

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

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 211—The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), that Bill 211, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ewasko: Bill 20—[interjection] Bill 211, thank you. This bill governs the collection, use, disclosure and destruction of personal information by organizations in the private sector. It also establishes a duty for those organizations to notify individuals who may be affected when the personal information the organization has collected is lost, stolen or compromised, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill 210—The Seniors' Rights Act

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I move, seconded by the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), that Bill 210, The Seniors' Rights Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: It's my pleasure to introduce this bill, and this bill establishes a bill of rights for Manitoba's seniors. Certainly, the House would recognize the important role that Manitoba seniors play in our economy, and this bill will make sure that our seniors are entitled to the social and economic security that is so well deserved. 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—

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by 1 per cent without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by T. Kauenhofen, C. Kauenhofen, G. Unger and many others.

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

Further petitions?

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And this is the reason for this petition:

The St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure and the loss of local access to Lake Manitoba, as well as untold harm to the ecosystem and wildlife in the region.

The park's closure is having a negative impact in many areas, including disruptions to the local

tourism, hunting and fishing operations, diminished economic and employment opportunities and the potential loss of the local store and decrease in property value.

Local residents and visitors alike want St. Ambroise provincial park to be reopened as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider repairing St. Ambroise provincial park and its access points to their pre-flood conditions so the park can be reopened for the 2013 season or earlier if possible.

This petition is signed by D. Boddy, A. Miller and C. Miller and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by P. Zillman, A. Zusla, S. Desjardins and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities 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 an 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.

And this petition is signed by A. Dowhaniuk, A. Holewarhl, I. Mohr and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Manitoba–Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent Needs For and Alternatives To review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition has been signed by V. Penner, B. Schwittek and D. Braun and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase–Referendum

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this is signed by K. Singh Sidhu, G. Archambault, K. Fargey and many others.

*(13:40)

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase in the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this petition is signed by K. Loepp, E. Colem, B. Oliver and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Municipal Amalgamations–Reversal

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities 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 an 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. Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect.

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 A. Skardal, W. Stewart and M. McLaren.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government not to raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

Submitted on behalf of N. Vander Kooy, T. Johnson, F. Hurlburt and many other fine Manitobans.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

In the last five years, competition from alternate energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent

Needs For and Alternatives To review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by D. Penner, W. Hamm, D. Harder and many, many others.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities 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 an 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 the local—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 M. McRae, D. Baily, J. Coutu and more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities which—with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

(2) 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.

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

(4) 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 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

Signed by B. Tullis, D. Tullis, E. Bartok and many other Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legal required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

And (4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this is signed by C. Linnebach, M. de Guzman, M. Martin and many other Manitobans. Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by P. Wurch, A. Whurch, R. Munro and many, many other Manitobans.

* (13:50)

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

(4) 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:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by S. Kennedy, J.D. Dauer, D. Barkley and others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Justice Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 2013-2014 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the following report: Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives supplementary information for legislation review for 2013-2014 Departmental Expenditure Estimates.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Shady Oak Christian School 13 grades 6 to 9 students under the direction of Harold Klassen. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Increases

Fiscal Management Ranking

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Gary Doer used to say he wasn't elected to raise taxes, but this Premier clearly thinks that he was. The question, of course, is why?

Just like his no-tax promise, his story seems to change almost daily. It began with the entreaty to do

flood prevention work, but there was no plan there. It moved on to infrastructure, but there's no plan there either. And then it moved to schools, but that was an old plan.

So, this Premier and government have been ranked, by a national ranking service that should know, bottom of the barrel in terms of their fiscal management ability, Mr. Speaker, largely because they cannot get their spending under control, and their high-spending problem has become Manitoba's high-tax problem. This ranking came out before the last budget, which has a half-billion-dollar deficit and a PST hike.

So my question for the Premier is: Where does he predict he'll rank this year?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, this is what I will predict, that we will be one of the most affordable jurisdictions in Canada to live in this year, next year, the year after and every year after that.

And I know the member's been away for a while, but I have to say, Mr. Speaker, a family of four in Manitoba earning \$60,000 pays \$2,400 less, 28 per cent less, than when the member opposite was in office.

