not many were aware that the option to donate directly had existed and then had been removed. This was educational and enlightening to them.

Deputy Speaker, Bill 230 offers more than an opportunity to have union members donate a portion of their dues to charity. It also highlights the many humanitarian good deeds that Manitobans do to support those who are struggling.

The NDP would like everyone to believe that the unions would be underfunded, but this is not the case. The portion that is being identified for political advertising would be the portion that is being redirected to the employee's charity of choice. The ability to pay it forward benefits many. It supports future families and ensures that much-needed programming will be there for those who need a hand up in their life.

Thank you.

Questions

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

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Interesting to hear the member admit to being confused. Clearly, she was when she introduced this piece of legislation.

So can the member explain to us how often this particular piece of legislation was discussed at the Labour Management Review Committee?

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I thank the member opposite for the question.

This bill came out of a need from community members—union members, actually—who wanted to be able to have a voice and a say in where their union dues were going. They work in an area where a lot of the supports and resources were needing and lacking. And especially during COVID, they were wondering what other way they could assist, and so this was where we were heading with this one.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I'm wondering if my colleague can explain what inspired the member to bring forward the proposed amendment to The Labour Relations Act at this point?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I'd like to thank my colleague from McPhillips for the question.

A lot of the resources and community programs that benefit from the funding have been impacted with COVID, and with every person looking forward and not knowing the certainty of the future, this was something that was somewhat troublesome, and wanting to continue to support these programs, looked into it further and wanted to, you know, reintroduce

something that gives a union person an opportunity to redirect their funds to a worthy cause. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, I just want to remind members not to heckle on Zoom—if it can be okay.

Mr. Lindsey: The heckling will be my job, not the member opposite's.

So the answer to the question is it never got discussed at Labour Management Review Committee.

Can this member tell me just what all good works do unions do when it comes to charitable donations and helping the less fortunate? Does she have any idea?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you for the question.

This bill is about giving voice and empowering union members, and offering them an opportunity to take a portion of their union dues and put it towards a not-for-profit or a charity of their choice so that they can then ensure that their interests are still kept going through these hard times.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): My question for the member is, why is there this expectation now for unions to have to be the ones to support the most vulnerable here in Manitoba? Why is this government not stepping up and being the ones to put these supports in place?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank the member for the question.

The government isn't stopping funding for programming. Again, this bill isn't about other programming. This is about asking individuals or offering individuals who want to take a portion of their union dues and direct it towards charities and not-for-profits that they have an interest in or that they would like to see benefit from monies that they know they wouldn't necessarily be supporting with any electoral campaign or an ad that they don't want to have.

So it's giving them that voice and giving them an opportunity to put their money where they want to put it.

Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley): Thank you to my colleague for Seine River for that response to the member of Tyndall Park. That was very clear.

Can the member explain how this bill will help charities in an immense time of need?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I'd like to thank the member for that great question.

Over the last few months with COVID, a lot of the charities have not been able to be as open as they would have been. A lot of the churches have been closed. Some of the support agencies that are offering funding and resources to individuals have had to take on extra expenses, safety and health procedures.

So a lot of the money that would have been earmarked towards programming to benefit has been reduced, and this would be a great way for union members who, again, want to support these charities, ensure their longevity, to be able to put the funding and money towards them.

Mr. Lindsey: So the member talks about, well, union members would be able to donate to charities of their choice.

Is there anything precluding, stopping a member of a union from donating to a charity of their choice now? And what has the government actually done to help some of those charities remain in business during this COVID time?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you to the member for the question.

Again, this isn't about not having anyone donate to a charity of their choice. This is about giving an individual a voice, an opportunity to take that portion of the union dues that had previously, under the previous Conservative government of the 1990s, been an option for individuals to say I would like to donate this portion because I don't necessarily believe in where the union is going because this is not my political stripe.

Again, it is not for political purposes. It is just for the non-registered—sorry—charities and the not-for-profits. So it benefits—it's an additional—it's an enhancement. It is support needed, especially in these bad times of COVID.

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): Can the member describe some examples of charities that unionized employees may wish to support?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank the member for the great question.

There's a lot of charities that a lot of individuals may or may not know about, but some of the larger ones that have been struggling or have seen a decrease in their funding are some of the churches, some of the shelter facilities, some of the homeless facilities, some of the outreach within the community: a lot of those that provide grassroots supports who are seeing an increased need for their services. They would be the

ones that would most benefit from this—or member—the person would decide to allocate their funds towards.

Mr. Lindsey: So the member clearly admits she never spoke to any unions about this.

Could she perhaps tell us how many companies did she speak to? How many times has Merit Contractors, for example, lobbied either the member or the government to bring this piece of legislation in?

* (10:20)

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you for the question.

Again, this was something that was brought to my attention by individuals who were wanting to further help within a community. So whoever has the opportunity to take their union dues and pay it forward to an agency or a charity, and they have that opportunity, will want to do this.

Why would you not want to support the local community? Why would you not want to see success and continue to help those who are most vulnerable at this time?

Mr. Martin: I'm wondering if my colleague for Seine River can explain, especially to my brothers and sisters across the way, how her bill won't impact the day-to-day operations of unions in their activities.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you to the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) for that great question.

The monies that we are looking at the portion has already been earmarked for political purposes, so some of these purposes would have been election communication, election financing, third-party partisan activity ads, election expenses subject to the Canadian elections act—anything that would have been put forward through the unions but not necessarily representing all of the union members who are paying their dues.

Mr. Lindsey: Perhaps maybe the member opposite hasn't heard of this thing called the Canadian constitution but, in 1991, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that exactly what this government is trying to change was constitutional and was allowed—did meet the requirements of use of union dues.

So why is this government once again trying to introduce a bill that's going to be proven to be unconstitutional?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you for the question.

Again, this is about helping those in need and giving a voice to individuals who are paying union dues, who don't necessarily have the same ideology as the union leaders that they're working under. And it benefits community.

Again, I ask him: why would he not want to see community—the very support agencies that they speak to support and help—why would they not want to see them benefit from dues that would have gone to partisan activities?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I can't say that I'm shocked to see a government, in the middle of a pandemic, introduce a bill like this, because it just ties into their whole anti-work or anti-union right-wing ideological attack on the people of Manitoba.

The member talks about, well, we'll give all this money to charity. But at the same time, this government has refused to negotiate properly with unions, has refused to respect people like front-line health-care workers, nurses. They stand up every day and say, oh, thank you very much, thank you very much, but refuse to actually allow them to sit down and negotiate, refuse to allow them to go to arbitration.

And the best way that Manitobans would have more money to donate to charities is by having strong union jobs that are properly negotiated to allow them to have a decent income, so that they can meet their basic needs and still make charitable donations, which the member has correctly pointed out that Manitobans are very generous when it comes to making charitable donations.

So let's not kid each other. This is just another attack on working people. This is just another attack on unions.

So let's look at the law. The last election, one of the members opposite stood up and accused Unifor of violating the election financing laws, which clearly was shown to be not true. Said member also refuses to stand up and apologize for making those kind of false accusations.

But wait, was somebody found guilty of violating the election laws? Well, yes: Merit Contractors. Merit Contractors—the same bunch that their leadership makes regular contributions to the Conservative Party,

the same bunch that is anti-union, the same bunch that mounted campaigns about stopping project labour agreements which benefited union members and non-union members.

So let's not kid ourselves about this being some great, almighty charitable drive, because that's not what it is. It is most assuredly not what it is. What it is is just another attack on unions. Well, why does this government hate unions? Well, because unions are very effective at educating their members, very effective at mobilizing their members, and one of the things that they do educate their members about is politics.

And I'm sure the member opposite would be more than happy if working people had no concept of politics and who was taking advantage of them this week. But that's one of the things that unions do, and I suppose that would be one of the things that, under this bill, would be not allowed; that union dues would be taken away from educating members.

You know, schools should actually educate kids about politics and right and wrong and voting and all that stuff, but they fail. But unions do that work, and do the work to make sure that members understand what party, what policies, what laws work for Manitobans, and which ones work against Manitobans.

