

Second Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

| Member | Constituency | Political Affiliation |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| ALLAN, Nancy, Hon. | St. Vital | NDP |
| ALLUM, James | Fort Garry-Riverview | NDP |
| ALTEMEYER, Rob | Wolseley | NDP |
| ASHTON, Steve, Hon. | Thompson | NDP |
| BJORNSON, Peter, Hon. | Gimli | NDP |
| BLADY, Sharon | Kirkfield Park | NDP |
| BRAUN, Erna | Rossmere | NDP |
| BRIESE, Stuart | Agassiz | PC |
| CALDWELL, Drew | Brandon East | NDP |
| CHIEF, Kevin, Hon. | Point Douglas | NDP |
| CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon. | Kildonan | NDP |
| CROTHERS, Deanne | St. James | NDP |
| CULLEN, Cliff | Spruce Woods | PC |
| DEWAR, Gregory | Selkirk | NDP |
| DRIEDGER, Myrna | Charleswood | PC |
| EICHLER, Ralph | Lakeside | PC |
| EWASKO, Wayne | Lac du Bonnet | PC |
| FRIESEN, Cameron | Morden-Winkler | PC |
| GAUDREAU, Dave | St. Norbert | NDP |
| GERRARD, Jon, Hon. | River Heights | Liberal |
| GOERTZEN, Kelvin | Steinbach | PC |
| GRAYDON, Cliff | Emerson | PC |
| HELWER, Reg | Brandon West | PC |
| HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon. | Fort Rouge | NDP |
| IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon. | Fort Richmond | NDP |
| JHA, Bidhu | Radisson | NDP |
| KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon. | Swan River | NDP |
| LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon. | Dawson Trail | NDP |
| MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon. | St. Johns | NDP |
| MAGUIRE, Larry | Arthur-Virden | PC |
| MALOWAY, Jim | Elmwood | NDP |
| MARCELINO, Flor, Hon. | Logan | NDP |
| MARCELINO, Ted | Tyndall Park | NDP |
| MELNICK, Christine, Hon. | Riel | NDP |
| MITCHELSON, Bonnie | River East | PC |
| NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom | Interlake | NDP |
| OSWALD, Theresa, Hon. | Seine River | NDP |
| PALLISTER, Brian | Fort Whyte | PC |
| PEDERSEN, Blaine | Midland | PC |
| PETTERSEN, Clarence | Flin Flon | NDP |
| REID, Daryl, Hon. | Transcona | NDP |
| ROBINSON, Eric, Hon. | Kewatinook | NDP |
| RONDEAU, Jim, Hon. | Assiniboia | NDP |
| ROWAT, Leanne | Riding Mountain | PC |
| SARAN, Mohinder | The Maples | NDP |
| SCHULER, Ron | St. Paul | PC |
| SELBY, Erin, Hon. | Southdale | NDP |
| SELINGER, Greg, Hon. | St. Boniface | NDP |
| SMOOK, Dennis | La Verendrye | PC |
| STEFANSON, Heather | Tuxedo | PC |
| STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon. | Dauphin | NDP |
| SWAN, Andrew, Hon. | Minto | NDP |
| WHITEHEAD, Frank | The Pas | NDP |
| WIEBE, Matt | Concordia | NDP |
| WIGHT, Melanie | Burrows | NDP |
| WISHART, Ian | Portage la Prairie | PC |
| <i>Vacant</i> | Morris | |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 15, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

Prior to routine proceedings, I just want to advise all members of the House that there will be a slight delay in the Hansard for yesterday afternoon's proceedings, but it will be out here to you this afternoon sometime.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 40—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard), that Bill 40, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Rondeau: This bill makes a number of changes to The Residential Tenancies Act. These amendments are part of a package of legislative and regulation changes intended to address the issues in the residential tenancy and rent regulation program.

One of the proposed changes will require landlords to pay a renter—a tenant's moving cost and additional expenses when the tenant moves out because the landlord is carrying out renovations in an unreasonable way that interferes with the tenant's enjoyment of their unit.

The pet damage deposit will be allowed to be increased to one month's rent.

The proposed amendments will allow for the termination of a tenancy when a person engages in

unlawful activities in a residential complex where it adversely impacts others in the building.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will also make some changes to the appeal process. The time to appeal orders of possession will be reduced, and leave to appeal and certain orders to the commission will be required.

Finally, the method for calculation of the rent increase guideline will be set out in regulations.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I highly recommend this bill.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Bill 43—The Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act and Liquor and Gaming Control Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 43, The Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act and Liquor and Gaming Control Act; Loi sur la Société manitobaine des alcools et des loteries et Loi sur la réglementation des alcools et des jeux, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, this act is historic as it represents the first complete overhaul of The Liquor Control Act in almost 60 years. The existing act was passed by this Chamber 60 years ago and it's been greatly anticipated so that our overall intent is to modernize liquor licensing, integrate the complementary regulatory service for liquor and gaming, emphasize public input and community safety and reduce red tape for Manitoba businesses and encourage the vibrancy of our hospitality industry.

The new act also defines in law the social responsibility mandate of the corporation to conduct or fund initiatives that promote responsible gaming and responsible liquor consumption. In addition, the act will ensure Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries allocate an amount equal to 2 per cent of its anticipated net revenue to fund the promotion of responsible gaming and responsible liquor

consumption, as well as addiction prevention and treatment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none, we'll move to—

PETITIONS

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipality with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including the absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition is signed by S. Ziprick, N. Ziprick, G. Gorda and thousands of other Manitobans.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than a thousand constituents.

The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

(5) Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than a thousand constituents to amalgamate.

This is signed by M. Murray, J. Murray, B. Bird and thousands of other Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they're deemed to have been received by the House.

Further petitions? Seeing none—

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today the 2013 summer tour guides, Rachele Bosc, Elise Champagne, Erica Siddall, Brad Wiebe; the liaison officer with the security department, Julie Schubert; and, of course, our own Vanessa Gregg, director of our tour program. On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also, in the public gallery we have with us today Winnipeg artist Charlie Johnson, who is the

guest of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

And also in the public gallery, Oly Backstrom and Heather Monette of SCE Lifeworks, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers).

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

And also in the public gallery we have today, from the Migrant Worker Support Network, Karen Hamilton, Jodi Read, Katharine Bergbusch; and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Lynne Fernandez, Wendy Land, Keith Lowe, Molly McCracken and Thomas Novak, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism (Ms. Melnick). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome all of you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Export Market Concerns

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): There seem to be a growing number of hydro doubters in this province, Mr. Speaker. It is a 20-plus-billion-dollar investment, and it's being questioned by many Manitobans.

The Public Utilities Board in its analysis put the cost of producing the hydroelectricity at triple the actual current market price and said that we'd be in a loss situation for potentially a couple of decades as a minimum. So we're questioning the timing of this and we're questioning also the propaganda campaign the government has launched around promoting the project at Manitobans' expense, and we're not alone.

Len Evans, a former NDP member of the Legislative Assembly, a 30-year veteran of this place and a man who spent half his time in this place as a Cabinet minister, a respected Manitoban, has said, quote: In effect, selling our high-cost northern power to the Americans is a losing proposition. End quote.

And I would ask the Premier, who so frequently lapses into rhetoric and disrespectful responses, to give a respectful response to the concerns—genuine concerns—raised by—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member—the Leader of the Opposition's plan to put a

complete halt to hydro development for export purposes would wind up creating a shortage of hydroelectric power in Manitoba over the next 10 to 12 years. Then the rates would dramatically increase as we became a net importer.

What the member has to know is that we have \$7 billion of signed contracts for exports. Those will pay down the costs of new generating facilities. Those will help fuel economic growth in Manitoba by about a half a per cent a year. Those will create about 22,000 person-years of employment in Manitoba, opportunities for northern Manitobans, opportunities for First Nations people, opportunities for small business in Manitoba.

The opportunity is huge, and I haven't even discussed the climate-change benefits, Mr. Speaker, of building clean, reliable hydroelectricity in Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Well, in addition to all the false information that the Premier puts on the record, he's insulting a member of his own party and disrespecting the Public Utilities Board members who made the recommendations that he refuses to listen to.

This goes way beyond the sheer stupidity of the rambling road to nowhere, the bipole west boondoggle, and it's the biggest gamble in the history of our province and deserves a respectful discussion. So we better get it right, because our kids are the ones that are going to be paying for it if we don't, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Tim Sale, a former Cabinet minister, a NDP member who spent 11 years in this place, seven of them in Cabinet, says, quote: It simply makes no sense to raise rates to build dams for US customers.

And I would ask the Premier if he would give a respectful response to the concerns of Mr. Sale.

Mr. Selinger: Well, Mr. Speaker, fundamental to any good business decision is to have a customer that wants to buy your power at a price that will be profitable in Manitoba. We have customers that want to purchase our power on a firm long-term basis at a profit for Manitoba.

The Leader of the Opposition continually tries to confuse Manitobans with spot sales versus firm long-term contracts. We have \$7 billion of firm long-term contracts to our export customers. They are saying we are a supplier of choice of clean hydroelectric power.

Members opposite, back in the '90s—I know the member doesn't like to go back to the '90s, but they said Limestone was going to be a failure. It was built. It paid itself off in 10 years. It provides clean power to Manitoba. It kept our rates the lowest in North America, and it reduced climate change all over the planet, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pallister: The leader speaks about business decisions. This is a man who would sue his financial advisor because his rates aren't as high as he wanted. Manitobans won't have the opportunity to sue him as a consequence of no return on his decision. They deserve an opportunity to be part of the process now. They deserve an opportunity—help prevent an idiotic decision, poorly defined, poorly thought out, but the Premier doesn't want to give them that chance. He wants to advertise to them. He wants to brainwash them into supporting his ill-conceived plans. Now he's squandering a Manitoba advantage, and that is at risk.

Ed Schreyer, a former NDP MLA—I'm sure some of the members may have heard of him, okay—a Premier, a Governor General, a noted Manitoban, said last Thursday, eloquently: Hydro is not Manitoba's oil. That's apples and oranges. I have real concerns. Let's wait five years. Let's discuss this. That's the prudent thing to do.

Would the Premier, with all his former colleagues and many of his present colleagues concerned about this, give a respectful response to the question: Why are we going down this road?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we're going ahead with a build of Manitoba hydro power that we will need in the next 10 to 12 years for our own economy. Unlike the members opposite, our economy is growing in Manitoba; it has doubled over the last 12 years.

Mr. Speaker, we are putting at risk—the members' don't-build, do-nothing approach to the economy would put at risk \$16 billion in export sales over the next 20 years, \$29 billion of export sales over the next 30 years.

Those export sales allow us to pay down the cost of building new dams in this province. They keep rates for Manitobans among the lowest in North America. They make our business advantage very competitive in this province. They displace greenhouse gas emissions from other sources of power throughout the entire midwest region and in North America. It's an opportunity to grow the economy.

We believe in building Manitoba. They believe in mothballing it.

Manitoba Hydro Export Market Concerns

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Well, according to the PUB, the Wuskwatim dam is now set to lose \$9 million a month, with the losses to continue for another 16 years. Even Ed Schreyer, the former boss of the member for Kildonan, says that he's wrong.

Why do ratepayers have to pay for his hydro export gamble addiction?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, in the last 10 years the average Manitoban has doubled their use of electricity. This province has seen an increase of population of 120,000 people at the last—who all use electricity. We will run out of electricity in 2022.

What will members then say when we have to import oil from other provinces? Will we have to import coal from Saskatchewan and Ontario when we have the cleanest green energy in the continent? No, we're going to build hydroelectricity for Manitobans and to export and to help the economy and climate change around North America.

Mr. Speaker: I just want to caution honourable members. The—we're doing pretty good to start off question period here today. I want to thank you for that, but I also want to remind honourable members that the level's starting to climb up a little bit, so if you just keep it down. We have visitors with us here in the gallery, and I want to make sure that they're able to hear the debate that's occurring here during question period.

So the honourable member for St. Paul, for a first supplementary.

* (13:50)

Mr. Schuler: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and Ed Schreyer, his former employee would be—employer, would be very disappointed in that answer. In fact, in the last 12 months we have seen hydro rates go up by 8 per cent in 12 months.

Tim Sale, the former NDP caucus colleague of the member for Kildonan, says the member for Kildonan got it wrong. With Wuskwatim set to lose 9 million dunces—dollars a month and losses to continue for 16 years, even former colleagues see this development risk as a problem.

Why do Manitoba ratepayers have to backstop the member for Kildonan's export gamble addiction?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Wuskwatim dam was a very new departure in Manitoba. It was a project that was done in partnership with First Nations communities. It was a project that had no flooding. It was a project that put a priority in employing and training Manitobans. It was a project that generated substantial small business opportunity in northern Manitoba.

And because of our rapidly growing economy, one of the best in the country, Mr. Speaker, Hydro has now said that Wuskwatim energy, that 220 megawatts of power, will be needed for domestic consumption in Manitoba sooner than forecast.

If the members opposite had their way, we would be importing power into Manitoba over the next couple years at far higher rates than we are paying for our own clean Manitoba hydro energy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schuler: Wuskwatim is set to lose \$9 million a month, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, the PUB says the member for Kildonan has it wrong. Ed Schreyer, his former boss, says the ND 'pember' for Kildonan has it wrong. Tim Sale, his former caucus colleague, says the NDP member for Kildonan has it wrong. Len Evans, the NDP grise éminence, says the member for Kildonan has it wrong.

So the question is: Why is Manitoba Hydro advertising? Is it to try and convince former NDP politicians that he doesn't have it wrong?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite would like to go back to when they were in office and the economy was not growing. They cancelled Conawapa in the 1990s. The economy of the 1990s had higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of taxation on business, higher rates of taxation on families, lower disposable income, people moving out of Manitoba.

The opposite is occurring today, Mr. Speaker. People are moving to Manitoba. Tax rates are lower for Manitobans. Manitobans have more disposable income, and they are consuming more hydroelectricity as part of a modern lifestyle.

We're building these dams for the future growth of Manitoba. We're building them a little earlier so

that we can pay them down with export revenues. We have a—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. First Minister's time has expired.

The honourable member for Charleswood has the floor.

PST Increase Budget Advertising Campaign

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would say to the Premier that we don't need any history lessons from this NDP government who lied to Manitobans in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP brought in a bad budget that is going to hurt Manitobans, and now they're spending a quarter million dollars of taxpayers' money on a propaganda campaign to convince Manitobans that this budget is good.