The ranking is very clear. Cost of living is more affordable in Manitoba now than when he was in office before.

Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Pallister: Well, Back to the Future is a pretty interesting movie, Mr. Speaker, but it was out quite a while ago, and that Marty McFly routine is wearing pretty thin for Manitobans who are faced with challenges that the Premier is unaware of at 35,000 feet.

Now, these are real people with real challenges living in today's world and they deserve a Premier who—and a government that see the challenges as real today. The impact on gas tax hikes, hydro, life insurance, haircuts, car registration, home insurance is very real. That was last year's broadening of the GST. This year the government proposes to deepen a broadened PST, and that means \$1,600 less in every household in this province.

Now, fundamentally, I'd like the Premier to simply admit to the Manitobans he seems to be willing to ignore that their challenges are real and that he believes that their money is better in his hands than it is in their hands.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, if the member were correct, which he is not, at \$1,600 being the cost to a family for a point in PST, they would have to spend \$160,000 a year. Very few people in this room will be making that kind of expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, this budget followed through on something that we promised Manitobans, the Mental Health Crisis Response Centre, and I was pleased to be there with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) today and the Minister of Culture and Heritage when we opened up the first, unique Mental Health Crisis Response Centre in Canada, in the country. This facility will provide emergency, 24-7 service to people in mental health crises in our community, first of its kind in Canada, state-of-the-art services, broad support for people to stay in the community and to meet their needs in the community. This is the kind of thing we have done in our budget—

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

Taxpayer Right to Vote

Mr. Pallister: Well, you know, \$1,600 less in each household in this province over the last two budgets is a reality Manitobans have to deal with. I wish, simply wish, and I know they wish, that the Premier would deal with the same reality, but he will not. He has no plan, and that increasing insecurity Manitobans feel is something that I understand the member opposite feels as well, but he feels it in a different way, and he isn't reacting intelligently to it.

And the reality is Gary Doer used to say he wasn't elected to raise taxes, but neither was the Premier elected to raise taxes. In fact, he promised he would not, and now he wants to go further and say he's going to tear up the taxpayer protection act. Well, ask Manitobans who've got \$1,600 less if they feel confident in a future where the Premier no longer has to go to them and ask about major tax increases and they'll tell you, no, we're worried, we're concerned.

So I want the Premier to give them a little bit of confidence today and promise them that he won't make any more major tax hikes a reality for Manitoba families without them having a right to vote on it.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, a Manitoba family at \$60,000 and a family of four pays \$2,400 less, and we are providing universal health-care services.

The biggest threat to the bottom line of a Manitoba family is the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition on radio this morning. He said a two-tier health-care system is a delivery system we need here in Manitoba.

We reject that, Mr. Speaker. His attempt to have a two-tier health-care system will be what puts Manitoba families at risk for health care and for costs. We will never do that. They will.

PST Increase Infrastructure Projects

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the NDP government said that they need the PST increase for important infrastructure projects, yet they siphoned off \$320 million of infrastructure money from last year's budget and they used it for their pet projects. That's 19 per cent of projects which were delayed or cancelled. That is one in five projects.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) again: Where did he spend that money? Because he certainly didn't spend it on infrastructure. Where did the \$320 million go?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): One of the places it went was to the Mental Health Crisis Response Centre that we opened up in Winnipeg today, the first-of-its-kind centre in Canada, Mr. Speaker—first-of-its-kind centre in Canada—Mental Health Crisis Response Centre. It will divert up to 10,000 people from having to go to emergency rooms in the province of Manitoba. It will provide them a team of professionals that will respond to their mental health crisis needs in a fashion not seen anywhere else in the country. This is the kind of health innovation that will make a real difference to Manitoba lives.

What won't make a difference is what the Leader of the Opposition and the critic for Finance are saying: A two-tier health-care system is a system we need in Manitoba. That is not the case.

* (14:00)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government lied to Manitobans in the last election. This Minister of Finance has broken the law, and he's going to do so again on July 1st, yet they stand here and they say, trust us, we're going to tell you where we spend the PST money after we spend it.