We've already seen this government refuse to follow the law which, in itself, they should be found guilty and maybe the Premier (Mr. Pallister) hauled off to jail for refusing to follow laws. Bill 28, for example, has been ruled unconstitutional, but the government refuses to withdraw it and refuses to bargain properly.

There's a law in the books that says either party can ask for arbitration after a certain period of time. This government refuses to follow the law. They refuse to send those negotiations to arbitration—you know why? It's really quite simple. Because every time they go to arbitration, they lose. Because what they're trying to do is not legal. This is another attempt to institute a piece of legislation that is not going to be shown to be legal.

So the member opposite, perhaps, has never heard of the Rand formula. So very quickly, what it was was it was a piece of court ruling that came into being way back in 1946 that talked about unions' ability to collect dues to do the work of the union.

So back in the '90s, probably when there was a Conservative government, probably, you know, they

made some kind of goofy laws that said they couldn't use it for political purposes. But in 1991, the Supreme Court of Canada—which last time I looked, they held sway over this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and these Conservative governments; the law is the law—they ruled that such practices were acceptable. It said unions should have the latitude to spend their money as they see fit and that the formula, by requiring all contract employees to contribute union dues whether they wish to or not, did not undermine the right of Canadians' freedom of association.

So it's already been ruled in the court. Now, the member talks about, well, the law got changed back in the '90s—because it was found to be unconstitutional. Which this government should listen when courts rule that their laws that they're introducing are not constitutional.

So we know that since day one, when this government first got elected, it's been attack, attack, attack. The member opposite talks about, well, she talked to some community members. We know they didn't talk to the Labour Management Review Committee. We know they didn't talk to any actual unions.

* (10:30)

But this fit into their ideological slant, and I'm sure the member opposite—probably a decent person—been directed to make sure she introduces this private member's bill to attack unions, to attack workers with the theory that, well, there's going to be more money for charities. By their continued attack on working people and unions and unions' ability to negotiate, that is the attack on charities. That is the attack on Manitobans.

That is the attack that we should focus on today, not trying to take more rights away from working people, more rights away from unions, under the guise of somehow helping charities during a pandemic when, in fact, this government has done little or next to nothing to help those very same charities that this member proclaims that workers should be able to donate their union dues.

Workers can donate whatever they want to charities, but what the member fails to understand is that a lot of unions already donate money, time, labour, effort—all that stuff to various charitable causes throughout the province, throughout the country. But that doesn't fit their mindset, so they want to try and change people's thinking that, oh, I've got this choice. Oh, wait a minute, I won't have a decent

salary to be able to donate anything. It's just wrong on so many different levels.

I call shame on the member for introducing this bill at this particular time and trying to say that it's because of COVID that it's a good thing. The best thing for those charities is strong unions negotiating good collective agreements so that members have money to donate as they see fit—and they do. But when workers don't have jobs, when workers don't have negotiated settlements, when workers are held back with this government's attack on minimum wage, they don't have the money to donate to charities.

So fix that problem, never mind introducing a piece of—and another piece of anti-labour legislation strictly to meet this Premier's ideological drive to beat unions, to break unions so that his right-wing agenda can run amok and destroy the very province that he claims he's trying to protect. And on all those members opposite are guilty of that, as well.

They're destroying this very province, right before our eyes, in the middle of a pandemic. They should all be ashamed of themselves, withdraw this bill and let's get back to business.

Thank you.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): It's always a pleasure to be here this morning to participate in the democratic process. I just finished listening to my colleague across the way, the member from Flin Flon and he's advocating for, if I heard right, he was using the Trump's lock-'em-up slogan. The irony, though, is that of the—out of our two leaders, I'm pretty confident that his leader might have been locked up. But, you know what, I'm digressing a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Before I get into the parts of my comments in support of the member for Seine River's (Ms. Morley-Lecomte) bill—oh, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I think the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) is having an audio visual problem or I hope not a medical emergency, but she seems to be trying to get your attention. I don't know if she needs to contact the moderator or something.

The honourable member—[interjection] Yes, the honourable Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I don't know if the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) is trying to be funny or cute, but even if the member was having a medical emergency, it's

wholly inappropriate for him to bring that up and he should apologize to the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the same point of order, the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen).

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Deputy Government House Leader): Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm also following the debate this morning and it seemed to me that the member was simply reacting to signalling of some kind that was taking place in the background for the member for Point Douglas. So he was looking for a clarification. That's—all seems above board to me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to—at this point of order, that it's not a point of order, but the thing is, with—as the Speaker, I only see about four different members in front of me right now, so I don't—I can't see the whole screen of all the members in a virtual setting here.

So I—the thing is, it's not a point of order, but if everybody can—again, when they're on virtual they can't heckle, but also at the same time they can't have props and they can't have—again, if they can—and to get people's attention, I think this—everybody should be working—being it's virtual sites, much the same if they're being conducting themselves in the Chamber.

* * *

Mr. Martin: The only apology I need to make is for actually caring about my colleagues across the way and making sure that they are okay, if they were indeed trying to get your attention, Mr. Speaker.

But that being said, I think it is important too that at the front end that we as a government and we as MLAs acknowledge that Dr. Roussin was recently feted by Doctors Manitoba for the work *[inaudible]* He's been at the forefront of our—of the COVID situation here in Manitoba. So I say congratulations to Dr. Roussin and his entire team, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, here we are today discussing *[inaudible]* bill of the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), who has put forward a reasonable amendment to The Labour Relations Act. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) was talking about—and the NDP love to throw—I think at one point I heard the words *[inaudible]* And, you know what, if the member for Flin Flon had that information, then I encourage him right now to interrupt debate and table the legal opinion from the Supreme Court of Canada that indicated that the amendment that has

been brought forward today mirrors a similar amendment that is on the books in the '90s, *[inaudible]* was ruled unconstitutional.

I know for a fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the member for Flin Flon cannot table that opinion and that decision by the Supreme Court of Canada because it doesn't exist. There's just one more example of members opposite misusing or misrepresenting information in order to attempt—falsely—to put their argument *[inaudible]*

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other things—and *[inaudible]* the member for Flin Flon really failed to do their homework in terms of *[inaudible]* this bill and how they, as an individual MLA, can support the member for Seine River and her very thoughtful legislation.

The member for Flin Flon—and I did listen intently to their speech, it is important that we listen to each other and hear each other's comments and each other's perspectives because it's only then, together *[inaudible]* properly *[inaudible]* ensure that we represent all Manitobans. But the member for Flin Flon asked my colleague about how many times a particular business *[inaudible]* business came in to lobby the member for Seine River.

And I thought to myself, well, we have the lobbyists registry act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I—it behooves the member for Flin Flon that perhaps they should have actually gone down and actually had a look online—which is all available online at the Lobbyists Registry and they would have actually had that information beforehand and then they could have actually asked a more thoughtful question of the member for Seine River in relation to this bill.

So this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation can be summed up in single word, and it's about choice. And I'm shocked that members opposite and, you know, the Opposition House Leader, who claims that she is a proponent of choice, would deny Manitobans simply whose only situation is they happen to be a member of a union. And the—my NDP brothers and sisters across the way are saying to those union members, you do not have a choice, you do not have a voice.

This legislation in no way impacts the political activities of the unions. If the union leadership wants to take their six-figure salaries and go eat at Rae & Jerry's when the restaurants are available after COVID when these restrictions are lessened, Mr. Speaker, that is just fine.

This is a bill about that opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, saying to individuals, we acknowledge and we support—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

I just want to remind the member from McPhillips if there's a possibility if you can put on your mic on. I guess we're having—the headset—I guess we're having problems of actually Hansard hearing you. So if there's a possibility if you can put in your headset in. It's kind of really muffled, the sound.

* (10:40)

Mr. Martin: Apologies, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Unfortunately, my headset's in the back of my car, so by the time I run outside and get it and get back, my time will be up. Is—am I coming across okay for you?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, your audio is cutting in and out through the Hansard's transcripts here. So if there's a possibility—is there any way—

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll get through this as we often do. This is one of the challenges of a virtual democracy. But I, like all my colleagues across the way, are blessed to be part of this democracy, and we see the military juntas occurring in other parts of the world so—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to ask the member, is he reverting back to the Speaker about the situation with your headset?