So I would like to ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers): If they thought their budget was so good, why are they not telling people in that quarter-million-dollar propaganda campaign that they're increasing the PST?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I appreciated the preamble to the question by the critic, the Finance critic opposite, because—let's be clear. In the '90s they wanted to cancel history as a course in Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: And recess.

Mr. Selinger: And recess. And recess, says the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan).

But can you imagine a province where we didn't teach history? History is very important because Manitobans need to know who was working for their interests every day and every decade.

The members opposite want to cancel the history course. They want to make a big deal out of that kind of an approach, Mr. Speaker.

We want to build the province. We are keeping Manitobans in the top three for affordability. We are keeping businesses in the top three for affordability. We have more—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. First Minister's time has expired.

Impact on Small Business

Mrs. Driedger: I would say to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, that we're supposed to learn from history, not live in it.

Mr. Speaker, we met with two businesswomen this morning—we met with two women business owners this morning who told us that the PST hike is going to really hurt their businesses, whether it's going to be losing customers to the United States, having to charge customers more to pay for that PST hike or having to lay off staff. They both told us that these are real possibilities, that there will be a trickle-down effect from a hike in the PST.

So I would ask this Minister of Finance: Why is he hurting Manitobans and Manitoba families with that PST hike?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): The lesson of history is not to repeat the mistakes that you made in the past, Mr. history—Mr. Speaker, and what Manitobans remember of their history is what Conservatives did when they were in government, and that was they fired nurses, they fired teachers, they hurt our economy.

Mr. Speaker, that's not the mistakes that we're making. That's their mistakes. We're going to continue to grow this economy because that's the best thing we can do for small businesses, along with the kinds of things we did in the 2013 budget, and I want to point out to members opposite, we've extended the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister's making things up. I would ask him to look at his own third-quarter financial statements, where it says that retail sales have dropped in the last three years and, in fact, were at a three-year low last year. His own report also said that retail sales growth fell below the national average for the first time in years. People are spending less because this government is raising taxes.

Mr. Speaker, it was also pointed out to us this morning that four women business owners who owned fashion businesses have folded up their businesses in the last year.

So I would like to ask this Minister of Finance to explain: Why is he raising the PST and willing to hurt more Manitoba families and businesses?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, making stuff up is when the Leader of the Opposition comes in here and pawns off \$1,600 as the number that costs Manitoba families with the PST. That's making stuff up.

Mr. Speaker, what's not made up is the fact that we moved the small business tax rate from 8 per cent under the Conservatives down to zero per cent under us. That's a hard, cold fact that members opposite just don't like.

PST Increase Call for Referendum

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, what small businesses don't like is the 14 per cent rise in the PST.

Mr. Speaker, today the Canadian Federation of Independent Business released the results of a survey in which 93 per cent of small businesses stated they want the government to call a referendum on raising the PST.

Connie Hall of Peppertree Fashions in Winnipeg is one of those small businesses. She wants her voice heard by this government, and they won't listen.

Mr. Speaker, will this government stand with small businesses today and call a referendum not to raise the PST?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in every single budget that this government has brought forward in this House, we've had tax relief for Manitobans, whether they be individual Manitobans, whether they be small businesses, whether it be corporate taxes that we've brought down, property taxes, whether you're a senior. We've done that and we've shown support for education, for health care, for infrastructure.

We're going to continue a balanced approach that we have put in place where we support Manitobans and we support those kind of priorities, and we're going to continue to make sure that we are one of the most affordable provinces in this country in which to live.

Mr. Graydon: *[inaudible]* per cent of small businesses agree that the spendP should lower their spending by 1 per cent, not raise Manitobans' by 3 per cent. The same survey shows that 92 per cent of small business owners stated that they were opposed to the PST increase.

Emerson Bigway grocery, it's in Emerson, and they watch people drive by them day after day after day to shop in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, will this government stand with the small businesses today, call a referendum 'fon' the PST?

* (14:00)

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, example after example of companies coming to Manitoba to set up here so that Manitobans are staying in Manitoba with their money and investing in Manitoba. I'd invite the member to go to—over to IKEA. Go to IKEA, count the number of licence plates there from Saskatchewan or from Ontario. See the kind of action that's going on there. Marshalls, Target, the list goes on of companies showing confidence in our economy and in our government coming here to Manitoba because they know we're not going to turn on the people of Manitoba and cut their services like members opposite would, and we're going to continue to support with reasonable tax credits that serve to build our economy.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, 82 per cent of Manitoban small businesses believe the 14 PS-14 per cent PST hike will negatively affect Manitoba's competitiveness. Ninety-six per cent of small businesses believe that the PST increase will have a negative impact.

Reimer Redi-Mix sells building supplies, and owner Dave Reimer has created a strong business to provide people in southeastern Manitoba with their building needs. With the PST increase, however, the benefits of buying locally in Manitoba are shrinking and more and more Manitobans are going to Grand Forks.

Mr. Speaker, will this government admit their mistakes, stand with the small businesses of this province and not raise the PST?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, over the past 13 years corporate cuts, small business tax cuts have added up to \$2.9 billion in the hands of Manitobans—\$2.9 billion in the hands of Manitobans. We've lowered the business tax from 8 per cent, which was where that number languished under the Conservative government before us, from 8 per cent down to zero per cent. It's still—it's still—the only tax-free zone for small business in the country, and further than that we increased that threshold from 400,000 to 425,000 so even more Manitoba small businesses could participate.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member for Riding Mountain has the floor.

Children in Care Accountability Framework

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): It is abundantly clear that Manitoba's child welfare system is in a state of crisis and this minister needs to take responsibility.

In Manitoba there are more than 10,000 children in care. That's more than children that are in the entire Brandon School Division. Mr. Speaker, in addition, there are more than 6,200 children who are supported in their homes by CFS.

Mr. Speaker, when is this minister intending to fully implement an effective accountability framework so that the 1,600 children involved in the child welfare system don't come to the same fate as Phoenix Sinclair?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): You know, when the member opposite cites that there are 6,000 families that are being served in their homes by child welfare workers, I think that that is not necessarily a bad thing. That means that those families are getting help that they need to deal with the issues that they have so that their kids don't come into care.

I think that's one of the changes, I think, as we've heard from people with years and years of experience in child welfare, that has been one of the positive changes that have come about in the last few years in the child welfare system is not waiting 'til things get to such a point that you have to take a child out of the family but being able to work with the family where they are on the issues they have so you can keep that family together.

We work every day on improving that system and improving the accountability system, and we'll continue to work on that, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: The Auditor General, in her 2006 and 2012 reports on child welfare system, has noted some serious instances and failures throughout the child welfare system.

Under the minister's watch, at least five opportunities during the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry—Phoenix Sinclair's case was protected. Officials walked away from her, deeming the systemic issues in child welfare were not serious enough. The department has been told of serious inconsistencies with CFS, and this minister has failed to deal with it.

The minister of child and families is responsible specifically for children in care, and if a parent

demonstrated the neglect for their children as this government and this minister has, they would be removed from their home.

Mr. Speaker, where does this leave the 16,000 children involved with the child welfare system?

Ms. Howard: I think, you know, the inquiry has been very instructive in a number of ways. We've heard in very disturbing detail of the things that went wrong in the murder of Phoenix Sinclair and the case leading up to that. And the system has learned some tremendous lessons from that and will continue to learn some lessons from that.

And now we're hearing about some of those lessons. We're hearing about new tools in the hands of child welfare workers so they can take a more systematic approach to assessing risk and making sure that they can address those risks. We're seeing more preventative programs going on with families so that we can keep families together and keep those people—keep those children from coming into the system.

We'll continue to work on that. We will wait for the recommendations. We will act on those, but we will act now, as we do every day, to improve the child welfare—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Rowat: But lessons have to be learned. And the record management is so important within a department. The monitoring of financial and statistical information, such as caseloads, case file notes, compliance issues and efficiencies, are very critical to a department working effectively.

How would a health or justice system work without proper records? Health and justice information must be accountable. If not, action must be taken and then a redress is to be completed. But not with this department of child and family services.

Mr. Speaker, how does this minister make decisions within her department without information to the well-being of vulnerable children? How can she do this without a qualified system?

Ms. Howard: Well, I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that one of the immediate changes that we made in the wake of the murder of Phoenix Sinclair was to increase staffing in those child welfare agencies by over 200 workers.

And it's instructive to me that when the Leader of the Opposition wanted to tell us what a budget would look like under him, his answer was to cut everything that government does by 1 per cent. In my department, that would mean laying off 135 social workers.

Taxpayer Protection Act Democratic Rights

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The opposition continues to repeat their talking points. They need some new talking points, Mr. Speaker, that are factual in nature.

On CJOB—we got—one of our—as opposed to their 192 communicators, one of our two got me this transcript from 'OB this morning. The Premier was asked about the BC—surprising Liberal BC majority win over the NDP there, and he said this: Well, I think it's all about democracy. I think it really illustrates how important someone's vote is and that when they get out and vote they can make a difference.

Now, how could any leader who actually believes that take away Manitoba's right to vote and take away from every Manitoban the opportunity to exercise this democratic, all-important franchise by eliminating the taxpayer protection act?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, for the Leader of the Opposition, who was in the government that launched and implemented the vote-rigging scandal in the '95 election, to get up and say he believes in democracy is rich, to say the least—very, very rich, to say the least.

This is a person that was in a government that deliberately went out and tried to do vote splitting in the '95 election, and Judge Monnin, when he conducted that inquiry and he looked out at all the Conservative members in the inquiry room, he never—he said he'd never seen so many damn liars in his life, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pallister: Mr. Speaker, I might be angry if I had any respect at all for the man's opinion, but that lack of integrity—it comes out every single day in this Chamber—makes me happy to have the criticism, and I welcome it.

It gets richer, Mr. Speaker. Here's some more—here's some more—pontification.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

I'm asking for your co-operation once again. There are a lot of folks that are here with us in the gallery today and I'm sure there are many members of the public who are watching us through their television sets or online, and I'm encouraging all honourable members, please, keep the level down a little bit so that our viewing audience can at least hear the questions and the answers that are flowing from that.

* (14:10)

Mr. Pallister: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd encourage that listening audience and viewing audience to listen to this. Here's the quote: At the end of the day, the Premier said, it really shows value of every citizen exercising their franchise to vote, and that's what makes a difference and that's really the bottom line.

And it is—and it is the bottom line. Manitobans gave their lives so we'd have the right to vote. Manitobans made sacrifices, and what did they do it for? They did it for freedoms. They did it for rule of law. They did it to fight against dictatorships like that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, how can anyone who has such total disrespect for the right of people to vote make statements like this?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this comes from a member who was at the Cabinet table that launched the vote-rigging scandal in Manitoba, one of the worst abuses of democracy in the entire history of the province. They went out and deliberately tried to split votes so the people could not properly express their democratic will. They made donations to a third political party to stop Aboriginal people from being able to vote what they really wanted to do in an election.

That vote-rigging scandal is something—is one of the reasons why the members of the opposition wanted to abolish history as a course in high school.

CentrePort Canada Infrastructure Investment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, more than five years ago when the government introduced legislation to establish CentrePort, the NDP's minister spoke at second reading about how CentrePort would be a gateway to the world and said, and I quote, fast-track investment and economic decisions.

Manitobans are now expressing concern about how what could be Manitoba's jewel is rapidly losing its lustre for two years without any major investments at all.

I ask the Premier: When is he going to deliver on the original vision of fast-track investment and economic decisions?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): CentrePort way is rapidly working its way towards conclusion, a major infrastructure investment in Manitoba which allows trucking companies and companies that move goods and services out of that area of Winnipeg in the CentrePort area to move them around Winnipeg without creating traffic disturbances in Winnipeg.

Many private investments have already occurred in the CentrePort area. Many companies have put up buildings there; many more companies are interested in building there.

The project is moving forward. It will be a gateway to North America—both in and out of North America, east, west, north and south. The project is moving forward. It's part of our long-term vision for growing the Manitoba economy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Manitoba's Premier, instead of focusing as he is on liquor and gambling, should actually focus on the economy and jobs.

Manitobans are well aware that the \$250 million has been invested in a road at CentrePort, but right now there's no development on either side of that road called Canada way. Many to—Manitobans are wondering whether the Premier has built a \$24-million road to nowhere. You know, businesses, I understand, are not too keen to establish in an area which is served only by porta-potties.

I ask the Premier: When will taxpayers actually see a return on investment—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Mr. Selinger: As I said in my first question, Mr. Speaker, the CentrePort way project, about a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar investment financed jointly by the federal government and the provincial government, is rapidly moving towards completion. There are already have been millions of dollars of investment by the private sector in land in that area; facilities have been built. It's a very large site. Some of the—a good portion of the site already has services, and so there has been investment occurring out there.

There is more investment lined up there for the future. It's a long-term economic development project for Manitoba, reinventing Winnipeg and Manitoba as the gateway not just to the west but to the south into the United States into all the major markets, down into Mexico, up north through Churchill, Manitoba, into Asia and parts of Europe, as well as a supply link into northern development in Manitoba as well as the rest of Canada, including Nunavut. It has great potential for the future, and we're moving forward on it every single day, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the centre way has no water and no sewer and no buildings along it.

The development is gridlocked. The government itself, in fancy words, just as the Premier is saying today, said, and I quote: This is going to be comprehensively planned, functionally integrated, implemented in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

And yet the reality is that the Premier must actually accept responsibility for the lack of leadership, for the glib-gridlock and the present impasse.

I ask the Premier, who has so far shown rather ineffective leadership in working with the City and with the RM of Rosser, by what date—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired. Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member, Mr. Speaker.

I can only underline that the project is moving forward. CentrePort way is—continues to be completed—major infrastructure project. Many companies have already invested in sites over there, where they have access to services. Many other companies have identified sites that they would like to invest in the future. Jobs are being created every single day as we move forward on this project.

We have three major railways that have access to Winnipeg. CNR, CPR, Burlington Northern Santa Fe all service Winnipeg; all have networks into the United States.

We have five major trucking companies and many others that provide global services for trucking in and out of North America. We have the Port of Churchill, the only deep-sea port in western Canada, Mr. Speaker, with a world-class airport that has just

opened and excellent airport facilities in Churchill as well.

We have many of the attributes that will be built 'upon' to provide an opportunity to make Manitoba a transportation hub for North America.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. First Minister's time has expired.