They have refused, Mr. Speaker, to tell us up front where they are going to spend that money.

So Manitobans want to know now, today, up front: Where is the list for where this NDP government intends to spend the PST money?

Mr. Selinger: Sterling example that we've just seen this morning, a Mental Health Crisis Response Centre, health innovation allowing us to deliver universal health care in this province.

The members opposite, Mr. Speaker, in the last election said they would preserve universal health-care centre in the province of Manitoba and, indeed, across the country. The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), said a two-tier health-care system is a delivery system we need in Manitoba. That is the biggest broken promise in this Legislature in the history of the province.

Mrs. Driedger: That's pretty rich coming from the expert on broken promises.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government cannot be trusted. The Minister of Finance says that he will guarantee that the PST money is going to be spent on infrastructure, yet \$320 million of last year's infrastructure money disappeared. Their chief of staff has declared that the PST hike is the start of the next election. Well, it's becoming clear that the PST hike is going into an NDP pre-election slush fund.

So will they provide today the list? Where do they intend to spend that PST money? Provide us a list up front. Show us today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I think Manitobans will greatly resent the characterization of the priorities we're addressing in this budget.

The Grace Hospital's building a new access centre, free cancer-care drugs to Manitobans who are in their most vulnerable stage, a Mental Health Crisis Response Centre, a new school in Sage Creek, a new school in the St. Norbert area, a new daycare centre in Brandon at George Fitton School, all of these things are meeting the priorities of Manitobans. Capital spending, new roads in Manitoba, flood protection in Manitoba for the people in the Assiniboine valley and along Lake St. Martin.

It's very clear, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite want two-tier health care—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. First Minister's time's expired. [*interjection*] Order, please.

I'd like all honourable members to reflect on the fact that we have a lot of young guests with us here this morning from schools, again, as I've said before,

perhaps visiting us for the first time. I'm sure honourable members would want to leave a good impression for these folks that when they go back into their communities they will be able to reflect on what they have heard and seen occur in our Chamber here today.

So I'm asking all honourable members, please keep the level down a little bit and allow our guests to enjoy the experience as well.

The honourable member for Emerson, I believe, has a question.

PST Increase Impact on Small Business

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and that was from the king of broken promises we just heard.

Mr. Speaker, the spendP's plan to raise the PST has small businesses at a disadvantage. Businesses are trying to remain competitive with other jurisdictions, and they simply cannot. Altona Mobile Homes is one of those businesses. More PST means less people buying homes, both from Manitoba and across the country. People are now looking for homes in United States and in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to pay itself with a vote tax. When will they realize that small businesses like Altona Mobile Homes cannot compete thanks to their—the excessive spendP taxation?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker—well, first of all, we don't have the PST on new homes; that won't impact the very company that this member brings forward.

Mr. Speaker, what would really impact small business in this province is the fact that we moved from 8 per cent down to zero in terms of the business tax that small businesses pay, something that he himself voted against.

Mr. Speaker, let's just think about what a two-tier health-care system would do to small business in this community—in this province. It would increase their costs just like you see in the US of A. This is not the party on this side—

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

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the minister doesn't know what the PST does go on.

Mr. Speaker, the spenDP doesn't realize that their excessive spending leads to tough decisions for small businesses and for individuals trying to help their families. Domo Gas Mart, owned and operated by Abe Giesbrecht, sells gas to families in Altona, and in order to get to work and to drive their children to activities, families need to buy the gas. Seven miles down the road, however, gas is a dollar cheaper a gallon. This government's spending addiction is forcing Manitobans to shop in the United States.

What will the minister's response be to Abe Giesbrecht's concerns?

Mr. Struthers: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, a two-tiered system of health would be—would impact incredibly the bottom line of Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker, so would the expansion of the PST to harmonize with the—harmonized sales tax, something else members opposite have argued for.

Mr. Speaker, we live in one of the most affordable provinces in the country. We are—have an affordable province because our gas taxes are amongst the lowest. We have an affordable province because our Autopac rates are the lowest. We have an affordable province in which to live because we have the lowest hydro rates.