Mr. Martin: No—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are you referring back to the debate is the question I had for you, sorry.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am returning to debate on Bill 230, the labour relations amendment act, put forward by the MLA for Seine *[inaudible]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now we'll go on to the honourable member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino)—no, sorry. *[interjection]* Are you not finished?

The honourable member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin).

Mr. Martin: I apologize for the technical confusion, Mr. Speaker, but like I said, this is the situation we're in and we can smile about it because we are very blessed to be in this country, that we can have these conversations.

So I encourage—again, I encourage my brothers and sisters across the way to take a good look at this

legislation, to take a look at an opportunity that they have to allow union members to have a choice: the choice where there's a small portion of their dues *[inaudible]* activities are being allowed to make use of a charity of choice.

I don't think that is unreasonable, and if individuals want to have that choice, they should have that choice. And that's really what it comes down to. As a card-carrying member of the UFCW for a number of years, I've paid my union dues and I attended the meetings. And I acknowledge and support the work that they do, but I encourage, in terms of support, that all colleagues take a good look at Bill 230, the labour relations amendment act, and say to Manitobans, we've heard you, we recognize that you have an opportunity here to have a choice. And if you choose, Mr. Deputy Speaker—you can choose to take that money and support any organization, any charity that you want.

And so the timeliness of my colleague's amendment couldn't be better. Last evening, I was out with my son, playing 21 at the end of our driveway and, actually, we had a number of CNIB, Canadian National Institute for the Blind—and, I mean, they were *[inaudible]* was going door-to-door in my neighbourhood, seeking charitable donations.

And so I had an opportunity to engage them in conversation—obviously, a socially distanced conversation—expressing my concern, obviously, during this—these restriction levels that seem like *[inaudible]* out canvassing. But they advised me that they are, indeed, struggling. Obviously, traditional means of accessing revenue *[inaudible]* aren't available, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so they are quite anxious to try new things.

I'm not in any way suggesting that the MLA for Seine River's legislation, we want it to be the be-all and end-all when it comes to supporting those charitable organizations. But, more important, it's about supporting workers. It's about supporting their choice to have their voice heard *[inaudible]*

So before any member opposite gets up and tries to suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is somehow an anti-union bill, I want to be crystal clear I one hundred per cent support the unions *[inaudible]* here in the province of Manitoba, despite members opposite's claim that this bill is unconstitutional. Unless they can put forward an opinion by the Supreme Court of Canada, they are simply wrong.

This is legislation that gives people that opportunity to have their voice heard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is really what all legislation should be about.

Even last night's legislation—the legislative committee where we had discussion about our plan to eliminate half of the property tax for all individuals here in Manitoba, including farmers. Individuals came to that to speak because again, that is their choice. They have that opportunity, and that is what Bill 230 is trying to do. It is trying to [*inaudible*] workers in Manitoba, who have every right to belong to a union and who want to support that union—absolutely, they can continue to have their office tower on Broadway, they can continue all their activities. What the member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte) is proposing is similar legislation that's previously in place, found to be valid, found to be constitutional and found to be of use.

And instead, the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Again, I just want to remind all members, if you're actually coming in on virtual, is to make sure you've got your mic connected to your computer. We—everybody was supplied—a headset was supplied to every member who was virtual. So if—I would really encourage them because it was very difficult hearing and understanding and communicating with the member. So I would really strongly recommend that you even have some tests done here with the moderator. [*interjection*]

Yes, and if you forget your headset, you—we allow—the Chamber here—like, go to the Clerk's office and they'll supply you with an extra set. So I really strongly recommend that.

Now we'll go on to the honourable member for Notre Dame.

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): It's really my pleasure to speak this morning on Bill 230, the labour relations amendment act.

Just wanted to make a small note that my children are at home this morning from school, so I'm really on tenterhooks. They don't understand that they just can't barge in in this room, so they could be coming in at any moment.

Anyways, let's get back to this bill. This bill amends The Labour Relations Act to enable a unionized employee to direct that the portion of their

union dues that would otherwise be used for political purposes be donated to a registered charity.

I would just like to say, you know, just coming out to—that this bill is just another attempt to limit the ability of working people and members of the union to speak up and speak out about issues that are important to them in their day-to-day work. And it also—this bill limits the ability of working people and working members to speak out about this PC government's regressive and anti-labour agenda.

Now, what is the need for this particular piece of legislation at this time? It's very disappointing to see, you know, instead of members opposite really putting their heads together, trying to work on a plan of action to help Manitobans—especially those that have been most impacted by this pandemic—to work together to come up with plans for Manitobans to improve, you know, systems in place so that they can have better opportunities at work or even, you know, to improve, like, the learning loss that's been happening in schools. Just—there's been such a myriad of issues that have come up due to this pandemic.

And instead of trying to improve that, you know, we're seeing legislation like this that's being presented, you know, just to attack labour more and to—you know, just more ideological regressive agenda for their policies.

So again, this just seems like a waste of time to be talking about this instead of focusing on the real needs of Manitobans at this time.

Now, what is the need for this? Since the year 2000, the NDP Doer government has already banned union and corporate donations. Union dues have not been able to be directed to partisan political campaigns for the last 21 years. So I'm not sure why, you know, they're trying to focus on the political purposes of this union still.

* (10:50)

And again, in a series of past legislation in the 2000s, there was already legislation about advertising before and during elections. There are strict restrictions in place regarding blackout periods and advertising amounts for—that individuals can spend. So, again, why are you—why is this government so worried about all the political direction that the—that unions can do?

I actually agree with those listed restrictions that have been passed since the 2000s, but with Bill 230, I disagree fundamentally with what this bill is trying

to do. This bill is trying to silence union members when they're trying to raise concerns on the issues of the day that are affecting them.

So, for example, currently unions such as the Manitoba Nurses Union, they use their member dues to raise public awareness on issues such as staffing shortages and how that affects them. The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union and the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union, they're currently waging a public awareness campaign on the need to improve wages for social service workers, such as group home workers and workers who care for those in community-assisted living.

And last year, when union members were getting infected with COVID due to a lack of personal protective equipment, the Manitoba Nurses Union and the Manitoba Federation of Labour, they waged public awareness and advocacy campaigns on the need for more health and safety measures to be in place for its members.

So, unions engage in issue-based public awareness campaigns that speak to the needs of their members, and this type of legislation that the member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte) has put forth would affect the ability of those unions to engage in these public awareness and advocacy campaigns.

Again, there are more campaigns just right now that I know that unions are engaging in. I know of union campaigns on the need to have more government child-care funding. I've seen union campaigns on the need to raise the minimum wage to a living wage and right now, other public awareness campaigns I've seen a lot on Facebook—on Facebook ads, is the need for paid sick days, especially during this pandemic.

So again, this bill, Bill 230, is talking about removing the right of unions to engage member union dues in political activities but, again, I would stress that there is already legislation in place to prohibit that. So, you know, in 2000, when NDP Gary Doer—Premier Gary Doer, he banned union and corporate political donations and later, a series of restrictions on political advertising.

Those political restrictions are already in place that had to do with spending amounts for advertising, the need to register before you could advertise, blackout times before and during an election. These types of political activities that unions could choose to engage in are already being restricted and legislated.

So this bill is different. This is now trying to take away the right of union members to use their collective voices and their collective dues to raise public awareness and advocacy campaigns on issues that affect them. And that's not right. That's not right.

So unions, you know, I guess this government is feeling threatened because unions have some of the biggest advertisers in recent election campaigns. That's according to Royce Koop, who teaches political studies at the University of Manitoba. He said that unions are probably the most important third party players in Manitoba politics. So I guess, you know, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), this caucus, is trying to silence union members and their voices because they know that what they've been up to over these last few years haven't been good for the majority of the public. So that's why they're trying to silence these voices right now.

Bill 230 is also striking at the heart of labour law, and specifically on an important decision made by former Supreme Court Justice Rand. The Rand formula is a feature of Canadian labour law requiring workers covered by a collective bargaining contracts to pay union dues, and that's why this is relevant to this debate because this Rand formula is about the constitutional act of paying union dues and who has to pay union dues, so whether or not those workers are union members. So this formula was a victory for unions struggling for recognition and financial security after the Second World War, and it became a standard part of labour contracts and—in the decades that followed.