City of Winnipeg Infrastructure Investment

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from municipalities, especially from the mayor of the City of Winnipeg, that infrastructure is a top priority. I'm aware that Budget 2013 has created an opportunity for the Province of Manitoba to invest in municipal infrastructure.

As summer approaches, we will be—we are aware that parks, cultural centres and libraries will be bustling with activity. And all this physical locations are often—need of—often need a renewal. We've accomplished much with Building Communities Initiatives and Community Places initiatives, but I'm seeking clarity on another program that is available for non-profit groups as well as City of Winnipeg centres.

My question is to the Minister of Local Government. I want to ask him if he can provide us with details on programs that might stem from the budget in additional recreational needs and infrastructure needs in Winnipeg.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the MLA for St. Norbert for the question with regard to Budget 2013. It guarantees investment in municipal infrastructure, and I was pleased to join the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today, as well as the MLA for Concordia and the MLA for Elmwood, to announce this new \$7.5-million infrastructure program specifically designed in infrastructure to the City of Winnipeg.

I certainly look forward to talking to the mayor and councillors in the City of Winnipeg with regard to this new initiative, and I know they'll be very, very pleased to hear that these dollars are going into not only City of Winnipeg infrastructure facilities but also non-profit organizations, Mr. Speaker, who will welcome an announcement like this.

And it's a real shame members opposite didn't support Budget 2013, because these dollars are directly geared and directed to infrastructure—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Minister's time has expired.

Victoria Beach Municipal Amalgamation

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, it's just—it's really interesting that the Minister of Local Government stood up and put some rhetoric up on the record just before my question.

Mr. Speaker, the RM of Victoria Beach is one of many rural municipalities who are being forced to amalgamate by the spendP. Just on Monday, the Minister of Local Government said, and I quote, "municipalities we believe in and we work hard with them and consult with them on a daily basis." That's what the minister said on Monday.

I'm asking today: Could the Minister for Local Government please tell us when—when—Mr. Speaker, he had that meeting with the RM of Victoria Beach to discuss plans for amalgamation?

*(14:20)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): We met just recently with a number of reeves and mayors in different regions of the province, and, in fact, last spring, Mr. Speaker, we dealt with hundreds of municipal officials with regard to not only the Building Canada Fund but also municipal amalgamations and all the benefits with regard to municipal amalgamation.

I know members opposite, you know, when the days when a wagon full of grain went to the nearest elevator and that's how they designed the boundaries, many of them actually were there at the time, and including the MLA for Emerson and a few others, you know.

But, Mr. Speaker, we work daily, daily, daily with municipalities on not only infrastructure but also how to improve municipalities overall with regard to rural economic development. We're very proud of our record.

Only if members opposite would have voted for Budget 2013—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Minister's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: At one of those consultation meetings, this Minister for Local Government made mention that he gave advice to the municipalities: Do not hold

town hall meetings because it'll just cause hard feelings, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask again: Can this minister put on the record today, when did he have the meeting with the RM of Victoria Beach?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat. We just met with all the—I will repeat. We met with mayors and reeves of the different regions of Manitoba, and—so I'll be clear so the MLA of Lac du Bonnet understands that, you know, the horse and buggy party are trying to—you know, we're trying to work with municipalities on a very serious issue.

And, you know, the MLA opposite asks a very important question. We consult the municipalities on a daily basis. We're very proud of our record of doing that, not only on infrastructure but other issues related to what they face every day.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House. Order, please. I have a ruling for the House. Order, please.

During oral questions on May 7, 2013 the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) raised a point of order regarding the content of an answer given by the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton). Specifically, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader noted that the minister had referenced an issue that the Speaker had previously taken under advisement, namely a matter of privilege raised by the same minister regarding the actions of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) and the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) in relation to a protest at the site of the Portage Diversion.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader noted that the minister had already been cautioned on this issue and I suggested that—and suggested that he be called to order. The honourable Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) also spoke to the point of order before I took this matter under advisement to consult with Hansard.

In his remarks on page 1,050 of Hansard for May 7, 2013, the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation specifically mentioned the illegality of preventing the operation of the Portage Diversion, as well as referencing the role of members opposite and the Leader of the Opposition in that event.

In my opinion this does constitute a reference to the matter I had under advisement at the time, something which is in contravention of our practices and something on which I had already cautioned the minister. Therefore, I would rule that the honourable Official Opposition House Leader did have a point of order.

While the ruling on the original matter under advisement has now been delivered to the House, I would urge all members to take note of this situation as an example. When I take matters such as this under advisement, that effectively removes them as a topic of debate in this House until I deliver a ruling. Many Manitoba Speakers have upheld this same principle numerous times from this Chair, and I know that with this ruling I am continuing to uphold the traditions and practices of this important institution that we all serve.

I would urge all honourable members to follow the—that example and to seek to do the same.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Student Art Show in Kirkfield Park

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, Kirkfield Park is blessed with many talented young people. I'm always astounded by the incredible athletes, musicians, artists, actors and thinkers that are sharing their gifts with the community in many different ways, and I've had the chance to speak in this House about many of them. We are also very fortunate to have some great educators who are committed to providing after-school programming so that our students can continue to develop their interests and grow some of these amazing talents.

Last week I was thrilled to have a chance to work with some of Kirkfield Park's budding young artists. Over 40 students from three schools in our constituency contributed their time, skills, sketchpads and paintbrushes to an art exhibit held last week. Their work, which includes photography, watercolours, charcoal and more, was showcased alongside pieces by local artist, Charlie Johnston. Charlie is known for his creative style, portraits of Canadian icons past and present, and, of course, his beautiful murals across Winnipeg.

The students all worked hard on their pieces, Mr. Speaker, and they are jaw-dropping. They feature everything from abstract art to nature photographs, from still life to self-portraits, and from illustrations of First Nations creation narratives, to a haunting

sculptural piece on the missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.

This show would not have been possible, of course, without the great arts programs at the participating schools and their dedicated teachers: Catharine Teichroew from Westwood Collegiate; Sheri Kovacs from the Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary and Middle Schools; and Crystal Stewart from Lincoln Middle School, which also participated in the Artists in the Schools program last fall.

Mr. Speaker, arts programming is one of the best ways that we can unlock the incredible potential of Manitoba students. I invite all members to join me in congratulating every artist involved with last week's art show for their hard work and creativity.

I also ask that I may be able to submit the names of all artists to be included in the Hansard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there a leave of the House to submit the names so that they can be included in the Hansard proceedings of today's. [*Agreed*]

Westwood Collegiate: Raylene Friesen, Janessa Fitzjohn, Megan Gair, Angela Gladys, Madison Braun, Zac Brown, Daniel White, Taylor Kennington, Dyle McCoy, Danni, Ashley Davis, Jaymie Prouten-Christianson, Art Teacher Catharine Teichroew.

Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary and Middle Schools: Jade Fehr, Grace Bruinooge, Kennedy Fehr, Kezia Doerksen, Justin Hall, Gretta Styles, Emma Houldsworth, Tanner Janzen, Jeremy Traverse, Gabrielle Gorchynski, Jennifer Einarson, Lauren Jesson, Art Teacher Sheri Kovacs.

Lincoln Middle School: Nate Handel, Evan Sykora, Eliza Montgomery, Lauren Bernier, Rebekah Hayward, Steven Huynh, Lucas Dumore, Ava Luong, Crystal Marchant, Alex Falkenhagen, Gabby Wilson, Katelynn Bourgeois, Jarrid Brake, Kia LaChose, Brietta Passalis, Zoe Rupps, Allison Varey, Amy Brooks, Art Teacher Crystal Stewart.

Koushkoupayh Days

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I rise today to inform the House of an important event that occurred in western Manitoba last fall, Koushkoupayh Days, hosted by the Grand Valley Local of the Manitoba Metis Federation, Southwest Region. Koushkoupayh Days provides a venue for Metis artists and artisans to showcase many of their talents. This is a great event which welcomes the whole community to

attend a family-oriented atmosphere celebrating the rich culture and history of Metis people in our province.

Louis Riel stated that his people will sleep for a hundred years, but when they awake it will be the artists who give them back their spirit. Koushkoupayh is significant in that it means wake up in Michif.

The festival is located off Highway 10 on a property just 34 kilometres south of Brandon. It features free admission, free unserviced camping, and is filled with traditional food, music and dancing, cultural booths, voyageur games and competitions, and many activities for children, and also great raffle prizes to be won.

Mr. Speaker, this event was a dream of a man-local man named Andy Dubois who had a vision for sharing Metis culture with the rest of us. Unfortunately, Andy passed away before his dream came true.

With all the help from Andy's friends and family, the inaugural celebration and the two-day festival of Koushkoupayh Days in 2012 was a great success. There are plans to make this an annual tradition, and this year the festival will be at the end of the summer on August 31st.

There are a number of Metis festivals in the province, and I'm always amazed to see and speak to the many number of Manitobans who travel around the province to attend all these festivals.

I encourage all members of this Legislature to attend this year's Koushkoupayh Days and ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating the work accomplished by the Grand Valley Local, the MMF, and all their friends and volunteers in promoting Manitoba's Metis heritage and Andy Dubois' dream. I wish them all the best for this year's upcoming festival and hope to see you all there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SCE Lifeworks

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the efforts of an agency that supports people with intellectual disabilities to work, participate and contribute to the community.

Mr. Speaker, SCE LifeWorks is a St. James non-profit organization that helps people with intellectual disabilities find meaningful employment opportunities based on their unique needs, interests and career plans. They work with program

participants to set goals and identify opportunities within the community, whether that is through full-time work, volunteering or work experience in alternate wage programs.

* (14:30)

Once an applicant is hired, SCE LifeWorks provides training for the new employee at the work site, while providing sensitivity training regarding disability issues to workplace staff to ensure that the individual is welcomed and treated like any other worker. They also provide continuing support. For instance, they arrange additional training for those who are promoted or whose duties change. They also help facilitate follow-up funding from Family Services for those who graduate from supported employment.

This organization is helping break down the barriers that keep people with intellectual disabilities from enjoying the things that the rest of us take for granted, Mr. Speaker, a chance to contribute their efforts and participate in the community. No one is turned away due to the significance of their disability, nor are they ever placed in segregated facilities.

I had a chance to meet with some of the leaders of SCE LifeWorks earlier this month and I was impressed with their dedication to the individuals that they serve. The work that they do benefits not only those with intellectual disabilities but also the businesses involved. It creates a more diverse workforce that more accurately reflects the province in which we live.

SCE LifeWorks was founded 28 years ago by a group of parents who wanted their children to have the same opportunities that others enjoy, to participate fully in the community, to contribute their skills and abilities and to be rewarded for their accomplishments.

I want to thank SCE LifeWorks for all the work that they do to make sure that opportunities are available for everyone to feel included.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Health Care Shortages in Rural Manitoba

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is facing a health crisis. What's worse, however, is how this health crisis continues to worsen under this NDP government, particularly where it asymmetrically affects the livelihoods of women and rural Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many more examples of failed care need to break the headlines for this government to meaningfully address the litany of problems plaguing Manitoba's health-care system.

Despite the rhetoric from government members opposite, the facts remain: RMs are facing a doctor shortage; the emergency room in Vita is closed; the Portage la Prairie obstetrics ward is closed intermittently; a woman who was denied obstetrical care in Russell was forced to give birth on the highway, in Saskatchewan. What is the—what is most disheartening is that of all of—this in the light of Manitoba having the worst infant mortality rate in the country.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the Health Council of Canada earlier this year released the findings of their report, which noted that only 25 per cent of physicians in Manitoba reported their patients had access to care after hours, the worst out of all Canadian provinces. Contrast this with 67 per cent in Ontario, and, clearly, Manitoba needs more doctors, those trained nationally and internationally.

In Virden, there is a local physician who wishes to begin working at his father's practice. Despite the need for his services, however, and the significant amount of money that the NDP government and local community of Virden and area invested, Dr. Roux was denied a residency placement in Manitoba, affecting a family legacy in the community of Virden and denying the residents of Virden consistent, quality health services on a long-term predictable basis. Indeed, this is reflective of other rural locations in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue and needs to be addressed in a significant way. Rural Manitobans are paying a high price—and in the case of the woman from Russell, are witnessing this NDP government turn hallway medicine into highway medicine.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PST Increase—Referendum Forum

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, May the 11th, I hosted a forum to examine the impact of the NDP's plan to increase the PST from 7 to 8 per cent on seniors, students and on individuals with low income. The forum also focused on the need for a legally required public referendum before a PST increase occurs.

The NDP wants to change the law so that they can increase the PST without having a referendum, and a growing number of Manitobans are expressing their outrage at this blatant disregard for the democratic process.

The panellists at the forum were Martina Richter, general manager at Agape Table; Rorie McLeod-Arnould, vice-president advocate at the University of Winnipeg; and Muriel Koscielny, a senior living in my River Heights constituency. Muriel is in the gallery today.

The forum examined whether the NDP was using good fiscal management practices. In the 2012 budget, the NDP Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) brought in a core government expenditure budget of 11 billion, 695 million. By the end of the year, he'd spent 11 billion, 825 million, or \$130 million over budget.

Seniors on fixed incomes cannot overspend in the way the NDP overspend. Seniors on fixed incomes know they have to set a budget which they can actually meet. The NDP need to be held to account and meet their expenditure budget. If they'd met their expenditure budget last year, they would have had \$130 million of the \$200 million they want to raise this year by increasing the PST by 1 per cent.

Until there's a PST referendum and until the NDP can show they can manage the Province's finances better and meet their expenditure budgets, they shouldn't be allowed to raise the PST.

And until they identify the urgent infrastructure projects the NDP say the PST increase is needed to fund this year, they shouldn't be allowed to raise the PST.

The general manager of Agape Table, Martina Richter, conveyed at the forum the NDP's decision to raise the PST will hurt low-income and homeless Manitobans the most. The NDP have made it a policy not to raise shelter rates, and, subsequently, Manitoba has among the worst poverty rates in Canada. Manitobans continue to pay increased tax under NDP policies but are not seeing the return from government in terms of better support for those on low incomes.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances? No grievances? We'll move on to orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): We're prepared to move to debate on the Opposition Day motion.

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to move to debate on the Opposition Day motion sponsored by the honourable member for Midland.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I move, seconded by the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese),

THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to begin working co-operatively and respectfully with Manitoba municipalities, rather than in an adversarial and dictatorial fashion.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pedersen: This Bill 33 which has precipitated from the minister's unilateral decision to amalgamate smaller municipalities has certainly led to a file full of information from municipalities. And my file continues to grow daily, hearing from municipalities who are unhappy with the bullying, the disrespect, the hidden agenda and the threats of consequences should they not follow his rule.