Mr. Speaker, this is the government on this side of the House that has said, very clearly, that we guarantee we're going to have the lowest bundle of home heating and hydro—

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

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, 80 per cent of the small businesses say that they wouldn't afford—or wouldn't want anyone to develop in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, none of the members opposite have any experience in trying to run a business. They don't understand how remaining competitive is vital to the future of Manitoba's economy.

Sawatzky's Furniture in Altona has been part of a community for years. Their business, however, is hampered by the ability to go shopping in United States and Saskatchewan for cheaper furniture.

Mr. Speaker, can the government admit that the PST increase will hurt businesses like Sawatzky's Furniture and families, and will they call a referendum and let the people decide whether they want a PST hike?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, moving from 8 per cent, which was the percentage when the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) was in government, moving from 8 per cent down to zero per cent doesn't make us less competitive. That, for the edification of members opposite, makes us more competitive. And if you're a small business, that works for you.

If you're a larger business—when the member for Fort Whyte was in government, larger businesses were taxed at a 17 per cent rate. Under us, they've gone to 12 per cent. That's not less competitive. That's making our businesses more competitive.

And they've hired people to work in those businesses, because our employment level is down, Mr. Speaker. That's all—

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

Conference Board of Canada Report Accessibility Ranking

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, Bonnie Guagliardo fell at home. She sustained a traumatic head injury and she went to the right place, a hospital emergency room. And she was failed.

The Conference Board of Canada has just released a report, and it gives Manitoba a failing grade too. We learn that Manitoba fails when it comes to accessibility in the health-care system. Manitoba scored the lowest mark possible, the only D out of all the provinces when it be—came to accessibility in health care.

Bonnie Guagliardo died because she couldn't access the care she needed under this NDP government.

Can the minister explain: If a patient cannot access the health-care system in the first place, how can Manitobans have any confidence that the system won't also fail them?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, and I think one of the clearest examples that we can see about improving access is the opening today of the first of its kind in Canada of the Mental Health Crisis Response Centre, a place where those individuals in mental health crisis can go, where they can be safe, where they can have supports that will help them continue to function to their best possible selves in the community.

My question for the member would be: How many people do you think would access such a centre if it were private, like his leader wants?

Emergency Care Task Force Left Not Seen—Follow Up

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, this NDP government created an Emergency Care Task Force in 2004, and that task force issued 49 recommendations. A key recommendation from that report was, and it was to be implemented immediately—it was called: Left Not Seen—Follow up. And staff were to make telephone contact with patients who left an ER before they were treated to ensure that they were receiving appropriate response for their condition.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, this initiative was recommended by the government's very own task force. If Bonnie Guagliardo had got such a phone call it may have saved her life.

Will this minister explain after nine years how she has failed to—

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

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): And again, I'll say to the member opposite that this particular very tragic case is under review by the Chief Medical Examiner who will call for further inquest on the matter if necessary.

I can say to the member, as I have in the past, that the recommendations from the Emergency Care Task Force have been followed through on, almost in their entirety except for some IT, and, indeed, the Health Links organization follows up with patients.

And, again, I would like to ask the member—it's question period after all—how many people does he think will access emergency rooms when they privatize them under the Leader of the Opposition's great vision?

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, this minister says that they followed through on the recommendations. There was no follow-through for Bonnie Guagliardo.

Mr. Speaker, there's another recommendation in the same task force report. It says, a reassessment role where hospital ERs would have a new nursing role to ensure that patients waiting to be seen are waiting safely by having them reassessed. And that nurse was supposed to act as an advocate for patient

and family, but Bonnie Guagliardo had no such triage nurse, and after six hours of waiting she was convinced that if she was in danger someone would have treated her by then.

Can this minister explain, after nine years with these recommendations, how she has failed to implement the Left Not Seen—Follow up and this reassessment role, and will she call an inquest into the death—

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

Ms. Oswald: I'll say to the member again that Health Links is now in place to follow up those that leave without being seen. There is a variety of options available now for individuals who do not need to go to an emergency room. They can go to a QuickCare clinic and an access centre.

I've said to the member repeatedly that the Chief Medical Examiner is studying all of the medical facts concerning this case, not the select few that are being presented here.