So just a little bit of background on the Rand formula, because I didn't really know too much about it. I think I covered it maybe sometime in junior high. There was a strike in Windsor, Ontario, and the Rand formula was named for a provision in a labour relations decision, handed down on January 29, 1946, by Justice Ivan Rand of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Rand was arbitrating the deadlocked and volatile Windsor strike at the Ford Motor Company in Windsor, Ontario, which lasted from September to December 1945. This was one of our country's largest post-war strikes.

Unions had gained influence during the Second World War, particularly at Canadian manufacturing plants, because of wartime labour shortages and heightened demand for military products. But after the war ended and soldiers came home, there was more labour available, and in this climate, the United Automobile Workers union at the Ford plant in

Windsor on—on to hold—to strengthen the power and influence it had achieved.

The main issue in the Ford strike was whether the plant should become a closed union shop, requiring all workers to join the union—that was the UAW's position; or an open shop, making union membership voluntary—that was Ford's position.

Rand's compromise in his arbitration decision was a binding—which was binding on the union and the company was that he denied the union's demand that the Ford plant become a closed shop but he also ruled that all workers falling within the bargaining unit, whether they were actual union members or not—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Now, I do just want to be able to put a few words on the record here. I have quite a few thoughts about Bill 230.

And just to sort of begin, it is a common practice in these Chambers that when a bill is brought forward, we ask the question of who was consulted. And this question was asked several times during the question portion of this bill, and really, the member who brought the bill forward has no excuse not to have an answer for this, knowing that it is a common practice that this question is going to be asked.

So, ultimately, we are left with the feeling that no unions were consulted for this legislation because the member was unable to provide any unions with us, stating that they had been consulted.

The other thought I had too is the member answered in one of her questions that community members were consulted yet could not elaborate any more on that. And I think it's a really important point that we make explicitly clear that there is a lot less credibility behind any piece of legislation when it cannot be backed up with any form of support or consultation prior to being introduced on the floors of the Legislative Chambers.

It is—it's shocking to me and I think it's something that the member should probably go back and do some actual consultation or at least get the names of who she supposedly consulted with before bringing this legislation forward, knowing that she would've been asked about who was consulted.

Now the member also spoke about how giving Manitobans are, and I think every single MLA in these Chambers knows this and we believe in this. We absolutely agree: Manitobans donate; they go above

and they go beyond and they support. And strong-holding Manitobans to do this, saying, okay, now you have to donate; you can pick your charity but you have to donate. I am worried that this could cause some deterrence rather than supporting.

And I also sort of feel like the government is passing the buck here. We're in a literal pandemic right now and this government needs to be stepping up and supporting those who are most vulnerable, supporting our charities with resources, with money. There are many different means and ways to do this.

Instead, the government is now introducing legislation with zero backup or support—at least, it wasn't shared with us if there is—and expecting union members and employees to be the ones to support the most vulnerable instead of this government, the government of Manitoba, during a literal pandemic. It's a little mind-boggling when you think about it—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Tyndall Park will have seven minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 22—Keeping Manitoba's Parks Accessible

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now it's 11 o'clock, we're quitting on the debate on the bill and now we're going to resolution. And the resolution today will be in the—resolution 22, Keeping Manitoba's Parks Accessible.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt),

WHEREAS Earth day was April 22nd, 2021; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's parks have provided a reprieve from the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS provincial parks are an asset that can never be taken for granted; and

WHEREAS the value and importance of provincial parks has never been clearer; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has invested in enhancing provincial parks, ensuring that parks remain accessible to all Manitobans through a \$20 million endowment fund; and

WHEREAS the endowment fund is additional funding meant to offset the changing demands and increased costs of enhancing and sustaining the parks; and

WHEREAS the preservation and upkeep of provincial parks is a key part of the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan, to see that improvements and program continues well into the future; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has made significant progress with its Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan to mitigate climate change including: the implementation of biofuel regulations which exceed the federal mandate; the establishment of a five-year Carbon Savings Account system; the increase in the Conservation and Climate fund; and the creation of \$102 million Conservation Trust and a \$108 million Growing Outcomes and Watersheds and Wetlands Trust to promote conservation of natural areas.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge the undeniable importance of Manitoba provincial parks and urge the provincial government to ensure that they remain accessible to all Manitobans.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wowchuk: It gives my pleasure to speak on resolution 22, Keeping Manitoba's Parks Accessible.

Our government takes pride in the many provincial parks it operates and knows parks are important for all. This year, we've seen our season's prescriptions and daily bookings like never before. With the pandemic, Manitobans are turning to the outdoors and their experience with Manitoba parks have to offer. The overwhelming demand is seen recently in bookings tells us this is going to be one of the busiest summers ever for our provincial parks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my constituency, the Duck Mountain Provincial Park is one of these jewels of Manitoba. It has three vibrant commercial operations, and they continue to enhance and they deliver an experience for all Manitobans that love the outdoors. In addition to the The Ducks, there's also Asessippi Provincial Park that provides that equal outdoor experience.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has also developed great partnerships. This was evident when parks partnered with Wellman Lake cottage owners and a number of stakeholders to raise funds and construct the new Wellman Lake dock in 2019. Our government is now working on the trail network planning. I'm proud to call this area home, as it is one of the province's most popular parks.

Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I get excited just thinking about the endless opportunities for the outdoor enthusiasts, who want that ultimate wilderness getaway. The seasonals, daily, weekly sites, cabins, yurts; the Duck Mountains has it all. Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba parks are not for sale, as our government wants to continue working with the people of Manitoba in continuing to bring this valued opportunity for generations to come.

Wildlife abounds with deer, moose, elk, bear and all the furbearers of Manitoba. It's also a popular songbird destination for the diversity of warblers and other neotropical birds, to satisfy that birdwatcher's haven.

Our government continues to invest in modernization and enhancements to support park improvements and the programming within these provincial parks. Every Manitoban has felt the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in some way or another, and what better way to combat the effects on mental health than to be in touch with nature. We can never take the precious assets our provincial—or our provincial parks for granted.

Even before the pandemic, the beauty and recreational opportunities in our parks provides solace and relief for Manitobans from the stress of daily life. Our government is committed to ensuring the provincial park system remains accessible to all.

On April 22nd, our government announced that \$20 million provincial parks endowment fund. This fund will enhance the ecological integrity and public experience in Manitoba's provincial parks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our parks belong to us, each and every Manitoban. Together, with partnerships and encouraging private and 'philyantrropic' contributions and the interest generated by this fund, our park improvements will remain sustainable for each and every one to enjoy.

Manitobans can leave direct legacies. This fund will be managed by The Winnipeg Foundation, and it's expected to generate as much as \$1 million annually. These decisions on our parks are being made by Manitobans for Manitobans.

Funds will be dispersed through a process involving citizens and stakeholder engagement, which will determine project priorities. See, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government wants Manitobans to be a part of seeing our parks grow into the splendor and the beauty that they're capable of delivering.

I'll say it again because the members opposite find it difficult to work with the people of Manitoba: Our parks are not for sale. These public assets are treasured and will remain treasured by people of Manitoba. The endowment fund will be dedicated to important upgrades in infrastructure for Manitobans in our parks, including trail development, playground structures, interpretive programs, upgrades, habitat restoration and enhancement, conserving historical assets and cultural sites, and purchasing modern machinery and operational equipment.

This government is enhancing our parks and not selling them. I always stop and think about the partnerships our government has established. Just last weekend, the Swan Valley sport fish enhancement had their drive-through supper. Over 500 dinners were sold, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This partnership and funding through the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund has also enhanced a world-class fishery with a huge diversity of species for the angler looking for that challenge or, perhaps, just for the opportunity to land that first fish.

Private engagement is nothing new in our provincial parks. This was done by the previous government nearly 180 times, as they didn't seem to have a problem with it before. If you can provide a better service to Manitobans, why not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Only difference here is that unlike the previous NDP government, we follow through with our promises and we've made significant upgrades within our provincial parks.