And, Mr. Speaker, we had the bill briefing last week and the unrealistic timelines continue in spite of the factual information that the municipalities, the AMM, has provided to the minister. The minister what—did the circuit of the reeves' and mayors' meetings earlier this year and he was told at those mayors' and reeves' meetings, repeatedly told, that the timelines, amongst other things, are too tight. And I think that it's just brought home in the instances which have happened since.

The ice pushing up on the beach at Ochre River last week—and, of course, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) are quick to get up there for a photo op—but the question that I posed that—on Monday to the minister was, well, do you expect municipalities now to just forget about the ice damage that was created or—and work on amalgamation only, or what is—what should be there municipality's priority. And we all know that their priority must be for the residents and to make sure that there is rebuilding and safety of the residents, but yet the deadline looms and the threats continue from this minister.

During the bill briefing the minister was very adamant that December 1st of 2013, all municipalities are supposed to have their plan, their amalgamation plan, in written form on the minister's desk. So, very obviously, the question I asked was what happens if they don't. And the minister kind of looked at the deputy minister and the deputy minister looked at the minister, and they were kind of going back and forth trying to decide what they really should answer. And I said, written in the bill it says there'll be consequences, so what are the consequences? Well, then we had this looking back and forth again and kind of pausing back and forth and it was decided, well, it's up to the minister to decide what the consequences are.

* (14:40)

So what are the consequences? He can't seem to tell me that. So the municipalities are—the minister is—can now—I don't know—play Russian roulette or something with the municipalities, and they're going to have their plan on his desk. Now I know how the NDP plans, so basically the municipalities perhaps they could just have a plan written on the back of a napkin, as just the way this whole bill came out because there was no consultation prior to the Throne Speech announcement.

We know it was diversion, and I use that word hesitantly in this Chamber, but it was a diversion in the Throne Speech. It was to get away from the flood compensation claims that this government continues to ignore, and it was also definitely a diversion to get away from meaningful infrastructure planning for the infrastructure deficit that all municipalities are facing right now. And it certainly worked because the Throne Speech coincided with the AMM convention and, of course, all of the language—all the talk in the AMM convention, then, was about amalgamation. And the Premier stood up and—at the banquet at the AMM and said: This is going to happen. And there was no doubt about it in the Premier's mind, despite what municipalities were saying.

I think there was a city councillor who got up, though, and actually received a rather—or gave a rather barn-burning presentation and received a lot more applause than the Premier did because basically that city councillor told municipalities to—that they have every right to be opposed to this, and that they shouldn't be bullied because this is about bullying.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to—I continue to hear from different municipalities, and I got an email the other—yesterday from the Town of Plum Coulee, and

the Town of Plum Coulee has been very adamant that they are not going to amalgamate. They're at something like 935 people now. They've got development plans in place for another set of apartment buildings and housing, which will push them well over this thousand threshold that the minister keeps talking about. But the—and the town of—so I called the Town of Plum Coulee and I asked if I could use their information from—

An Honourable Member: You consulted?

Mr. Pedersen: Yes, I actually consulted with them. I know it's a novel idea but I did consult with them, and if the minister needs the email address or the phone number of the Town of Plum Coulee I will gladly supply that to him.

But in this email that I got, they were—their—one of the concerns that the Town of Plum Coulee has is the cost of policing, and right now they currently pay \$110,000 a year for policing. But under this legislation they will be forced within three years to have a single policing entity within the supposed new enlarged municipality. They know right now that that will cost them \$175,000 per year. Who is supposed to pick up this extra \$65,000 a year? We know who will do that. It will be the ratepayers that will pick this up, and yet this minister categorically told me that there will be no changes in policing. And yet in this—in the bill briefing that I got, it says that there will be—they can continue with their different policing services if there is two different policing services within the proposed amalgamated municipalities. However, the next section says, must make arrangements to have a single policing entity provide policing services no later than three years after amalgamation.

So, despite what they tell me—what the minister tells me, that's not what the bill says. And yet, what we're talking about here is respect for municipalities, we're talking about poorly drafted legislation that is—continues with the bullying and the disrespect.

I don't know what the consequences will be when this municipality is supposed to have different policing outfits and then the same one. Maybe the new policing agreement will state the consequences of this municipality not following this convoluted legislation that the minister has brought forward.

Mr. Speaker, this Opposition Day motion simply asks that the provincial government begin a dialogue—begin a dialogue with municipalities, with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the

AMM. Not in an adversarial or dictatorial fashion, which they have done to date, which they do with so many different organizations. They are not—the municipalities will not be bullied by this government, they've been very clear about that—they will not be bullied.

And I really suggest that the minister and the government take this Opposition Day motion to heart and begin to work co-operatively and respectfully with Manitoba municipalities—that's the Manitoba tradition. It's not what the NDP has done, and I certainly hope that the minister will take this Opposition Day motion to heart and begin that true co-operation.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): With all due respect to my colleague from the opposition, I have to disagree with him on so many different fronts, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member's motion but—on the relationship between our government and the 197 municipalities in Manitoba, but I have to disagree on many, many of his points.

This government has had a very good working relationship with municipalities throughout our tenure as government in Manitoba, and his motion allows me to spend some time indicating the many ways we're working together to strengthen our communities and enhance services offered to Manitobans, who work collaboratively to talk and tackle some of the issues we face together.

In fact, the member from Brandon East was not only a municipal councillor as one of my colleagues, but he was also one of the leaders that brought together the urban and rural associations in order to consolidate the efforts of both urban and rural into one stronger entity. Mr. Speaker, it's passing strange—it's a great term that was used by our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), I haven't heard it for a long time, so I thought I would use it—it's passing strange that members opposite would disagree with amalgamation when AMM felt in—that it was so important that they come together, urban and rural, to make them stronger as an association, that they could deal with issues on a better footing, quite frankly, by them coming together and working together. And I know the brand—our MLA from Brandon East was there, in fact, to work, you know, hand in hand to put this together. And I know that this really recognizes the visionary perspective of the member from Brandon East and how amalgamating this entity was truly important.

And I know it—and also we have on this side, Mr. Speaker, is the MLA for Swan River. The MLA for Swan River is also a councillor but also the reeve of the RM of Mossey River, so he has a true perspective as well, not only as being a very good Minister of Agriculture, but also as a councillor and reeve of the RM of Mossey River. And certainly has a good understanding of—and he's the former board member, quite frankly, of AMM as well—has a very good understanding of the—of all the concerns and issues related to municipalities in Manitoba today.

Even though the member from Gimli was also an urban councillor for the Town of Gimli at the time, he also sees and saw the benefits of what happened when the two Gimlis came together and amalgamated. Also it allows for regional priorities and regional thinking to be embedded in the very council that makes local decisions on local services as well.

*(14:50)

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, the municipal leaders—in fact, we have a former chief of OCN as an MLA for The Pas now, who also have—has a different perspective, but he had the vision to ensure that the First Nation community just outside of The Pas and the town of The Pas work closely together. One might argue that hockey and the OCN Blizzard had a lot to do with bringing those two communities together. I would argue, the former chief and now current MLA for The Pas had a vision to ensure that these communities work closely together, hand in hand. So amalgamation and working together surely works.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the 197 municipalities in Manitoba, including the City of Winnipeg being its largest and biggest and, just—one needs to pick up the newspaper or watch the evening news to know how often we collaborate with the City of Winnipeg in allowing many projects to come to fruition.

I'll give you an example, Mr. Speaker: Winnipeg is receiving an increase in funding through Budget 2013; in fact, this year Winnipeg will receive \$286.8 million in provincial funding, that's \$22.3 million more—more—than they received last year.

An Honourable Member: How much?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, \$22.3 million more this year than last year.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, \$194 million for infrastructure through the Building Manitoba Fund and \$92.8 million for operating; Winnipeg's infrastructure and transit will be \$194 million, up by \$21.5 million, or a 12.5 per cent increase. This will allow for \$14 million to fix local streets, double—double—what it was last year; \$10 million over the next two years to build phase 2 of rapid transit; another \$1.1 million—we're planning the eastern corridor, which you're very familiar with, looking at a corridor going into Transcona in the eastern side of Winnipeg. So we're putting \$1.1 million towards the planning of that eastern corridor; \$13.5 million for new indoor rinks at Garden City and east end community centres, and the Dakota Community Centre extension; \$8.8 million for wastewater treatment plant upgrades, which is a continuation for us; \$11.4 million to expand the Convention Centre. Again, partnerships, partnerships develop between the Province and the City of Winnipeg, just as one example—one example.

I won't go into the many examples that we have with regard to other municipalities, other cities, like Brandon, which have work—we've worked co-operatively with on flood protection and many different initiatives. And the City of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, is receiving 10 more new police positions and 10 new cadets, to allow for firefighters, also, and paramedics, for ambulance services and fire-based EMS response.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we have many, many initiatives that we work closely with the City of Winnipeg as one—as the largest municipality in the province, and we, as a government, we are a government that wants to see all municipalities in Manitoba strive, be strong and engaged in today's economy, so that may shape their future. That's why Budget 2013 dedicated \$415 million in funding support for municipalities, including more than 1 point of PST dedicated for critical, local infrastructure through the Building Manitoba Fund.

Municipalities that made it clear they need support from senior levels of government to renew and build their infrastructure—Manitoba's financial support to municipalities has become amongst the most generous and broad in Canada. This year provincial funding for municipalities will total \$425 million, which is an increase of \$32 million.

An Honourable Member: How much?

Mr. Lemieux: —\$425 million, which is an increase of \$32 million or an 8.5 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, most Provinces across this country are cutting, are keeping the budgets flat with regard to municipalities, no increases at all, but just flat. And so between 2005 and 2013 annual provincial funding support for municipalities is almost double, increasing by \$200 million, from \$215 million in '05 to \$415 million in 2013, unlike other Provinces and—who have cut many municipalities. There's other Provinces have cut them by \$200 million—the municipal funding.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, I hope AMM and others, including many citizens of Winnipeg, read in Hansard that we provide funding for more than 50 per cent of the roads in Winnipeg. The Province of Manitoba provides funding to the City of Winnipeg and, you know, many citizens of Winnipeg, I think, are starting to see that the kind of funding that's being provided by this government. And, you know, in—you know, we just want to ensure that with regard to working with municipalities on a closer relationship, we believe and firmly believe that amalgamation is truly important. And I know members opposite, they say, well, we like what you're doing. Well, you know, just like the Liberals, we don't quite like what you're—how you're doing it. Well, you know, if it were left up to the opposition, I mean, what they have to say is that, well, just let them do whatever they want. I mean, sooner or later, you know, maybe they'll get and see the light and they will amalgamate and for all the right reasons.

But in the early '60s Duff Roblin commissioned a report. At that time they said some 40-some municipalities is probably the right way to go and that would be—they would be viable well into the future. Nothing happened with regard to that report. It gathered dust and, of course, Duff Roblin is most famous, of course, for beginning Duff's Ditch and protecting Winnipeg, so he had other challenges before him.

And then in 1997 the government of the day, Conservative government of the day, commissioned a study to look into municipalities and how they were functioning and how they were doing. They came up with this number of 1,000. They thought, at the time in '97, that it would be a right number to be—of municipalities to be viable.

Mr. Speaker, the—in Brandon—the institute in Brandon that we commissioned and worked with to bring forward a study with regard to what they felt would be a viable municipality came up with \$150-million tax base as well as a population of

3,000. And so we haven't gone with that. We've introduced legislation to say the threshold of 1,000 and also timelines with regard to be met for the next election.

We are adamant with regard to moving ahead. We want to have municipalities provide us with plans. There are many, many municipalities in the province of Manitoba that are working towards this goal. There's a lot of co-operation happening throughout the province of Manitoba and we look forward to continuing to make sure that any help they need we are there to help them and work with them through it.

Thank you.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise and speak to the Opposition Day motion brought forward by the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen).

You know, it's really interesting to listen to the Minister for Local Government's spin on some of this stuff.

This is—the bill, Bill 33 that's coming forward is basically an attack on respect for the municipalities and it's a lack of respect by this government for the municipalities. Doug Dobrowolski was quoted just the other day as saying this bill threatens—*[interjection]*—and maybe the members opposite should listen to this. This bill threatens to not only damage the relationship between our two orders of government, but to tear apart communities that have built their partnerships over decades not only because of what is in the bill, because of—but because of what—the undemocratic way it is being forced on our members. That's a direct quote from the president of the AMM.

I hear him talk about all this money going to municipalities. I wish he would tell me why those municipalities are so unhappy with him at the present time. If all this money's going out, if he's talking to them on a daily basis, all the things he says he's doing, why are these municipalities so unhappy? Obviously, Mr. Speaker, something is missing in his communication with them.

You know, when they trotted this out in November and said we're going to force these municipalities to amalgamate, it was done without any consultation at all. Municipalities found out through the media that the minister was putting this on the table, and then he has the nerve to stand up and talk about all this consultation, talks to municipalities on a daily basis. What a crock.

Mr. Speaker, he talks about his relationship with municipalities. You know, I—and—then he sits there, gives the member from Brandon East the credit for rolling MAUM and the UMM together. My good heavens, they're rewriting history, I'll tell you. I was on the original committee that started that process.

An Honourable Member: So was I.

* (15:00)

Mr. Briese: No, you weren't. Originally—the member from Brandon East was not on that committee. The four members on that committee were George Fraser, Deputy Mayor of the City of Winnipeg; Rick Borotsik from the city of Brandon; and Bill Roth from the RM of Dufferin; and myself, thank you very much. And we were the ones that laid the groundwork for putting that organization together. It was the right thing to do at the time and we did it with the full support of our membership, or almost full support. The—we consulted over a very long period of time, unlike what this member is doing on this amalgamation bill. We consulted for a lengthy time and did it right and put together that organization, which, I think, is one of the finest organizations in this province.

It—when you see another order of government attacking a lower order of government—I listen to, you know, the federal government now starting to make noises that maybe it would be a lot better just for the federal government just to deal with municipalities and bypass the provincial governments. You know, I'm not sure that wouldn't be a bad move. You know, we got this provincial government trying to take credit for this—for the fuel tax, trying to take credit for that amount of money for the fuel tax coming from the federal government to the municipalities. All they are is taking the money from the federal government and distributing it. They're not adding to it, they're not doing anything with it, and then they're taking credit. They're taking credit as if it's their own money.