And, finally, I can say to the member that we do have reassessment nurses in place, in fact, to the tune of 3,163 more of them compared to when they were in office.

Minister of Finance Hearing Attendance

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, it has not been a rosy last six weeks for the Minister of Finance. His deficit budget, increase in taxes have not been well received. He is forging ahead on the PST increase through Bill 20 whether legal or not. Judge Dewar ruled on the minister's breach of the law in dealing with The Pari-Mutuel Levy Act.

Mr. Speaker, the minister now faces allegations under The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Conflict of Interest Act. In fact, the minister has been subpoenaed to attend a hearing before a judge this Friday.

I want to ask the minister if he will be attending that hearing on Friday.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, very clearly we believe on this side of the House that gaming revenues should be supporting very important public priorities, public priorities of Manitobans. It's very clear also that this side of the House believes that and the other side of the House believes that we should be taking money

out of public services such as health care and education and putting into horse racing and gambling in Manitoba.

That's the—being in government is all about priorities and making choices. We're going to choose health care over horses any day of the week.

Record

Mr. Cullen: It's unfortunate that revenue might be used in legal fees.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has developed quite a record over the last year. Last year he admitted to the House he had inadvertently misled the House when questioned about obtaining Jets tickets. Secondly, he was caught red-handed withholding money that belonged to the horse racing industry. Thirdly, he is moving forward on the PST increase through Bill 20 despite existing laws. Fourth, he's named in a \$350-million lawsuit. Now it appears he may be in breach in a conflict of interest legislation.

How can the minister defend this record and still maintain the trust of Manitobans?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, any day of the week I'll defend our decision to move money from a horse subsidy to health care—any day of the week.

I am quite surprised, Mr. Speaker. I am shocked that anybody would get up in this House, as members opposite have, and defend public taxpayers' money going into horses and horse gambling when the real priority needs to be hospitals and needs to be schools and needs to be infrastructure.

This—just this morning, the Leader of the Opposition gets up and talks about a two—

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

Resignation Request

Mr. Cullen: Well, the minister should be abiding by the law.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has developed quite a track record and he's not respecting the law of Manitoba. The conflict of interest charges are very serious allegations. This could lead to a suspension of the minister from the Assembly. He's also front and centre on a \$350-million lawsuit, not a very good position for our Minister of Finance to be in. To say that he has lost the confidence of Manitobans is an understatement.

Given the record of the Minister of Finance, is he prepared to step down today?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to do exactly what we said we would do in the budget. I'm prepared to do exactly what the courts have said we have the authority to do, and that is to take \$5 million from the taxpayer-funded subsidy that goes to horse racing in Manitoba and put it directly into front-line services that Manitoba families depend on.

Minister of Finance Resignation Request

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): But the real priority for taxpayers is to have a government that doesn't lie continually, Mr. Speaker, a government that obeys the law.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen unprecedented instances that this Minister of Finance has broken the law time after time after time.

Mr. Speaker, how many more lawsuits is it going to take before this minister does the honourable thing and resigns?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): This coming from a member who sat in a Cabinet that rigged an election in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Finance, to continue his answer.

Mr. Struthers: This also coming, Mr. Speaker, from a person who sits just down the row from the Leader of the Opposition who makes up numbers when it comes to the budget, who makes stuff up and then repeats them over and over again as if they were the truth.

Mr. Speaker, our priorities have been very clear to Manitobans. We are the party that will protect health care and education and invest in infrastructure, and in an open, accountable way through Bill 20. We tell people where we're getting the money and then we show people every year in a report where that money goes to, what infrastructure it goes to. That's in the law. That's the approach we've taken. We've been up front with Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: But it's a sad day in the Legislature when we see a minister of the Crown abuse his power and authority and a government that lies and says anything to get elected.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the minister has finance has broken the law. It's clear to all Manitobans.

How many more lawsuits is it going to take before he does the honourable thing and resigns?

*(14:20)

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, I'll get up in the House every day and I'll defend this government's action to move money from horse racing into health care. Any day of the week we'll do that.