In 2020 alone, our government invested \$16.6 million in provincial park upgrades, including a combined \$1 million in improvements to a water treatment plant at Grand Beach and Asessippi Provincial Park and a \$3.4-million upgrade to the sewage treatment facility at Grand Beach; \$200,000 for relocation accessibility improvements to the Big Whiteshell campground office; \$3.1 million to Falcon Lake Southshore Road improvements; \$400,000 to improvements for the Birds Hill Provincial Park campground water treatment plant.

It doesn't stop in the east and west: \$425,000 was spent on the Whiteshell and Turtle Mountain and also on playground structures in Grass River Provincial Park to our neighbours in the North. This is government—this government invested \$23.6 million for parks in the last seven months alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Year after year there has been an increased usage. However, as of April 5th, 13,881 reservations were

made in a single day—more than twice the number previously booked in a single day. A week later, April 12: 27,337 reservations were made—more than 14,000 more than the same time last year.

We have focused the continued sustainable development and maintenance of our parks, something the previous NDP government failed to do. For years, the previous NDP government neglected to make the necessary upgrades to our parks.

Our government has always been concerned with public engagement. When we make decisions, we turn to Manitobans. We listen to Manitobans and take steps toward advancing Manitoba in a way that reflects the needs and desires of Manitobans. Governments must be forward-thinking and be able to balance between focus on the needs of the moment and the needs of the future. Our investing and upgrading of our parks will ensure that generations to come will be able to find the same kind of joy that we are able to experience today.

Manitoba has the largest provincial park-based cottage community in all of Canada. We value our time at the lake and want to preserve this for future generations.

* (11:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is excited about the future of our parks. Our working relationship with stakeholders, cottages, lodge owners and all Manitobans will work toward a bright future for our provincial parks and a sustainable future for our provincial parks. We will continue to work so that that future will continue to enjoy the beauty and ecological integrity that our provincial parks have to offer. Why would they ever be for sale when then are so valued by all Manitobans?

Thank you.

Questions

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

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I'd like to ask if the member can promise Manitobans that his government will not be selling off any park lands or services.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Our provincial parks are not for sale.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): I want to thank the member from Swan River from—for bringing up this important topic about keeping Manitoba parks accessible. The provincial parks are important assets that can provide a wide array of benefits for all Manitobans.

So, I'd ask the member, why is it so important to create more opportunity in our provincial parks?

Mr. Wowchuk: I thank the member for Dauphin for that excellent question. And to meet the diverse experiences or experience and demands that families want to encounter, this is very, very important.

More than ever, with the pandemic, you know, people are seeking our provincial parks as a retreat and a place to get away with their families and bring families together, and the opportunity to explore nature's wealth. And that is why it is so important to continue to enhance and create these opportunities.

Ms. Naylor: Can the member explain why his government has cut investments in our parks in half since taking office?

Mr. Wowchuk: We—all our park services have remained status quo with front-line positions. There has been no impact on service. We have moved toward modernizing our parks and we still deliver the services that have always been delivered.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I've heard the government say many times, you know, our parks are not for sale. That, frankly, is a complete evasion, which I'm quite aware of, because it's saying, well, just this—at this very minute, our parks are not for sale. I know very well that—the game that this government is playing.

So how is it that there is a—how does the member explain a request for proposal that was sent for—out by Travel Manitoba which specifically said the government needed to look at selling off parks.

Mr. Wowchuk: Okay. Again, to the member, our parks are not for sale. Whenever the opportunity arises to enhance, you know, services within parks, like our previous government on numerous occasions, where they provided services to enhance, you know, opportunity and various types of—well, the opportunities within the parks, we will always look toward enhancing those opportunities. But our provincial parks are not for sale. We make efforts to enhance

opportunity and provide a better service toward the fine people of Manitoba.

Ms. Naylor: Well, I prefer a truthful answer rather than that oft-repeated slogan that has zero meaning. But to build on the last question, why is this government talking to cottage owners about selling off their leased cottage properties while continuing to repeat the latest slogan about parks not being for sale?

Mr. Wowchuk: I appreciate the question.

Our government is working very, very closely with all user groups in our provincial parks to make a better system, a better park. It's part of dialogue that goes along with it, and we will continue to enhance our parks to be able to talk to and dialogue with the users of the park, the cottage owners, the lodge owners, just to provide a better experience for Manitobans.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I know my friend and colleague from Swan River is very passionate about conservation and about the great outdoors here in Manitoba.

Can he please tell the House exactly why provincial parks are so important to him?

Mr. Wowchuk: As I mentioned in my, you know, preamble previously, our provincial parks have a wealth of diversity within them. You know, it's the opportunity to be able to see wolves, moose, deer, elk, the furbearers of the province, and they're important because we all own our parks. They provide us with a treasure chest of opportunities. And this is what families are looking for. Families are looking for a place to get away and to have an appreciation of nature because nature is very fragile, and if not looked after, we'll be the losers and we'll cheat our—the future generations off the wealth that the—that nature has to offer.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

Ms. Naylor: Could the member tell us that when one of those Manitoban families that he's referencing books their park pass online, what can they count on in terms of privacy laws that the American company is bound to when it comes to protecting their Canadian personal information when they're making those purchases?

Mr. Wowchuk: Thank you for that question.

And we know that as Manitoba went to e-licensing, you know, the tenders were put out, and we

looked very closely for a company that could offer and have the software to offer an effective booking system for the people of Manitoba. And when we found that and we were quite satisfied with that, not only did our new e-licensing, you know, come up with that type of security, but it also came up with a park pass where you could now put two licences on a park pass, whereas previously we were only able to have one licence on a park pass.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): The NDP have an egregious track record on every file on government, including the maintenance of our parks.

How does the member from Swan River respond to the NDP's opposition to creating more economic opportunity in expanded services in parks?

Mr. Wowchuk: To my member—or to the member there, I appreciate that question because economic opportunity has been presented for a long time and, in fact, the—you know, the previous government opened and renewed contracts with private companies operating in our provincial parks. And, you know, the goal here is to be able to enhance a better service and a better experience. And why not? If we can do that for the people of Manitoba and give them that opportunity, we will sure look at those alternatives.

Ms. Naylor: I'd like to ask from the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk) if at any point during the development of this private member's resolution on accessibility of parks did he give any thought to accessibility for those of all socio-economic status, as well as for people of varied disabilities across the province? I heard no mention of this.

* (11:20)

Mr. Wowchuk: Our provincial parks are set up in a way that are probably some of the most accessible, some of the most affordable, with the, you know, with the park pass and also our facilities within parks. We're making efforts. And this is—some of this endowment fund will make sure that we provide, you know, the accessibility to people if there's, you know, any type of handicaps that they may have, to make sure that they can access our parks, access all the facilities within our parks and be able to get around within the parks.

So I think the member opposite for that question because that is very, very important.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I'd like to try and tackle this privatization issue a little bit in my question. I'm wondering if the member could ask—or could answer, sorry, why are private-public partnerships superior to ideological approaches of ballooning public costs. So, obviously, parks are not for sale but that does not neuter any discussion about private public partnerships.

I'm wondering if the member could perhaps address that issue and help explain for those who are still confused about it.

Mr. Wowchuk: Yes, and I thank the member from Rossmere for that question.

You know, it's all about enhancing a better service for a better experience, and I'll use an example. Last year, for example, at Blue Lake, you know, there was the opportunity there where, the year before, parks provided wood. This year, they went to a sale where the lodge owner has the sale of wood. In comparison to well over a hundred cords of wood being used the previous year, there was, like, about 30 cords of wood used upon the sale.

So that gives us the opportunity to put more money into those parks and to enhance them and to do the upgrades necessary. And, you know, so when we can go ahead and we can provide—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired and the time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The floor is now open for debate.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Manitobans deeply value our public parks and park services and want them to remain public for future generations to enjoy. Aside from their recreational value, parks and other green spaces are essential for protecting biodiversity and fighting climate change through carbon sequestration.

This PC government has been slowly and quietly looking for ways to break up and sell off our public parks and services. And we will not stand by and let this happen.

Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government simply isn't serious about protecting our parks or fighting climate change. Budget 2021 made multiple harmful cuts to their conservation of climate department. They cut the budget to the Climate and Green

Plan Implementation Office by almost 2 per cent. They also cut the Environmental Stewardship office budget by a further 1.8 per cent.