You know, a number of years ago, the federal government did away with GST to municipalities, said it was inappropriate for one level of government—and by the way I was at the FCM at that time—Federation of Canadian Municipalities—and I lobbied for that and we got it for municipalities—and we got the GST removed. The federal government said it was inappropriate for one level of government to be taxing another level of government. What are we seeing out of this government? This government increased the PST to municipalities in '02, increased

it again in '04, increased it again in '11, and now come along and say we're going to add another per cent sales tax to it. *[interjection]* Yes, the total increase from 2011 amounted to just about \$800,000 to municipalities just on municipal insurance alone with the PST on it. That's really a shame the way they've been treating them.

You know, in December 2011, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), while speaking about federal transfers, said: Well, I think there is a big concern just about the way it has been done just dropped on the people without any consultation or discussion. What exactly happened here? Dropped two days, three days before the convention with no consultation: We're going to force municipalities to amalgamate; that's what we're going to do, and you better be happy with it. Then, the minister went on more recently and talked about consequences. Well, he talks about consequences to these municipalities if they don't follow this legislation, so—but he doesn't know what those consequences are. He's just going to make sure there's some consequences put out there to go after these municipalities.

You know, it's just there's so many words that come to mind about what's going on here—controlling, manipulative, autocratic, unprincipled. All those words come out, but most of all lack of respect—absolute lack of respect—for a level of government that balances their books. One of the reasons they're giving us, well, when the flood hit in some of these municipalities, the municipalities didn't have the resources to do proper floodfighting. You know what? I've talked to all those municipalities up along Lake Manitoba. They put out the resources. You know who didn't have the resources? The provincial government. The provincial government didn't have the resources. Municipalities handled it very, very well, and the people in those municipalities know it was handled well, too, and the—this Province literally dropped the ball. You know, those municipalities have balanced their books. They balanced their books. Some of them for 125 years they've balanced their books. They're required—*[interjection]* I hear the member from Thompson. By the way, I do have a tartan jacket. I hear the man—member from Thompson—*[interjection]*—I said I have one of them too. I'll have to wear it one of these days. You know, they—the Province absolutely dropped

You know, the Province absolutely dropped the ball of the flood; the municipalities did their thing and did it well. You know, we had the member from

Interlake suggest that municipalities—I think he was probably referring to ones under-a-thousand population, although I don't know why they use the thousand population, it's just another number pulled out of the air somewhere. And it—like, it could be 200; it could be 10,000—whatever, just a number pulled out of the air. But he suggested that those municipalities were totally dysfunctional—totally dysfunctional. Now where does he come up with something like that?

An Honourable Member: Those were the ones in the Interlake.

Mr. Briese: Oh, he's talking about his own municipalities, is that what he's doing? I'm surprised.

You know, in my municipality, the RM of Langford, which surrounds the town of Neepawa—something that I don't think a lot of these members of government understand. There's all sorts of agreements, there's all sorts of sharing done between other municipalities and my municipality and the Town of Neepawa. Things like fire, water, tax sharing, are all part of the deal out there. The town's water comes from the RM of Langford. The Town of Neepawa owns a section of land in the RM of Langford, pays taxes on it to the RM of Langford. When we had a couple of developments there that required more services, we went through seamless, very easy expropriations. We made deals, we were—everybody was satisfied with the deals.

If they're forced into an amalgamation, they're not going to be satisfied. They worked out the deals themselves and they work very well. And I think this is the way to handle this issue now, not force those amalgamations. Thank you very much.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): If ever there was a tactic in search of a strategy, it's this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, we have a bill on the Order Paper that deals with municipal amalgamations, and rather actually debate the bill, we have the bizarre situation that the member introduced this Opposition Day resolution, spent most of his 10 minutes actually quoting from sections in the bill and actually even relaying the briefing on the bill that he received from the minister. Well, if you want to debate the bill, you debate the bill; that's normally what we do in this House.

But I must say, Mr. Speaker, that the party of the '90s over there—and I want to put on the record, again, that when it comes to economic policies,

they're the party of the 1990s; when it comes to social policies, definitely the 1890s; and we know with the municipal amalgamations, again, they're the part of the 1890s.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about a co-operative and respectful relationship with Manitoba municipalities. Well, I want to suggest one thing—this is the year 2013, and I, you know, I've had a lot of people ask me about municipal amalgamation, and it really comes down to this: we've got two thirds of the province that is represented by one municipality—there was amalgamation in the early 1970s—and we got 196 other municipalities that basically represent the remaining one third.

And what the minister's put forward is actually the logic—and I want members opposite to really put on the record, you know, if they actually believe that there should be no change, Mr. Speaker; if they actually believe that municipalities can be viable at less than a thousand; if they actually believe it's actually good public policy that 39 municipalities have yet to be able file audited reports to receive the federal gas tax money—there are two that go back until 2009.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record we pay a lot of money towards the federal government. We want to see it coming back; we want to see it going to those municipalities. Members opposite want to go back to the 1890s. Of course, in the 1890s, you didn't have gas tax money, you had the horse and buggy, you know, for transportation. They are really a party that's stuck in the past.

But I'm not going to dwell on their 1890s agenda. I'm going to be a little bit more recent, I'm going to talk about the 1990s because I can't believe that members opposite have the gall to get up and talk about respectful relationship with municipalities, because—I want to put on the record what they did when they were in government in the 1990s.

* (15:10)

Well, first of all, by the way, you could hear every day in the PC government caucus the sharpening of those chainsaws. Because what they did, Mr. Speaker, they got out the chainsaws and they went after municipalities in terms of municipal funding.

What else did they do that impacted on municipalities? They hatcheted funding for drainage, Mr. Speaker. What did they do on highways? You know, they spent upwards of about \$85 million on

highway capital. This year, by the way, it's \$468 million. These are all issues that matter a lot to municipalities.

And talk about respect, when they actually rammed through and sold off MTS, there was a resolution came out of the municipality convention. It was overwhelming condemning that. Well, they didn't listen. They sold off MTS—and ask people in many of the rural areas, particularly those that want better cellphone service what it's like to have that privatized phone service. Oh, I forgot, Mr. Speaker: They are actually officially lobbying for that. Too bad that some of the members weren't around when they sold off the phone company.

But I want to talk about some of the other things they did: Transit, we used to have 50-50 funding for transit. They cut the funding for transit. What did we do, Mr. Speaker? I was never more proud, when I was Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, we reinstated 50-50 funding for transit.

An Honourable Member: By law, by law.

Mr. Ashton: By law.

And what we did, Mr. Speaker, is we brought in the first leg of rapid transit here in the city of Winnipeg—again, initiatives of this government.

Now, talk about respect: We respected the fact there was need on the policing side. We've added designated funding for policing. But not only that, we added funding for firefighters in Winnipeg, in Brandon, in Thompson and in Portage, Mr. Speaker—dedicated money.

We went beyond that. We added specific funding for rec directors in some of the most socially disadvantaged areas of Winnipeg so that we could help provide direct rec services to those kids, to those youth.

So, Mr. Speaker, we put our money where our mouth is. And I, you know, when I read this resolution, the least the members opposite could have done is said, well, we don't agree with, you know, the amalgamations; we want to stick with those 1890 boundaries. But you would have think that they would have at least put in the fact that in this budget—the budget they voted against—that we've had an increase of 8.5 per cent for the city of Winnipeg and for municipalities. But of course they voted against that.

Now, I want to suggest to members opposite that if you really believe in a—what were the words they

used—a co-operative and respectful relationship in working with municipalities, it starts with the fiscal, because I want to put on the record that we've been very clear about our goal as a government, modernizing, you know, some of our expenditures. We had a bill earlier introduced, well worth debating and discussing on liquor and lotteries; we amalgamated them. And I want to put on the record, I think it's a good sign in terms of the modernizing. But, you know, we're moving on that. But one thing we're not doing is we're not moving ahead with an austerity, a tight budget, the kind of traumatic slashing that we've seen in other areas.

And I know the Leader of the Opposition talks, he describes their agenda as tough love. Well, Mr. Speaker, he was part of a government that was pretty big on the tough part and not a heck of a lot of love.

And I—what I look at is members opposite really are—you know, they're, you know, there's a show on TV. It's on reruns, I think, the '70s show, right? They're the '90s show. Every day for them is the '90s, you know. You know, we have the Leader of the Opposition saying—was it the greatest premier, I think, in history was Gary Filmon. You know, Gary Filmon, I been always—I ask the question again: What did he build in the 11 years he was in government? Well, the silence is deafening because the answer is nothing. And one thing he didn't build was the municipalities in this province. It was pretty lean, mean years for those municipalities.

And I can tell you when I meet with the municipalities, and I've met with municipal leaders throughout the province in many of the portfolios I've been honoured to have.

One thing that I've often heard from people, Mr. Speaker, is how arrogant the government of the 1990s was—the Conservative government, dealing with municipalities. Because, you know, they often sat down and attempted to raise issues, whether it was highway issues, whether it was issues in terms of drainage, whether it was many of the issues in terms of municipal infrastructure, and not only did they not get any funding, they got some of the most arrogant responses, this sort of we-know-best approach.

And I would suggest to members opposite that, you know, that approach lives on in their leader—the Leader of the Opposition, who, Mr. Speaker, and I—you know, I've got a list of quotes from him when he was in place. I remember when he was lecturing, you know, flood victims, not quite as, you know, much as

the premier who's-blamed people living in a flood plain, but it was very dismissive government.

So this bunch across the way, if they want to talk about the good old days of the 1990s, bring it on, because, you know, there are a lot of Manitobans including a lot of municipal leaders that remember that.

And I want to put on the record that, you know, I know that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell)-I'm not sure if you can particularly reference what he's wearing, but he's wearing his AMM jacket. You know, I guess he doesn't have a UMM tartan jacket-

An Honourable Member: It's in Brandon.

Mr. Ashton: -it's in Brandon-to wear. But, you know, I wonder, Mr. Speaker, how many people would question the amalgamation of the UMM and MAUM, the urban municipalities and the rural municipalities, because I can put on the record, as someone who's dealt with the municipalities on numerous issues, that was incredible foresight.

So the issue here, Mr. Speaker, is if we're talking about respectful and co-operative relations with Manitoba municipalities, I'll put on, you know, the record, I'll put forward, as we will as a government, our record in dealing with municipalities against their record any day because action and funding speaks louder than words.

And I also want to stress that, you know, members opposite, we've seen their agenda unfold in this-[*interjection*] Mr. Speaker, I already give them credit. I mean, you know, I think there is a broader 'agender', you know, probably a hidden 'agender'. But they give-they showed us the tip of the iceberg, you know, the 1 per cent cut. You know, that-the tough-love stuff. But I want to stress one thing: if anybody, if any municipal leader thinks that they're going to be better off with members opposite, they got another thing coming. Because when we brought in a budget that highlights the need for investments in infrastructure-and, by the way, that goes to infrastructure that is provincial, but it also goes to infrastructure that's municipal as well. One of the reasons we're bringing in the measures in terms of sales tax, 10 years' time limited, is because the Building Canada Fund.

So members opposite may bring in motions like this, a tactic in search of a strategy, but, Mr. Speaker, their history speaks a lot louder than words. They shed no respect. There was no co-operation with

municipalities-and I'm proud of the fact we're working in partnership and we're building this province, a growing province by working with our municipalities.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to speak to the Opposition Day motion today in this Legislature in Manitoba, May 15th, and it's brought forward by my colleague from Midland. And it says that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to begin working co-operatively and respectfully with Manitoba municipalities rather than in an adversarial and dictatorial fashion, and that's truly the nuts and bolts of the mismanagement of this government in-right there in that motion.

Mr. Speaker, we just heard the member from Thompson in his bombastic style in this Legislature speak about a bill that he was once the minister in charge of as well, and I noticed that he didn't do anything with it when he was there. But I think his bombast today was part of the result of last night's BC election. The minister was hoping to have an expansion of the orange crush across the province of BC, and instead it turned out to be a red-letter day in BC. And so, you know, it's discouraging to see the minister stand up and belittle municipalities like he just did-the Minister of Infrastructure in this province, and also the minister before him that spoke today on the government side, the member from Dawson Trails.

Mr. Speaker, the government brought forth a Bill 33, called it The Municipal Modernization Act (Municipal Amalgamations), forcing municipalities under a thousand to amalgamate. And I would say that perhaps it should have been called the municipal Jurassic Park act because this minister is dictatorially telling those of another level of government to do things that he can't do. He's telling them to amalgamate with their neighbours-and I know Maxine Chacun, the deputy mayor of Virden, asked him in Waskada if he would amalgamate with Saskatchewan on a parallel basis, and he didn't have much to say about that either. He won't-not being a part of the New West Partnership, he couldn't go there.

* (15:20)

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, we know that there's too many good things in Manitoba to look forward to in the future. They're not coming to fruition under this government, and one of them is to detract everyone's attention in municipal bodies across this

province away from the day-to-day operations of the bad debt that this government is leaving to Manitoba, of the huge deficit, the biggest deficit we've ever seen in this government, back-to-back deficits, that is costing Manitobans money. And he's detracting away from the day-to-day operations of municipalities, to force them into doing something to distract them away when they're already operating at great efficiencies.

Even their own policy statements say that there'll be no increases in benefits in municipal funding savings, Mr. Speaker. There'll be no savings and—in amalgamations of municipalities. Many of the municipalities have spoken out on that themselves.

I've had the opportunity of being at several of these meetings, Mr. Speaker, across the province of Manitoba, some 30 perhaps, where I've had direct contact with municipal leaders that are saying they cannot understand why, when they balance their books, the province can't, and yet it's the province that's forcing them to say that you have to amalgamate to be more efficient.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the fact that the minister's received hundreds of letters across the province from people saying that they don't want to have forced amalgamation—and don't get me wrong. Our side of the House sees nothing wrong with amalgamation, as long as it's voluntary, as long as it's voluntary. *[interjection]* I appreciate the voluntary support of the members in the government, that they finally woke up. They're looking at—they're applauding the fact that somebody wants to see voluntary amalgamations in this province, unlike, you know—and some of the other—like some of the other ministers in this government weren't consulted before this dictator came forward to make this happen.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would want to say that I put on the record that this is a very bad move by the government, and so I want to say, you know, was it a—and, of course, it goes on to be even worse, with the member from the Interlake saying that municipalities of less than a thousand people are clearly dysfunctional. And I want to ask the government if this was a response of his from an NDP caucus discussion or was he just freelancing again like he did when he said, it could be worse, speaking to his own flood people.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

There are no real improvements and cost savings from Bill 33, as I've mentioned earlier. There is no leadership in the effort to eliminate or address the issues of the rising infrastructure deficit by bringing in the PST or municipal amalgamations. There's no more money going into helping these municipalities with a program to make this happen. It's been a very—I was—attended the meeting in Waskada myself where the minister was—answered questions for two hours, and all he could come up with, well, we might consider moving this forced amalgamation away from June of '14 into June of '18 so that you can meet the next—but he hasn't even done that. He hasn't even done that in the bill, and he isn't about to bring forward any amendments to it, I assume. He would have had that chance.