Mr. Speaker, the—every day of the week, also, I'll get up and I'll defend Bill 20, which tells Manitobans exactly where we're getting the revenue from and where we're spending that money into, and every nickel will go into infrastructure in this province, roads and bridges, schools and hospitals.

I don't need to take one single lesson from the member for River East or anybody else on that side of the House when it comes to integrity and honesty.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But this minister isn't a rookie, Mr. Speaker. He has blatantly and flagrantly broken the law and his party has lied to Manitobans and done anything to get elected.

I ask the minister, again, a very, very simple question: When will he have or show some credibility in this Legislature and ensure that he does the responsible thing and resigns before there's another lawsuit against him?

Mr. Struthers: What is very clear, Mr. Speaker, is that we on this side of the House stand for gambling dollars going to health care, and members opposite, they stand for health-care dollars going back into gambling.

That's what this comes down to, and I'll take, any day of the week, our supposition that health-care dollars matter a lot more than money going into horses. That's been our position all along; that's what we said we would do in the budget, an open and honest document like the budget. That's what the courts have said we could do, and, Mr. Speaker, they can yell and they can scream all they like, but that's exactly what we're going to do.

Antibullying Initiatives Social Media Activities

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I support Bill 18 because it's an important step forward in addressing bullying in schools.

Bill 18 still needs to be strengthened, as bullying occurs not just between students who attend the same school. We're all aware that students can be bullied from other schools, either face to face or through social media. Students also experience bullying by those who've dropped out of school or who've graduated or who are older individuals.

I ask the Premier: What specific actions is he going to take to ensure all forms of bullying of students are adequately addressed?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): First of all, I appreciate the member for River Heights, the Leader of the Liberals, supporting the antibullying bill. I hope he encourages the other members on the other side of the House to support it as well.

The bill provides for protection for students so they can have a safe learning environment in the schools. It gives discretionary authority to administrators, principals and teachers to implement the bill on a foundation of the safe schools act, which is already in place, which has consequences attached to it. So, on the foundation of the safe schools act and the Safe Schools Charter, which are in place, and the antibullying bill, we are putting tools in the hands of administrators and teachers and parent councils to ensure that every school environment—to ensure that every school environment—is a safe learning environment for students regardless of their background.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the current Bill 18 needs to be strengthened in its approach to all forms of bullying. There's a gap a mile wide in addressing the sort of bullying which occurred with Amanda Todd, which was cyberbullying, but from what we know, one of the primary bullies may have been an older individual who was not in her school. The present Bill 18 lacks the means and the teeth to address bullying, including cyberbullying, where it's perpetrated by individuals who are outside the school system.

I ask the Premier: What specific measures is the Premier going to take to address bullying of students by people outside the school system?

Mr. Selinger: First of all, I—again I want to thank the Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for River Heights, for identifying that one of the most important features in this bill is the ability to deal with social media bullying. That's a very important dimension of what's happening out there in our communities.

If the Leader of the Opposition is concerned about activities by people outside the school using social media for bullying, I can tell him that our Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) is working closely with the federal minister to ensure that that's a Criminal Code offence, and we will follow up on that. I hope the member will support that when it comes forward. Thank you.

Human Rights Code Antibullying Amendment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the importance of addressing bullying coming from somebody outside the school still stands, and I'd like to suggest an answer to the Premier.

One of the problems in Manitoba is that Manitobans' Human Rights Code, which could be used to address such bullying, doesn't address bullying in all its forms. It only addresses bullying where harassment occurs in association with certain specific forms of discrimination. It's important to make our Human Rights Code consistent with and cohesive with Bill 18.

I ask the Premier: Will he support an amendment to broaden Manitobans' Human Rights Code to include a general provision against bullying?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Again, I find the question from the Leader of the Liberal Party and the member for River Heights a useful question. It does underline the fact that just two years ago, we changed the Human Rights Code to ensure that people could not be discriminated against based on social differences, and that included people with—we also brought in a specific amendment that would not allow them to be discriminated against based on gender difference or gender orientation. So, we broadened the provisions of the Criminal Code to specifically address groups which have been victimized by bullying, whether in the school, whether in public or through the social media.