Instead of fighting climate change, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) spent millions of taxpayer dollars on a lawsuit to fight carbon pricing and he still continues to drag out this fight. Now with the Supreme Court ruling, the Premier has a choice: keep fighting the federal government and losing or get serious about fighting climate change. And there should be not questions whether climate change is real or whether climate action is the right thing to do.

But Conservatives federally deny climate change is real. This isn't a government that has shown respect, care, knowledge of or financial investment into the environment or climate. Certainly, there is no clarity about the impact to protected lands and provincial parks on the climate or on the environment, nor has this government moved to make parks more accessible.

In fact, some of the policies have made parks less accessible to Manitobans. In fact, I'm not sure that this government even understands what the word accessible means. It's obvious this PMR was created to distract us from some of the policies that this government is putting in place in order to privatize services in parks.

Accessible means one can afford to buy a pass, has a computer to purchase a pass, has a method to make an online purchase, has the ability to print it and somehow get to a park, perhaps in a borrowed car, which is trickier with the current park pass purchase system, and can make use of the trail and other facilities when they get there.

This government failed to anticipate and prepare for a surge in booking on the parks' reservation system, leading the system to crash not once, but twice, impacting thousands of Manitobans' ability to secure a spot. People waited for hours before being kicked off the website when their turn came. Others couldn't even get into the queue because of the faulty booking system.

Multiple constituents and, actually, many of the PC constituents have reached out to me as the environment critic to raise their concerns about their inability to secure a yurt or camping spot this summer.

Despite entering our second summer in a pandemic, no creative, proactive efforts were made to increase opportunities, such as opening yurts and camping spots earlier than usual or letting the season

run a little longer than usual. This government had a year when more spots could've been developed.

In other parts of the country, there is built-in criticism and analysis of how public parklands, national and provincial, are becoming less accessible from a socioeconomic perspective. I can see that happening here in Manitoba, as well, as it becomes more challenging to purchase a pass.

Increasingly, the accessibility of the outdoors and provincial parks to Manitobans—sorry—increasing the accessibility of the outdoors and provincial parks to Manitobans can have public health benefits. It gets people outside, moving, breathing in fresh air. It's also an opportunity for rest, relaxation and feeling more connected with land and water.

Many Manitobans are simply not given a chance to decide whether the outdoors will be a part of their experience. Increasing the number of people that can access the outdoors and provincial parks should be a part of any government building a more equal Manitoba and a healthier Manitoba.

Accessibility also means designing park facilities for those who have a disability. The new garbage collection system introduced in the Whiteshell last year was physically inaccessible to some users of the park. In addition to needing paths and facilities that are wheelchair or scooter accessible, more work needs to be done to create universal access for folks with all forms of disability, such as hearing impairments, vision loss and developmental disabilities.

It's very telling that a member of the Pallister government would introduce a resolution on accessibility, yet never mention or consider accessibility for Manitobans of all income levels or accessibility for all ability levels. Clearly, this resolution is a wasted opportunity when it could really have been making—about making parks truly more accessible to all Manitobans, especially during our second summer of the pandemic.

If this government was serious about accessibility of parks, they would fully stack them up as well. Parks and resource protection have almost 23 fewer full-time positions in 2019-2020 than they had in 2015-2016. This figure doesn't include vacancies. If this government was serious about parks accessibility, they would hire more park staff and ensure these vacancies were filled.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoban families love visiting the province's parks and beaches. They want to protect our natural spaces and invest in making

them even more enjoyable for generations to come. Yet the Pallister government is determined to sell off and privatize park services bit by bit, so they are getting ready to do that.

Since forming government, the Pallister government has cut investments in our parks in half. They've already handed the park pass and hunting-fishing licence system to a US company. Now, daily park passes have doubled in price and are extremely inconvenient for families wanting to enjoy our parks.

Recently, Manitobans have raised concerns about the conflict between the statement that information entered into the computer to buy a pass is FIPPA-protected, but this contrasts with the US company's own privacy policy that suggests that information can be shared or traded in other jurisdictions and that the Canadians' personal information isn't subject to the same rules it provided to an American company.

This government is just getting started on selling off parkland and services. Internal briefing notes within Conservation show that the Pallister government has directed the department to develop plans to sell public parkland. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government have already made it clear they're looking to privatize park management. They also issued a request for proposals for a study aimed at evaluating all 76 of Manitoba's provincial parks to identify and rank the top 15 from a business feasibility perspective. And now we know from an internal document that they also plan to sell.

The Minister of Conservation has said she was unaware of any plans for selling off parkland, but two days later, through the media, she said her department has had discussions with cottage owners about exploring ways to take ownership of their leased cottage properties.

The Pallister government needs to set the record straight. Manitobans deserve a government that understands that park investments are needed that last for generations, that the Premier and his team can only see short term. Our provincial parks are not business opportunities; they belong to all Manitobans and they must stay that way.

The Manitoba NDP knows that Manitoban families love visiting the province's parks and beaches. We want to protect our natural spaces and invest in making them more sustainable, accessible and enjoyable for generations to come. We're committed to great, affordable and publicly owned parks.

* (11:30)

We believe Manitoba parks and park services should always remain public for all of us to enjoy. We will hold the Pallister government accountable for its continued cuts and attempts to privatize Manitoba land.

Provincial parks and the natural resources protected there—land, water trees, diverse species of plants and animals—are also a very important part of mitigating climate change, and we already know that the Pallister government lacks a meaningful plan to combat climate change.

The Pallister government refuses to show leadership or accept responsibility for growing emissions across the province. They continue to blame the federal government for their problems and released a plan that doesn't include any real emissions reductions goals or targets.

Manitobans deserve a government that take climate crisis seriously and a government that cares about our parks, not one who only sees dollar signs when they look at our priceless environment. We will continue to stand against the Pallister government as they prepare to break up and sell off our parklands and services and we will continue to push them to immediately reduce our carbon emissions to fight climate change.

We call on this government to ensure Manitoba parks and park services always remain public.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): It's great to have the opportunity to talk today on this resolution brought forward by the member from Swan River, and it's regarding keeping Manitoba parks accessible. And I know the member from Swan River and I and the member from Riding Mountain and Agassiz are—all share large parks that are in our constituencies and they're very, very important.

So this important resolution today does acknowledge the undeniable importance of Manitoba provincial parks and it also links it as part of our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan. It's a key part of that plan and it also urges the provincial government to ensure they remain accessible to all Manitobans, so.

I know the member from Swan River is—again, I think it's been noted here before, he's quite passionate about parks and conservation, and he's been an exceptional positive and active role model in his community as a local teacher and sports with the

youth, and I know he's, again, a very strong advocate and promoter of the parklands and conservation efforts in sustainable development, so.

The member from Swan River and I—again, we do represent a large geographic area known as the parklands, and keeping Manitoba parks accessible is not only an important issue for the parklands but it's an important issue to all Manitobans. And Manitobans have a wide array of parks—you know, in our areas, ours are quite obvious. They're quite large.

But across Manitoba, there's all kinds of provincial parks that are scattered out throughout the province, and I would use a rainbow park—Rainbow Beach provincial campground that's located on the south shore of Dauphin Lake, and the Manitoba provincial park—or Manipogo, I should say—the home of the Ogopogo—provincial park located on the west shore of Lake Manitoba.

They offer great camping, fishing and beach getaways and experiences for families. And these parks, I think, are, to Manitobans, are quite common and they are quite familiar to most Manitobans in terms of their amenities and the services and what you can experience in the outdoor.

And, of course, this is important for—especially during this time of COVID. I know there was a significant uptake in use of the parks last summer and I think this year it really went over the moon, and people are seeing the values of these parks for family and friend gatherings, and, of course, there's some natural separations, I would say, during COVID. So I think Manitobans are really seeing again the value of these parks.

So, but what is important is Manitoba parks are quite diverse and they're quite diverse in scale, and, again, most Manitobans will be familiar with, like a Birds-Hill- or a Manipogo-type park, but they may not be as familiar with a—even though it's a national park—the Riding Mountain National Park or Duck Mountain Provincial Park and Turtle River or Turtle Mountain. You know, those are quite large ecosystems in our province, and they may not be as familiar to Manitobans as a campground.