I want to—my colleague, will—other colleagues will speak today on the Victoria Beach, the rural municipality of Victoria Beach, a very sound area of the province, but I want to say that, you know, with a—from a municipality with a \$380 million total assessed value base, maybe this government should listen to the needs of the people of Victoria Beach as well.

There are several mayors across—and reeves across the province of Manitoba that have spoken out, and I just want to read a few quotes into Hansard. The reeve of the RM of Park, man by the name of Craig Atkinson, said, it's a sad testimonial that the province can't even find the time to respond to our questions when we sent back in early January.

The reeve from Woodworth municipality in my own region, Denis Carter, said, they need to slow down and give us more time and stop bullying us.

That's—goes along with some of the other things we've seen. And I think what Mr. Carter means is this bill was put forward, this idea came forward in this House from a Throne Speech five days before the convention of AMM started last November, and yet there was no consultation with Doug Dobrowolski, the president of Manitoba municipalities, or any of the executive or executive directors of that association, and that is not a co-operative manner to act in this province, when you're trying to work with other levels of government. And so I certainly applaud Mr. Carter's comments and certainly agree with them.

A reeve from the RM of Whitewater, Blair Woods, said it'll be—I'll be all spring and summer at

meetings trying to figure this out. To meet this timeline and do this municipality justice, I literally won't farm this year.

Debbie McMechan, a councillor from the RM of Edward said, where we used to be 18 votes on the floor, we will now be six votes. It's going to change the ability of small municipalities to get their voice heard by the provincial and federal governments. I don't believe there's any cost savings. It's going to mean that we don't have representation at the local level. We are quite capable when we see a benefit to our ratepayers to join our other municipalities.

Wendy Davidson, the reeve of Archie said, we feel we have not considered the negative—we feel—pardon me. She said, you—we feel you have not considered the negative impact of amalgamation. The most crucial is the loss of local identity.

And there are others who have made comments on this, and one of the last that I'll read is Mr. Wayne Drummond, the reeve of the RM of Cameron, said, I've not seen the right reasons to do it, let alone the time frame to do it in.

And I know from the meeting with 180 people at it at Hartney in mid-January that my colleague from Midland and I attended that there was great—a great disservice being done in the province by this government, or you don't get 180 municipal leaders together on a night when it's 35 below and some of them had driven three quarters of the way up across the province to attend, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so I say that they, that my colleagues in the municipal level of government in my provincial constituency and all other constituencies in—constituencies here in Manitoba, are very, very concerned about this act. They're very concerned about the dictatorial manner in which it was brought forward, and they want to see the government back off. They want to see them at least give more time to this bill. And the dysfunctional comments of the member from Interlake are not what's clearly defining the process across Manitoba.

And I just want to say that it's—in closing that there is still a chance for this government to either bring forward amendments to this bill or to cancel it completely. And I know that the municipalities across this province would like to see them cancel it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): It's a pleasure to get up to speak in the House today on my

colleague's resolution and to put some words on the record.

I want to say that I appreciate very much the work of my honourable colleague, the member for Local Government, who, in putting forth The Municipal Modernization Act, has begun to resolve an issue that is over a half century old. Duff Roblin, the last leader of the Conservative Party that had any—*[interjection]*—Progressive Conservative Party that had any foresight and vision for this province—a half a century ago, Duff Roblin suggested that the province of Manitoba should have 40 municipalities.

And I—you know, I actually—you know, not to disagree to heartily with those who have been in our government putting this legislation together, but that's more in line with my thinking than what we are doing. We're doing a very modest modernization of the municipal structures in the province of Manitoba. But I can say that Mr. Roblin, as Premier, was a visionary. Those days are long gone from members opposite. The visionary bus has left for the Conservative Party. And Duff Roblin in the 1950s put a number of 40 on the number of municipalities that would be appropriate for this province, and I find myself agreeing with Mr. Roblin in that assessment.

I should also note, although he doesn't hold a candle to Mr. Roblin, I should also note that Mr. Filmon, the last leader of the Conservative Party that held office as Premier, in his swan song, once he was defeated by our government, he lamented the fact that one piece of unfinished business that he had as a Premier was municipal amalgamation. He lamented the fact that he didn't ever get around to that. But, you know, members opposite, the Leader of the Opposition today, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), was part of Mr. Filmon's government. I know that they were preoccupied with other pressing matters like selling the telephone company to themselves and vote rigging, but I—the leader of the Tory party during that time and the then-Premier, Mr. Filmon, did lament that they did not and he did not get around to municipal amalgamations.

* (15:30)

We don't shirk from that responsibility. We, as a government, accept the responsibility and accept the role of leadership in this province that's required to move our province and our economy forward very strongly. And, in fact, that is our record during our time in government: successive credit-rating increases from international bond-rating agencies,

international financial institutions, bringing the NHL back to Manitoba after members opposite drove it out during their time in office, building this province, you know, from north, south, east, to west. Wherever this province is in need of provincial support, we are there as the go-to level of government. And I'm very proud of that record of accomplishment by our government since our election.

So we are taking the task seriously of getting on with the work begun by Duff Roblin over a half a century ago; work that the members opposite are opposing today as they oppose everything else in this House. We are building on the work of Duff Roblin in modernizing municipal level of government in this province. As I said earlier, Mr. Roblin suggested 40 would be a good number, something that we have not approached. We've taken a more balanced approach to this question, respecting our working relationship with municipalities throughout the province.

I'm—I know that members opposite, although I can't speak for the memory or the capacity of the member for—*[interjection]* No, no, right here, this—I'm not even sure where these fellows exist across the province—the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese). I can't speak to his memory or his capacity when he was part of the AMM, but I'm standing here in the House today with my AMM sports jacket on and I did try and locate my UMM tartan jacket, but I think it's hanging in my closet in Brandon East. It's a beautiful Manitoba tartan from my times on—time on the Union of Manitoba Municipalities. I also served, as my colleague noted in speaking to this earlier—that I was also a member of the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities, succeeding Rick Borotsik when he became a federal Member of Parliament and undertaking the amalgamation of the UMM and the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities back in 1998 and '99. And that was a very, very useful exercise. It certainly was something that municipal leaders recognized as being important in having a common voice in dealing with the provincial government and dealing with the federal government.

I remember being at many meetings with the previous administration, some of whom still sit on the opposition benches today. But I remember being at a number of meetings with the members opposite when they held the reins of power in the province of Manitoba, and they would come back to us as municipal officials saying, well, you know, we hear what you're saying, but, you know, what's the other

guy say? What's MAUM say about this issue? Or, if I was there with my MAUM hat, it would be, what does UMM say about this issue? So it was a very convenient way for members opposite to do nothing for municipalities.

You know, MAUM would say one thing and UMM would say the other. Oftentimes we'd be saying the same thing, but it was a convenient diversionary tactic for members opposite to say, well, you know, you guys haven't sorted out your own house yet. You know, there's an urban municipality, there's a rural municipality association, you know, will you come back and talk to us when you've got your act together? And that was basically defining a municipal relationship with the previous provincial government, the government of Mr. Filmon and the government of the member for Whyte Ridge. They just would brush off municipalities, blow us off—they weren't supportive. The member, my colleague, spoke earlier in this regard, talking about the increase in municipal support from the Province of Manitoba since we've been in office. And, you know, between 2005 and 2013, annual provincial funding support for municipalities almost doubled, increasing by over \$200 million to \$415 million in Budget 2013—*[interjection]*—and that is a lot of respect. It is a lot of respect and it's also worth noting, and I think it's important to note that every single penny of that \$200 million was opposed in this House by members opposite, every single penny.

So it's very, very difficult to take seriously any sort of opposition to a bill that supports Duff Roblin's initiative from a half a century ago, supports municipal actions in their own House in terms of merging the urban and rural municipalities back in my time as a municipal leader. And, really, the—you don't really have to say too much more other than the—

An Honourable Member: Speechless.

Mr. Caldwell: I'm speechless. Thank you, I'm speechless. Are you—really—the level of disingenuousness that's involved here is really highlighted by the fact that every single penny of municipal support that has been increased by this government since coming into office has been opposed by members opposite. They opposed the creation of the MTS Centre downtown, which brought the Jets back to Winnipeg. They voted against every single penny and continue to vote against every single penny for roadways, bridges and

infrastructure in this province. While the members opposite are voting against funding for the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway, or in my own community the twinning of 1st Street and the twinning of 18th Street or the building of the Brandon Regional Health Centre or the building of the Assiniboine Community College or the building of schools or the affordable housing initiatives or the provision of increased police officers for the city of Brandon. Members opposite vote against every single penny they bring into this House on a regular basis and issues and resolutions that would undermine the economy in this province, that would undermine municipalities. They would undermine future prosperity. Members opposite are the doom-and-gloom party. It's the same old song every single day in this House. They opposed every single positive initiative that can build this province, and this is a continuation of the same.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): It's a pleasure for me to put a few words on the record with regard to the Opposition Day motion put forward by the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen).

In the municipalities that I represent—there are 25—and so I think I have a fairly good understanding of what amalgamation is about.

And I think that before I start my debate I just want to share a statement that was made by a reeve of the RM of Bolton, and I think it's a very important one that we should all be thinking about when we're putting pieces of legislation forward. To anyone who has ever lived in a rural area or has ties to a rural community, you are aware of the tremendous sense of pride residents have in their community. Volunteers not only run our fire departments, but also our community clubs and recreation facilities. Numerous families have relocated to municipalities such as ours to raise their families and they retire in a safe and welcoming environment. So I think that what we have to do is put into perspective exactly what is being presented here with this legislation.

I've talked to all of my municipalities on a regular basis. It's not an easy task because it—the distance is quite large from one end to the next in the municipality—or in the riding of Riding Mountain. But what I hear over and over again is that they have no issue with a government that would consult them and talk to them and help them work through a process of an amalgamation, but a voluntary

amalgamation, help them by providing them with the tools to move forward.

What this government has done is put municipalities into a very difficult situation. These municipalities balance their budgets. They complete their infrastructure needs within their community. They are the grassroots of those communities. They know what their ratepayers need and want, and now they're asking—this NDP government is asking these municipalities to put that aside and to do something that in their hearts they believe is the wrong thing to do.

* (15:40)

The reeve of Shellmouth-Boulton, Alvin Zimmer, has gone through an amalgamation. He knows the process; he knows how much time and effort it takes to gain the respect and the sense of inclusion from the municipality ratepayers; he knows that that takes time. He's asked for a meeting with the Minister responsible for Local Government and the staff would not allow Mr. Zimmer to have a meeting with the minister. And I thought, this is absolutely ridiculous; here's an individual who has gone through the process, understands the process, is part of two regional organizations that are so successful—SAVED; it's an organization that works with the Shellmouth Dam area, developing entrepreneurial ideas and projects in that area, making sure that the Assiniboine region is productive through tourism and agriculture, et cetera. He also is a part of the Assiniboine Park economic development group which has seven to eight municipalities involved in decision-making with regard to economic development.

So for the minister not to take his call and not to want to talk to this individual just shows the arrogance of this government and this government's desire to just bulldoze, go ahead, bully municipalities, tell them this is going to happen no matter what, but—and then walk away, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And to me, that is just—it's a serious issue and a very serious matter and will have a direct impact on every ratepayer and every citizen within our province.

To put forward a bill like this and say, it's going happen; it's going to happen before the next election, is actually pretty senseless. It's hurried, it's poorly planned and it's—it—we're unsure of what this really—what the government's real agenda is with regard to this amalgamation process.

There doesn't appear to be anybody that can provide a solid reason why they are forcing municipalities to amalgamate. And I know that he's heard that, you know, municipalities would look at this as a—as an option to do it voluntarily through their own means but provide some resource—and I'm going to tell the story: about four years ago I was asked by three municipalities what the process would be to amalgamate. So what did I do? I gave a call to a friend of mine and asked him if he would come out and meet with these municipalities, because he is—he worked in the government—municipal government. He also worked in the provincial government in rural development, or now, local government. He's taught university courses on municipal government and actually provides classes now to CAOs on that program.

And so I had him come out and meet with those municipalities and, actually, it was two years before the next municipal election. And he sat down and he talked to the councillors and to the reeves and said, you know, this is what you need to do and this is how you get buy in and this is what you need to look at with regard to your expenditures, et cetera.

But he says, but, you know, this is going to take a while. And I think you have to have meetings with your ratepayers, there has to be—you have to answer their questions, you know, determine how best this should proceed. And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he said two years—the—it's—it is not enough time to get this done, but if you put the plan into place and through the next two years and then into the next term, this could work out in a very positive way for everybody involved.

Well, Mr. Speaker—or Deputy Speaker, this appears to not have been the advice given to this Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux). What we've heard is that he's—his staff are unaware of how to answer questions that municipalities have with regard to amalgamation. We have situations where individuals have indicated that, you know, there's no transparency. We're not sure, you know, what they're expecting, and staff are very concerned about how they're going to be able to pull this off, because municipal staff do not sit and twiddle their thumbs. If anybody has been into a municipal office, they know that the staff work very hard and the off-loading that has occurred from this provincial government, with red tape and requirements—paperwork that is required by this provincial government by municipalities—they do not have the time to be working through this

process with the lack of support that we know this government has provided in this area.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I—you know, I'm very concerned that the RM of Shellmouth-Boulton have indicated clearly that they feel they're bullied. They've been through the process before. They'd be more than willing to give advice, but they're not being asked.

With regard to the RM of Strathclair and others, they do not see the benefits to amalgamation and have asked the question and have not heard back with regard to what those benefits would be. Because they have to sell it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They got to sell it to the ratepayers because the ratepayers are going to have to buy in. They're going to have to do what the municipalities are being directed to do. So make sure that they know what they're trying to sell.

The NDP can bring in legislation after the fact on so many things. They could break the law. Municipalities doesn't break the law. They follow The Municipal Act, and if they don't they get into trouble. This government continues to break the law and just continues to change legislation so that they can be in there with no consequences. And they talked about arrogance. Well, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're at that stage. They are there, you know.

I remember working as an economic development officer in the RM of Glenwood in the town of Souris, and I remember—and it was this government sent out one of their economic advisers and they wanted to know where we were planning to put a project, an agriculture project, and it was creating 25 to 30 jobs. So this individual comes out and he says, well, where's the project going to go? And I go, why is it your business? And he says, well, we would like to know because we don't want to lose it to Saskatchewan. I said, if I tell you where it's going, it will go to Saskatchewan. It's none of your business. We're not asking for any money. It's not—you know, and I just thought, oh, my gosh. This is a government that thinks that they have to have their fingers in everything, and then when they do get their fingers on something they destroy it.

You know, municipalities like the RM of Silver Creek have indicated that, you know, they're very concerned with regard to this decision of amalgamation. Amalgamation isn't required for municipalities—

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

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Before I begin my speech, I think I'll take some liberties and acknowledge that I'm joined in the gallery by my 13-year-old son, Dane, today. Welcome, son, and now that means that your name's recorded in Hansard, and I'll mention Kieran and Iris just so we can tell them they're in Hansard as well—and Joanne, of course—my wife, Joanne.

It's great to stand here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as somebody who's been through that amalgamation process as a former councillor for the town of Gimli. And, of course, my history of Gimli: I was born in Gimli hospital. I did spend three years in the community of Arborg before my parents moved back to Gimli. Now, for the longest time it took me a while to understand, as a young man growing up in Gimli, that I actually lived in the RM of Gimli. I always thought and I always identified with being from Gimli, period. But my parents bought a home on Colonization Road, right across the ditch from the RM of Gimli—or in the RM of Gimli, I should say. So most of my life growing up, I was actually from the RM, but I couldn't differentiate between the two because I always talked about Gimli as Gimli, and it took a while to understand that.

Now, it's something to have gone through that process, living in the community and being a part of a process that would see the communities merge and become one, and I have to tell you, it was a very interesting thing to be a part of. And I was really proud to be a part of that government that worked with the rural municipality because I actually lived in the town of Gimli and ran for council and was successful in that election and wore my town of Gimli hat to—as someone who lived most of his life in the rural municipality—to champion the cause of the amalgamation.

* (15:50)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know I've told members often enough about what pushed me into politics as a teacher growing up—or, pardon me, as a teacher working in Gimli High School, but there's another factor that I don't talk about much and that's the pull factor that pulled me into politics. And the pull factor was what I saw happening under the NDP government in the first term in office, from 1999 to 2003. And what I saw happening was a government that was prepared to work with our municipality in

so many ways. In fact, we know that working together with the RM and the town of Gimli was not actually an easy process, to work together to get our wastewater treatment project going, but we got it done. And I thought there's got to be a more efficient way. When we're all working for the same goal, there's got to be a more efficient way that we can do that. Perhaps, to have one government structure to make that come to fruition was a better way to do things.

The impact that this provincial government has had from 1999 to 2003, investing in rural Manitoba, has been very significant and, of course, shortly before the 2003 election we had a new school open in Gimli. We saw a lot of significant investment in the community, and the other thing that really impressed me was the willingness of the government to work with us, as municipal councillors, to help us go through this process and understand the amalgamation process and were very resource—very generous in their support for that particular process. So the resources that were provided to make it happen were—really important part of that exercise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So it's really interesting that we're having this discussion today and talking about respect for rural Manitoba, because we've demonstrated that time and time again, that we are a government that governs for all Manitobans.

And we've demonstrated that through the investments that we've made in health care, and in education, and that's another thing. Since '03, of course, we've opened up a brand new hospital in Gimli, we've added the kidney dialysis unit in Gimli, CancerCare hub, Telehealth in Riverton, all the things that we're doing to improve quality of life for rural Manitobans. We are certainly champions for rural Manitoba.

But we also recognize that some communities have some challenges, with respect to their ability to move forward. And it's rather curious, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I actually found a poster that a constituent had given me when I was first elected, when they recognized, you know, being a history teacher, they thought I'd see value in this poster.

Now, the poster I got was printed on the hundredth anniversary of the printing company, and it actually showed the municipal boundaries in Manitoba in the 1880s. And when you look at that poster, there are actually some municipalities whose boundaries have not changed at all in that poster.

And it was quite fascinating to look at this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because if you consider the other dynamics that have changed within those communities and we know that as a function of the last century we have seen significant change in population patterns. We know that some of these very small geographic entities that might have had larger populations when we were primarily a agriculture province, we know that there have been significant changes in population. And we know that there have been some challenges, in terms of economic growth and development in these communities. So this modernization act, and I stress modernization, is designed to make sure that these municipalities have the tools and resources that they need in a—in—economies of scale play a very important role in that exercise.

So I know that the members opposite have a bit of a problem with the word modernization. When we had the school modernization act, they challenged that. They didn't see the value of the amalgamation of school divisions and I certainly saw that value, because as a teacher I know the impact that it can have, to have a better resourced education system, where there's more emphasis put on the front-line services and you have a more streamlined ability to deliver those front-line services. So the school modernization act, something members opposite oppose, so I'm not surprised, quite frankly, that members opposite are opposing The Municipal Modernization Act.

And, I see a startling modus operandi with members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we know that there was a very important issue with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the report that came down as a result of the AJI and we know that it was still in cellophane and put way up high on the shelf, that they went through this process but decided to do nothing about it.

We know that there have been recommendations made and it was interesting because I know one of the members opposite was talking about the population figure of a thousand. Where do you get a thousand from? Well, I think the recommendation actually came under their administration, that a thousand was the number that we should look at, as far as a sustainable municipal entity is concerned. And they had those recommendations and I don't know where that report went. I suppose it was put very, very high up on the shelf beside the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and nothing was done.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to be on the side of the House that recognizes that change is inevitable, that we have to embrace change and we have to work together to make change happen in the best interests of our communities.

So having been through that process, yes, I understand some of the trepidation that people had about that process, but it was a very important exercise for the community of Gimli to undertake and I think we've definitely seen the benefits of that particular process.

And, yes, there are some people who still say, I'm from the town or I'm from the RM, but there are many people who say, I'm from Gimli, and they don't differentiate between living in the Camp Morton area where I've had a home and—living in Aspen Park where I also had a residence, or living in Shorepointe Village where I have a residence. They don't differentiate between those rural municipality boundaries and the town of Gimli.

The Town of Gimli needed to go through this process when they had the—believe it or not, the second largest population density in Manitoba, because you had 1,700 people crammed up a mile long and half a mile wide along Lake Winnipeg. And there were some infrastructure challenges that they needed to address, and the best way to address those infrastructure challenges was to take that boundary and erase that boundary and to embrace the community and work as a community towards the common goal of improving economic opportunities in our community, and it's something that the community has done very well.

And it makes sense to me now that I—I've always identified with coming from Gimli and I never really identified with having a boundary between the government ditch, as we used to call it growing up in Gimli, which was the line that divided the south beach where I spent 15 of my years in my parents' home—and we didn't differentiate between that boundary and the community of Gimli at large.

And I know that this is a very important undertaking for our government, it's very important for the best interests of the future economic growth and opportunity for the rural municipalities that are currently facing or have seen dramatic change over the course of the last 100 years.

And, again, those boundaries were in place over a hundred years ago. So members opposite should be looking at this initiative as one that is very essential

to the growth and well-being of these rural municipalities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am very proud to have been a part of that exercise in Gimli in—starting in 1999 and seeing it come to fruition in 2003, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this today.

Thank you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Very pleased to stand and talk about the resolution, and let's talk about that resolution. It's very clear, it says that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urged the provincial government to begin working co-operatively and respectfully with Manitoba municipalities, rather than in an 'adaversual' and 'dictorial' fashion.

And, you know—and the member from Gimli brings up some very interesting points. In fact, one that he said was very clear to him—population changes. Well, he was sent a letter by the Village of Dunnottar talking about population changes—they have the data. We're talking about communities that are close proximity to the city of Winnipeg. The member should very well know exactly what the population's going to do.

In fact, the last census—and he shall have a copy of this letter, it was addressed to him, the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux), the Manitoba municipalities, RM of St. Andrews and, of course, the ratepayers from the association that they represent.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a municipality there that has roughly 700 people according to the last census. Now, that census is outdated, as we know. In the municipal election they had over 1,700 'restured' voters; they're a population between two and four thousand yearly—they're not permanent residents, but they are people that want to have their voice. So, if this member truly does believe what he just put on the record, he would make sure that Dunnottar gets an exemption. And I'm asking the member to make sure he represents those folks that elected him.

We're going to make sure that whenever he goes out in the next election and tells those people that, yes, he did support them and he supports the legislation, Bill 33, the way it currently stands, he's going against everything that he just put on the record—if he truly believed it.

* (16:00)

Also he said very clearly, economic issues—economic issues. Another community, the town of Riverton—the town of Riverton got \$1.5 million from this Province for a project. What did they spend? Eight hundred thousand, there's economic issues.

What they—[interjection] Yes, yes. Check with the reeve. I talked with—or the mayor this morning. I talked to him. These people are very concerned about economic growth, economic issues. They are taxpayers in this province. They want to make sure that they don't spend any more than they have to. They were not consulted about this merger, this false act—the way the bill was presented to the municipalities was ridiculous. They announced it in the Throne Speech. They come out to AMM, and all of a sudden they're going to solve this thing, solve this thing with what they're going to do with this merger.

What they forgot to do was 'consold'—consult and work with—and that's exactly what this resolution says: work with the municipalities. Yes, there's some RMs that are totally in agreement with the merger. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) got up yesterday and talked about what a great job the people in Ochre River were doing. Well, that RM has 929 people. Is he going to force closure on that? We want to hear from the Minister of Finance—his own municipality that he said did a fantastic job. The First Minister got up in this House, said what a great job they're doing.

Now they're going to just take away that authority and say, sorry. You're not doing such a good job after all, even though you balance your budgets. We don't; we don't balance our budgets. We run deficit. But you have to, and you're going to listen to us because we're the big daddy. We're the big daddy that knows best.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that whenever we look at legislation changes we have to make sure—we have to make sure—that we do the consultation to make sure we do the right thing. We're not doing the right thing with this legislation. So that's why we brought this resolution forward in order to ensure—in order to ensure—that we do have consultation. That's what it says. Will you do that? We're asking you to support this resolution. I cannot see any member of that House—any member of that House—that is opposed to consultation and not a 'dictorial' fashion. Everybody in the House, on this side of the House, must agree with it. If they vote against it, I'll be totally surprised—totally surprised.

What we expect from government is to make sure we have the right policies that benefit all Manitobans. And what we found from the members—some of the members' comments over on that side—that they kind of agree with what we're saying. And I know the member from Interlake don't agree with us because he thinks all municipalities are totally dysfunctional. In fact, he likes to call and threaten them—call and threaten them—and say, you're not going to get no more funding; you're going to be towed into line and you're not going to be doing any more of this, the flood mitigation and protesting because we're not going to put up with that. So I'll make sure that nothing like that happens.

But don't balance your budget because our government don't balance them anyway, but we will. We will in the future, down the road we will. But in the meantime you're still totally dysfunctional. But we're okay even though we don't make sense.

So anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have other things I want to put on the record, but I know we are very limited. We only have a half an hour left to debate on this bill, and I know there's some umber members—in fact, I know the member from St. Norbert was talking just a little bit ago, I know he wants to get up, put a few things on the record as well. So with that I'll end my comments at this point.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'd like to put a few words on the record today in regards to this Opposition Day motion brought on from our member from Midland.

Just to repeat exactly what we're sort of chatting about today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to begin working co-operatively and respectfully with Manitoba municipalities rather than in adversarial and dictatorial fashion.

So what we mean here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that this government brought in the bill, Bill 33, without any consultation. We're not necessarily saying that we're—as the member from Arthur-Virden mentioned earlier on in his speech—we're not saying that we're against amalgamation. The fact is is that it's the way they went about it. In the Throne Speech in the fall, the Throne Speech was delivered and during that speech that's when they decided to announce that they were going to be

amalgamating all municipalities with a population under a thousand.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So today I'm going to put a few words on the record, in regards to two situations in my constituency, one in regards to a municipality that does not want to amalgamate and a couple municipalities that do want to amalgamate.

So the first one I'm going to chat about is the RM of Victoria Beach. Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, I had asked the Minister for Local Government when he had actually sat down and met with the RM of Victoria Beach, because just on Monday the Minister for Local Government mentioned that he believed in municipalities and that him and his department work hard with them and consult with them on a daily basis. Now, I know that the RM of Victoria Beach is being forced into amalgamation and basically there's not really any reason for it. They're being asked to amalgamate with the fact that they have roughly 400 permanent residents, and if you take—if you count the seasonal residents, they're up to over 2,000, closer to 2,200.

So this Bill 33 that the minister had brought forward for first reading basically talks—speaks volumes to the fact that the member from Midland put on the record today, and also from Monday, it shows the level of disrespect, bullying, hidden agendas and now consequences that local municipal governments deserve, and that they're not to be treated with this amount of disrespect, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier, the RM of Victoria Beach, 2,200 ratepayers, they want a voice, Mr. Speaker. I have received many, many, many emails directed to myself and also cc'd to the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) and also to the Premier (Mr. Selinger), asking that their voices do get heard, and I'm strongly encouraging the government of the day to listen to those hard-working Manitobans because a lot of those Manitobans that are sending the emails are residents and voters within the city of Winnipeg, in some of the NDP ridings as well. So, again, they should be listening to the grassroots and the people who elect them.

Now, another couple comments I want to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the RM of Victoria Beach is self-sufficient. Matter of fact, in the Winnipeg Free Press, the reeve, Tom Farrell, said, and I quote, the key to this whole thing is that

Victoria Beach has never been on a—has never been a drain on anything that the province does. End quote.

In fact, the total assessed value of the RM of Victoria Beach is more than \$380 million. They are self-sufficient; they have their own police service, EMO, golf course and their firefighting as well. So to ask a RM with such a fantastic background to amalgamate with another RM in the local area, without any consultation or without sitting down with them, is an absolute insult, Mr. Speaker.