So—and, again, preservation and upkeep of these provincial parks is very, very important. These areas are largely inaccessible, a lot of these parks, and largely misunderstood. And so I think the government taking action in this RFP and looking and doing this consultation and re-evaluation on our parks is an

extremely important and smart decision by this government. There's a diversity of value in these assets, and I think it's smart to do a current assessment on these provincial parks and make sure that they are accessible to all Manitobans.

Now, going back to some of the things that were said about the commitment, that I think this member from Swan River said it quite good: they're not for sale. And the provincial government is investing, ongoing, but they're also looking to the future as well, and that's a really important part of it, what the government has been doing in responsibly looking at Manitoba's parks.

The PC government has invested \$20 million in an endowment fund that will enhance our provincial parks and ensure our parks remain accessible for all Manitobans, and these additional funds will—are intended to offset changing demands and increased costs enhancing and sustaining the parks. And, of course, there's, I think it was mentioned, there's \$1 million expected annually that can go towards trail development, children's playgrounds, infrastructure, all those things that can help and complement Manitoba parks. And, of course, this trust, or this fund, I should say, is available for other people to put—philanthropists to put money towards and have a lasting legacy in our Manitoba parks. So that is a really good investment that's being made by this provincial government.

Again, and I mentioned the climate change. So the PC government also needs to be applauded in their consideration of parks and ag and conservation in—on combination. The \$102-million Conservation Trust and investing \$108 million towards GRowing Outcomes in Watersheds and wetlands trust to promote conservation efforts are very, very positive investments and commitments made by the PC government, and they're very, very considerate because a lot of those things are—don't stand alone; they're very connected and there is a relationship between the parks and the ag and conservation. So it's great to see this PC government really making a concerted effort to combine those, and, of course, that's all within—part of the Manitoba—Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan.

And I know in our area of—you know, the parks are surrounded by agricultural producers, and they're, of course, they're some of the greatest stewards of the land there is, and they're very conscious of their environmental footprints. So I know our agricultural producers are heavily, heavily invested, and have

been, in responsible stewardship and efficiency and these PC government investments towards environment and conservation are appreciated and supported by producers.

And while the NDP did next to nothing in this regard—I can honestly say there was—ignored and taken advantage of and took for granted, a rural Manitoba—it's great to see this PC government supporting our parks and our rural agricultural regions and the valuable services they provide all Manitobans.

* (11:40)

So I would just like to close and say the PC government is absolutely committed to ensuring our parks remain key provincial assets. They are tremendous assets and a diverse set of assets for Manitobans. And it's smart to do assessments on these parks and look at the values not only for today, but what they can provide for Manitobans into the future; this is a really, really smart move by the government.

Manitoba parks are undeniably important to Manitoba for a wide variety of reasons and benefits. Our provincial parks are more than just campgrounds and nature preserves, they are also very large and diverse Manitoba assets, and they should be looked at every now and then. And, you know, especially in times of change, you know, it's good to do an assessment on the values, because some of these values may not be relevant 20 years ago, but they might be today. So it's wise and smart of a government to be doing this.

I just want to say—thank the member from Swan River for raising this very important resolution and call on this Legislature to recognize and support this very, very important resolution.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Thank you to my colleagues for the rousing applause, bringing me here in the Chamber and welcoming me here in the Chamber this morning. This is an important issue. This is an important issue to be debating here this morning because we have an opportunity like we haven't seen before.

Let me just begin by talking about some of the points put on the record by the previous speaker, who wanted to claim that not enough had been done in parks in the past. You know, the previous government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, increased the size of parks, the amount of park land put aside, set aside in this

province by more than any government since the 1960s and '70s—the Schreyer government.

More investment in parks; \$30 million, just in the last few years of the previous government, was invested in parks to modernize them, to bring on new campgrounds and new opportunities for Manitobans to get out there. It was a government that prioritized parks, and it was, I said, was building off of the great work that was done in the 1960s and '70s by the Schreyer government, another NDP government who also decided that it was time for the parks to take a central role and to be a focus for the government.

Now, I mention this because, as I said, this is an incredible opportunity right now. Right now, during the COVID-19 pandemic—and we don't talk about many positive things when it comes to the pandemic and the impact that it's have—had on our lives here in Manitoba, but the one thing I think most people can recognize as being a positive and can see as something that we could be building on is Manitobans' appreciation for our parks, for our provincial parks.

I had the opportunity this last spring to get out and visit some of the parks in Manitoba. Of course, Birds Hill park is always a favourite, living in the northeast part of the city. It's a quick, you know, 15-minute drive out to that park to go hiking with my kids, to enjoy the wild spaces there. I had an opportunity this winter to snowmobile through the Whiteshell Provincial Park and to appreciate some of the amazing places that we have there.

Many members know I have a cottage at Grand Beach. And I'll talk about this at any opportunity, because Grand Beach is a gem, is an absolute gem of Manitoba, and, you know, world renowned. And it's something—it's a place that should be protected and enhanced.

You know, I'm a fisherman. I'm a—well, not a very good fisherman, but I enjoy it. I'm a camper. I'm a canoer; I like to canoe every chance I get. We do backcountry camping. I have my site booked for camping in just a few weeks from now over at Birds Hill Provincial Park, and I understand the—I understand that the restrictions would not allow me to invite the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) to come join me, but if he wants to pitch his tent in the next campsite, we can try and get him a site, because I'll be there, I'll be camping with my kids in my tent.

I love the outdoors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm not alone. When I went out a few weeks ago to my cottage, I was blown away by the number of people

who had come to day trip up to Grand Beach to come see the ice melting, the lake changing, the amazing natural beauty of that place.

It's the kind of place that people want to get to and like so many other areas of this province, Manitobans want to get out and enjoy these natural spaces.

So what better time could there ever be for the government to say, now is the time to invest, now is the time to protect, now is the time to enhance. And instead, what do we hear from members opposite? We hear talks about privatization. We hear the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), proudly proclaiming that he's on the track to privatize parkland in this province; how this will be a positive for this province.

It's sickening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's appalling that the members would, when pressed, well, you know, we won't sell any parkland they say, and yet the minister goes ahead and looks for outside guidance on exactly how to do that. They go out and speak to individuals about how to privatize our parklands. It's 'infuriating' because this government has an opportunity like none before to enhance our parks, and they are not taking it.

They're also making it less affordable to be in our parks and, you know, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) rightly pointed out the Americanization of our parks reservation system, the fact that the data is being sent to Texas; but even beyond that, the fact that it's now costing members—or, people from Manitoba, citizens of Manitoba, more money just to go through that system and then, the daily passes have increased in terms of how much they cost Manitobans.

These are all very concerning things because, you know, we talk about a resolution that specifically says accessibility is the issue. Well, accessibility is out of reach for many Manitobans. Not only is their life getting more expensive in so many ways, renters are going to be paying more when it comes to their rent and the rebate that they're going to be getting. We know that their hydro rates have gone up, their natural gas rates have gone up. They're struggling in this pandemic with no supports from this government.

The one thing that they may have to look forward to is to get out to a park, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to get out to a Manitoba park and enjoy it. And then when they go to get their pass for that day, well, it's more expensive than it's ever been before.

At the same time they're doing all of this—you know, and then member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk)—I think Swan River, himself said,

you know, he acknowledged the fact that the funding has been cut to parks; you know, this government is spending less on parks. He said, well, there hasn't been any impact in services.

Has the member been out to any one of our parks to talk to one of those folks at the gates who's talking to people trying to access that park? Well, no, I can tell you he hasn't because he would know that, half the time those gates aren't even—don't even have an individual at them and when they do, those people are telling us they're worked—extremely overworked, they're not able to keep up with the demand that's there.

There is—it's unconscionable that this government would cut funding at a time when parks could be invested in.

Now, I will acknowledge that there is an opportunity to look at endowment funds, which I think is something that we could enhance our parks with, but once again, this government throws, you know, paltry amounts and says, well, this is going to solve the problem.

We know those are one-time amounts that then don't continue the funding that we need in our parks to actually enhance them. And we know where they're going to make their money up, and that is by selling off parkland which will never, ever come back to the Province.