Now, just earlier this week, as well, there was a ice jam up at the RM of Ochre River, and I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had showed up there for a photo op, and they had mentioned, over and over again, that the RM was doing a great job handling the ice disaster, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, the thing is, they did a fantastic job. They are an RM with a population of 929 and so one of the questions are going to be, and I guess the minister will answer this I'm sure in the next few days, whether Ochre River—the RM of Ochre River's going to be asked to amalgamate as well. So, even though they're doing a fantastic job, Mr. Speaker, they're going to be asked to amalgamate.

*(16:10)

Now, the other RM—couple RMs in my constituency, the RM of Lac du Bonnet and the Town of Lac du Bonnet, have said on more than one occasion and, matter of fact, they announced it at the AMM, that they're more than willing to amalgamate. So they stood up and asked the Minister for Local Government, we're willing to amalgamate, will you help us with this process? And the minister stood there and said, yes, we will. So, if we have one—a couple—a pair of municipalities that want to amalgamate, we have one municipality that does not want to amalgamate, why would the department and the Minister for Local Government not put their time and effort into the couple RMs that actually want to amalgamate? Now, that time and effort can absolutely be better used with those two RMs as opposed to spending all that time arguing and trying to force amalgamation on an RM that absolutely doesn't want to.

So, again, with today's Opposition Day motion from the member from Midland, basically what we're asking is work with the municipalities, put your resources there, lay off Victoria Beach, concentrate on Lac du Bonnet, the RM and the Town.

And I thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): A pleasure to rise today and debate Opposition Day motion.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by a quick definition of bullying, and bullying can be defined as a blustering, quarrelsome, overbearing person who habitually badgers and intimidates smaller or weaker people. And, quite frankly, here we have a Big Brother government, NDP government, that believes they know better than any other municipal government here in the province of Manitoba.

Now, we've got the minister—the minister of amalgamation here is driving the boat on this particular piece of legislation, and we have to look for motive, Mr. Speaker. Now, this same minister was the minister that was around for the amalgamation of school boards around the province of Manitoba, and many of us will know the consequences of the amalgamation process when the minister was at the helm at that point in time. That did not save ratepayers and people around the province of Manitoba money. In fact, I would put forth that, in fact, that cost us as ratepayers and taxpayers a lot of money here in Manitoba. So to say that the minister is saying that he's going to save us as ratepayers money, I would certainly put forward that that is probably furthest from the truth.

Now, clearly, municipalities and communities in my riding are very concerned about the idea of forced amalgamation. Now we've had some successful amalgamations. I look back at the municipality of Killarney-Turtle Mountain who went through the process; that was a decision that they went in with an open mind. They actually voted on the process. They had an election, decided this was going to be the proper thing to do. They worked through that process. That process took them a—five or six years before they—everybody was comfortable with the amalgamation process because there was a lot of details to work out.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here we have government that's going to be forcing amalgamation down the throats of municipalities in the course of a matter of less than two years. In fact, what they're saying to municipalities is—the government is saying, sign now and work it out later—sign now and work it out later. Now, that is not a realistic approach to moving forward. Clearly, they're—it's they're forcing the hand of municipalities.

Now, not only do municipalities not have a say in terms of what the amalgamation process is going to look like and how—who is going to be amalgamating with who, but I'm getting calls from ratepayers, you know, the constituents of various municipalities, who are saying their government is forcing their hand to amalgamate, and I as a ratepayer have no say in this thing, Mr. Speaker. And that's the fear in this thing that's being driven by the NDP government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, not long ago I was out in Brandon at the AMM convention and the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) was there to speak to municipalities and municipal governments. And he wasn't there to listen. He was there to tell municipalities his approach on how this thing was going to work. In fact, he drew the parallel of amalgamation and forced amalgamation. The parallel, he said, and he laid it out very clear: It's just like winter. He said winter is going to come and so is amalgamation. There is no discussion at that point in time. He is clearly saying to municipalities that this is going to happen.

Now, municipalities have been very good stewards over the years. They're forced to balance their budgets every year, and they do that, and they do that, unlike the Province here, and the NDP government, Mr. Speaker, who have time and time again missed their budgets. It's very clear there's a difference between NDP provincial governments and local municipalities. In fact, Doug Dobrowolski, who's the president of AMM, said amalgamation wasn't even on the AMM radar until two days before last fall's Throne Speech, and, consequently, there was also the AMM conference just a week or two following the Throne Speech.

So, Mr. Speaker, you have to wonder what the motive is behind the amalgamation and the forced amalgamation of municipalities. What is the government trying to prove?

And clearly, we know the NDP are very good when there's hot water around. They're always looking for a diversion. They're looking for a diversion to distract people from the real problems that are out there in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Now, and so, when the Association of Manitoba Municipalities come together, they've got a lot of issues they want to debate, you know, infrastructure, financial issues. All kinds of issues they want to debate, but the NDP government has got them so distracted with the talk of amalgamation, it's hard to

have a very open and honest debate about all those other issues that are out there.

You know, with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to close my comments and thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss this resolution today.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to put some comments on the record on the Opposition Day motion by the member from Midland. I've been getting a number of calls lately from people that actually have cottages in Victoria Beach, and a lot of people are now starting to become much more aware of what the government is doing and they are very disturbed in what they are hearing.

And, Mr. Speaker, last year, in the fall, when I attended AMM, I was sitting with a rural municipality, and we had been in discussion about what the government was doing around this forced amalgamation of municipalities, and I have to say that the people around the table who were from a rural municipality were absolutely stunned to find out what the government was doing.

It came out of the blue. There was no consultation. Nobody was sure what was happening. People were wondering if there was a hidden agenda by the government. People couldn't understand the pigheadedness of this government. In their position, and without warning, they put this onto municipalities throughout Manitoba.

And it was very, very disturbing to them and to others when we all found out what the government was doing with this dictatorial approach to how they were managing this issue. The fact that they were going out there and completely catching people off guard is really something that I think a lot of people felt very disturbed about and very insulted.

And then to hear some of the comments that have been coming from the government following that is also disturbing. When we hear the Minister of Local Government taking such a tough stand in what he's doing, and indicating that amalgamations are happening, that's it, there's no further discussion on it. His tone is really one of challenge and certainly that of a dictatorial approach in how they are handling municipalities.

But something else happened last week, Mr. Speaker, which is giving us a bigger indication of how more and more people in Manitoba are being treated by this government. There was a major conference last week in Winnipeg, and it was a think

tank conference put on by the Business Council, and a lot of very, very important entrepreneurs, and business people, and health officials, and education officials and poverty advocates were at this event.

* (16:20)

And what came out in session after session was comments from the public about the antagonistic approach that this government is taking with all of them in how they do business. I was actually surprised to hear the extent of the feelings of all of those people that they thought that this government was antagonistic in how they were approaching a lot of things that they were now doing.

A number of the big, big businesses here in Manitoba have indicated that this government is charging ahead with no consultation and not looking at how it affects anybody. As long as it's fitting their agenda, they are in their own arrogant way now moving forward without consultation, without input and with a high degree of arrogance. I think that is showing, Mr. Speaker, that this is a government that has been around too long. They're long in the tooth. They now have a bully approach, and they are not doing what is in the best interest of Manitobans.

I just want to indicate that the way they're moving ahead with Victoria Beach is really upsetting a number of people, especially related to that particular area of Victoria Beach, and it's insulting. And I'm sure when more and more cottagers and people that live in Victoria Beach hear what the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) said that, and I quote: Municipalities with less than a thousand people are clearly dysfunctional. End quote. I think a lot of these Manitobans are going to be very upset by what that member has to say about their particular municipality.

The RM of Victoria Beach is really a crown jewel in this province, and, in fact, people would say probably in Canada, and there is no other place like that in Canada. It is very special, and the people there are fiercely, fiercely protective of that ambience that they have created and worked very hard to maintain. And then to have the member for Interlake, the NDP member from Interlake, say that they are dysfunctional when they are probably one of the most successful RMs in Manitoba in terms of accountability and financial management, is clearly an insult to these people. And I would indicate that certainly more and more people are going to hear what this government has to say about Victoria Beach and others in terms of this forced

amalgamation, and I think that we should encourage the government to take a far different approach.

Forced amalgamation is not the way to go. There was a more respectful way to do this. But this government for some reason has chosen not to respect Manitobans once again in another issue that is very important to people.

So I would encourage this government to have a second look at it, and I certainly support the amendment—or the Opposition Day motion put forward by my colleague.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment briefly on this resolution.

The way the government has approached this has not respected municipalities. They have made amalgamation mandatory. They have indicated that the only thing that is important about a municipality is that it's got a thousand people without respect to the geography, without respect to the character of the municipality and the nature of the municipality, and this is not the way that the government should approach municipalities.

It is interesting that we have an NDP government which really doesn't care about the little guy, about the little municipality, even though it may be distinct, even though it may be—have characteristics which stand out and reasons that you should have a distinct municipality, that this is a government which is only concerned about the big guys, the big municipalities, doesn't care a hoot about the small guys. And that's an interesting turn of events, given that this government and characteristically an NDP government would've—one would've thought would be more concerned about the small guys.

But they certainly are not, and this has actually been, if you look carefully, something which has been a trend with this particular government. But certainly the geography is important. The extent of the size of a municipality, the location of a municipality, geography of how large an area you can cover effectively, where you have to put the services, graders and so on in a municipality to be cost effective and how you have to organize is this. This is not important. The only thing that is important is that you're a big municipality—a big guy—and if you're a small guy, this government doesn't care about you. And I think that's wrong, and that's what I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that this government should've paid more attention to the little

guys and to the unique characteristics of some of the municipalities and to the geography. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise and put a few words on the record today about this forced amalgamation and certainly speak to this Opposition Day motion by my good colleague from Midland.

What we've had in—and the comments that we've had from some of the members opposite and the member from the Interlake with the comment about the municipalities being dysfunctional, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the NDP have many, many dysfunctional MLAs. They went into the last election going door-to-door being complete strangers to the truth—complete strangers to the truth. So, if you don't tell them the truth at the door, would that be considered a lie? Well, I prefer to call it a stranger to the truth.

Mr. Speaker, they proposed a lot of things that they wouldn't do. They didn't say, however, that they would force an amalgamation on another level of government who have balanced their books for in excess of 135 years. And, when I look across this great room that we're here today, and I see a government that has not been able to balance their books. For 12, 13, 14 years, they haven't been able to balance their books. It's a shame; it's a crying shame. They don't believe in democracy; they don't believe in that at all, but what they want to do is they want to ram a forced amalgamation down the throats of law-abiding municipalities—the grassroots government in this province—the very people that built this province.

And they want to force them, and they say it's because it's going to save them money. What would they know about saving money? What would they know? They're nothing but a tax-and-spend government.

But let's just see what one of my constituents has to say. One of the towns in my constituency says: There's no good response from the minister of government. Something I'd like to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, is that this minister always insisted we would retain policing during the listening-to-the-municipality stage of progress—that's process. However, in this new legislation proposed, we will lose our municipal policing within three years, and that's indicated in The Municipal Modernization Act (Municipal Amalgamations).

That's the minister—is telling the municipalities one thing and doing another. It's so easy—it's so easy—for the NDP to walk up to the people, the public, and say one thing and do exactly the opposite. They find it so simple to mislead the public, not make the hard decisions.

Leave the people alone that are the law-abiding citizens in this province. It is not only a huge loss to our residents, not only for the peace of mind of safety, but also in cost.

Currently, we pay \$110,000 for policing. If we were to go to the RCMP, we would be looking at numbers at a minimum of \$175,000. That's a cost saving; that's NDP math. It's not acceptable. It's not acceptable in rural Manitoba. It's not acceptable in urban Manitoba. This would be a cost to our residents, not the new municipality at large. It won't be to the new large municipality; it will be to the town of Plum Coulee, Mr. Speaker. Why, if this was such an important part of their agenda going forward, and that would be plan—what would that be—plan—three-year plan—five-year plan—

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 28(14) I must interrupt the debate to put the question on the motion of the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Would you summon the members for a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order. Order, please. The question before the House is the motion by the honourable member for Midland.

Does the House wish to have the question put back to the House?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a yes.

The motion is

THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to begin working co-operatively and respectfully with Manitoba municipalities rather than in an adversarial and dictatorial fashion.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Maguire, Mitchelson, Pallister, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Nays

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 19, Nays 32

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 15, 2013

CONTENTS

| ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS | | Speaker's Ruling | |
|--|------|--|------|
| Introduction of Bills | | Reid | 1287 |
| Bill 40–The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act Rondeau | 1277 | Members' Statements | |
| Bill 43–The Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act and Liquor and Gaming Control Act Chomiak | 1277 | Student Art Show in Kirkfield Park Blady | 1288 |
| Petitions | | Koushkoupayh Days Helwer | 1288 |
| Municipal Amalgamations–Reversal Rowat | 1278 | SCE Lifeworks Crothers | 1289 |
| Schuler | 1278 | Health Care Shortages in Rural Manitoba Maguire | 1289 |
| Oral Questions | | PST Increase–Referendum Forum Gerrard | 1290 |
| Manitoba Hydro Pallister; Selinger | 1279 | | |
| Schuler; Chomiak | 1280 | | |
| Schuler; Selinger | 1280 | | |
| PST Increase | | | |
| Driedger; Selinger | 1281 | | |
| Driedger; Struthers | 1281 | | |
| Graydon; Struthers | 1282 | | |
| Children in Care Rowat; Howard | 1283 | | |
| Taxpayer Protection Act Pallister; Selinger | 1284 | | |
| CentrePort Canada Gerrard; Selinger | 1285 | | |
| City of Winnipeg Gaudreau; Lemieux | 1286 | | |
| Victoria Beach Ewasko; Lemieux | 1287 | | |
| | | ORDERS OF THE DAY | |
| | | GOVERNMENT BUSINESS | |
| | | Opposition Day Motion | |
| | | Pedersen | 1291 |
| | | Lemieux | 1292 |
| | | Briese | 1294 |
| | | Ashton | 1296 |
| | | Maguire | 1298 |
| | | Caldwell | 1300 |
| | | Rowat | 1302 |
| | | Bjornson | 1304 |
| | | Eichler | 1306 |
| | | Ewasko | 1307 |
| | | Cullen | 1308 |
| | | Driedger | 1309 |
| | | Gerrard | 1310 |
| | | Graydon | 1311 |

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

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>