This is a big concern, and I think it's something that more Manitobans will certainly become aware of and be concerned about. And for them to bring forward this kind of resolution when their government is doing so much harm to our parks, I think is incredibly bold of them to do.

Before my time runs out here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to—wanted to acknowledge the folks who are living out in southeastern Manitoba. There's extremely dry conditions all over the province right now, but I know folks in the community of Sandilands and in that area near Woodridge, Marchand, are facing a fire that, as of just yesterday, was still out of control.

I know that the folks out there, volunteer firefighters, are doing everything they can to combat that fire. So, I certainly applaud the work that they're doing and wish all the best to the folks out there.

* (11:50)

And I mention this to also highlight the fact that this government also sold off our provincial greenhouses that had our ability to regrow forests in the face of forest fires, which also was out in that area of Sandilands. This is a huge missed opportunity. I do hope that whatever private contract the government now has, they will take that opportunity to use those resources to reforest that area.

I'm very concerned about the—and not only the provincial parks in this province, but also the provincial forests. And it's not something that a lot of folks talk about because the provincial forests have a different status in terms of, you know, how they're counted in terms of our wild spaces, but I know that's one of the areas in the province, again, that I spend a lot of time, if I can, enjoying the wild spaces out there; a lot of Manitobans do.

It's not a provincial park per se, but it is a provincial forest. It's written up as an asset by the Province, but it's not—it should not be and cannot be for sale. Those need to be protected and I'm very concerned that this government is also looking to privatize those provincial forests for a one-time, you know, hit to make some money and then walk away while these lands get privatized.

There's a lot of concerning things about this particular resolution, but I'll simply end by saying that I feel that in a time when Manitobans have more respect than ever for our wild spaces, for our provincial parks, you know, we could be using this opportunity to build like no time since the 1960s and the Ed Schreyer government. I think this would be our opportunity to do that, and this government is failing in that regard and I condemn—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time is expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): There's lots to challenge in some of the things that have been said already today. Look, we would all like our parks to be more accessible. I will point out that the Wilderness Committee right now is trying to ensure that the logging licence for Duck Mountain—which has been in place for 25 years, where we've been clear-cutting in a provincial park—that it is not renewed at the end of last year. So the fact that we allow clear-cutting in provincial parks tells—says a little something about the commitment of both the NDP and the PCs to how we treat our parks.

And there's absolutely no question; there was a request for proposal put out by Travel Manitoba last

year. It says: Evaluate all 76 operational provincial parks in Manitoba to identify and rank the top 15 from a business feasibility perspective, which ones generate revenue and recover costs; which investment, public and private, is needed to make the top five parks viable of 76; what assets should be divested; identify partnership and P3 investment opportunities in order to decommission, transition parks to other models, other groups operate or own parks. That's the RFP from Travel Manitoba, which—last time I checked—is a Crown corporation owned by all Manitobans. This is a plan to sell off parks; there's no question about it.

The fact is that parks are a public service. We don't ask ourselves which hospital is making the most money, which police station is making the most money, which library is making the most money; they're public services. They exist for the purpose of servicing the public at—free of charge. It's a different model. You don't have to make a profit off absolutely everything. In fact, it's wrong to do that. It's a corruption of what public parks are supposed to be.

And when this government decided to bring in electronic ticketing or whatever for—to get into parks, we objected because we said, look, we want to make sure that people can actually afford to go without the hassle of going online; it's more expensive. And we were told, oh, no, no; well, it's already been decided. In fact, an order-in-council had awarded the contract before this government passed the bill to make it okay. It was awarded on March 4th and we voted on the bill on April 15th. The contract had already been awarded to a Texas company that I was getting complaints about because they had no French translation. And we do, actually—aside from the French-speaking folks who live in St. Boniface or across Manitoba, there are French people in Quebec who might actually want to be able to use a government of Manitoba website that was never translated. So we've—there's no question we've misused parks.

I'll actually add one other thing which is from the park RFP, which is an indictment of both governments. The Parks and Resource Protection Division has identified a number of challenges currently facing Manitoba provincial parks—agreed the aged state of park infrastructure, much of which was developed 40 to 50 years ago. That means there have been plenty of elections and plenty of government changes where there was an opportunity to invest in parks and it hasn't happened: 50 years, 40 to 50 years that there haven't been any reinvestments.

And they need to be public investments. Just saying we're going to turn this over to a philanthropist means that some philanthropist ends up—doesn't have to pay their taxes to support a park. Instead, they can get money and they can take credit for something that somebody else owns.

Now, I recognize there's some fantastic parks. Wasagaming and all those businesses there are great. It doesn't mean that businesses can't operate in provincial parks in any way at all. But the fact is that public parks belong to everybody and the damage that we've done to our parks, like places like Duck Mountain where we allow—if you have logging roads it means you have hunters going in there and getting to moose populations, which have been a huge problem. The dispute over hunting and the dispute over dropping moose populations have been a huge problem, and it's because we have cut roads in—deep into wilderness and into the habitat of animals.

So it's not just a question of overhunting or night hunting and all the other problems that this government has identified, it is a problem with our—with the fact that we are—keep eating away at the habitat that we actually need. And there is absolute—it is not just a question of saying, of putting a price on everything, right? There's—it's the old saying that, from a cynic's points of view, that it's people who know the price of everything and the value of nothing. The fact is, is that for parks to be for everybody they have to be accessible to everybody, and they are not, not under this government.

So there's a lot of very nice motherhood statements. The one other thing I will say is the idea that our parks—just saying our parks are not for sale is an evasion. It is not clever. It's annoying, because the fact is it's been constructed as a way to say something that is true to give a misleading reception. The fact that our parks are not for sale at this one second does not rule out the fact that this government has a request for proposal that makes it absolutely clear they want a plan to sell off parks.

So saying it in the present tense does nothing to keep it from being—to stop this government from selling these government—these parks off this afternoon or tomorrow morning or in June when this—when the Travel Manitoba's report is likely to come out.

The fact is, is that these are assets, these are—this is public property, it is supposed to belong to

everybody, and selling it off in chunks means that we are all losing something. And there is no excuse, there is no excuse not to make significant investments, infrastructure investments to make this better for everyone. But that's not what this is doing. We keep on either eroding, selling off, chipping away at public property. But the other is that we're raising barriers as well. This is a sell-off of public assets, of something that we all own together, of our common wealth.

So I just wish this government could be more straightforward about what they're actually doing, instead of playing word games and saying, well, our parts are not for sale at this particular second. Because there's no question, none whatsoever, because not only was this RFP put out, it was—somebody got the contract. Someone is writing a report right now which is going to grade all of Manitoba's parks, take the top five at 76, figure out how to put money into that and maybe make those profitable, though we don't care about profits for all sorts of other departments because they're public services that we're going to treat, we're—for some reason we think that parks should operate like a 7-Eleven and that they should just—or a Walmart and should just make as much money as it possibly could. That's not what—that's not what parks are for. Parks actually have their own unique value, and that has to be preserved.

So that's all I have to say. Thank you very much.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I have so much to say but so little time to say it in, so I'm just going to say I support this resolution by my friend from Swan River and I ask you to call the question of the House on this resolution this morning.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I just want to say it's an honour to follow my colleague, the MLA for Concordia and I want to express my same concern for the people of Sandilands, Woodlands, and Marchand, Piney, that whole area, and there's nothing like going to the Sandilands and getting a nice sapling. I do know there are a number of those saplings that are growing in Transcona because many of us—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Order. Order. Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 10 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Resolutions	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Res. 22–Keeping Manitoba's Parks Accessible	
Second Readings–Public Bills		Wowchuk	2931
Bill 230–The Labour Relations Amendment Act (2)		Questions	
Morley-Lecomte	2921	Naylor	2933
Questions		Wowchuk	2934
Lindsey	2923	Michaleski	2934
Morley-Lecomte	2923	Lamont	2934
Martin	2923	Nesbitt	2934
Lamoureux	2923	A. Smith	2935
Reyes	2923	Micklefield	2935
Johnston	2924	Debate	
Debate		Naylor	2935
Lindsey	2925	Michaleski	2937
Martin	2926	Wiebe	2939
Marcelino	2929	Lamont	2941
Lamoureux	2931	Nesbitt	2942
		Altomare	2942

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>