If the member has other useful suggestions, we'd be happy to entertain them, but he does need to know that the Human Rights Code has been broadened in

Manitoba to cover and include these very people which have been the victims of bullying in Manitoba.

Mental Health Crisis Response Centre

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that I'm not the only MLA in this Chamber whose circle of family and friends have been negatively impacted by mental illness.

And I'm also reasonably certain that I'm not the only Manitoban who is truly shocked and appalled that the legacy of Tommy Douglas is, according to the Leader of the Opposition, something that Canada should shred and move beyond to a two-tier US-based medical system at a time when unmet needs such as mental illness are front and centre and requiring change and courageous action from government and a commitment to innovation; they would go the opposite direction.

I'm wondering if our Minister of Health might be able to shed a much brighter light on this important subject.

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

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, and I thank the member for the question. I was very honoured today to be present with the Premier and the Minister of Culture (Ms. Marcelino) at the official opening of the—Canada's first-of-its-kind Mental Health Crisis Response Centre.

Yes, this is a really important innovation, Mr. Speaker, that's going to enable families with loved ones in mental health crisis to have their own special door where they can go and get service from psychiatrists, from registered psychiatric nurses, from mental health workers. It's a place that's going to be a home base for our mobile crisis team. It's a place that's going to increase accessibility for our Manitobans that are—and loved ones. We know one in four Canadians will experience mental health crisis. This is the place—

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

Bill 33 Hoist Motion

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Last week I asked the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) about having some broad public consultation on Bill 33, and he kind of fell flat on that one.

So I'm going to just change it a little bit, then, and will the Minister of Local Government support the hoist motion introduced yesterday and set out to consult with municipalities over the next six months?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Local Government): Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Local Government will be attending meetings throughout the province as he always did, as his predecessor did.

In terms of our municipalities, I point out that the bill the member is talking about, if members actually want to have a vote on it and proceed to committee, people will be—have ample opportunity to put forward their views.

But I think it's important to put on the record, essentially, the position of members opposite is a position of the 1890s. That, Mr. Speaker, is certainly the case in terms of social policy and Bill 18. When it comes to Bill 33, they want the 1890 boundaries to stand. By the way, just in case members opposite don't know, it's 2013 and we need to modernize local government.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, I was at a lot of those mayors and reeves meetings and it was more like insult, not consult, when he was there.

* (14:30)

And, again, we've given the government the opportunity here to consult with municipalities to come up with a more workable solution with them. They've told them the timetable is too tight on this legislation. They're bullying municipalities.

Again, I ask the government: Will they consider supporting our hoist motion and do some true consultations with the municipality?

Mr. Ashton: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the members opposite would consider actually passing the bill, going to committee and listening to Manitobans because that's what our legislative process does.

And I think it's so important to put on the record, not only are we modernizing local government—and that's important to the 39 municipalities who have been unable to file audited statements to get funding from the federal government, from the federal tax rebate—but what's also important to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, in this budget brought in by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) we've increased funding by upwards of 9 and a half per cent to

Brandon, an equivalent amount to the City of Winnipeg, equivalent throughout the province.

So not only are we modernizing local government, we're putting more money into local government too.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, I must be attending different meetings, because that's not what the municipalities are telling me. They—telling me about getting cut back from this government, because the difference is I go and I listen to municipalities. I don't go and insult them in mayors and reeves meetings.

Again, Mr. Speaker, they have the chance now to support this hoist motion in order to give six months consultation—true, true consultation—to the municipalities, listen to their concerns, bring back a better bill so that maybe we can even support it then, if you would at least consult with municipalities.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is actually, I think, probably from another planet when it comes to dealing with our municipalities, because nowhere in his question or any of his comments did he also acknowledge that it's this government, again with the leadership of the Minister of Finance and the budget, that's putting in place a plan that's going to put significant investment in infrastructure, not just this year for infrastructure in terms of municipalities but over the next 10 years. And we're going to make sure we have provincial money in place to support that.

So they can try and delay progress all they want. It's not the 1890s. It's the year 2013.

Flooding (2011) Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, Richard and Diane McLaughlan lived at Hall's Beach on Lake Manitoba. They were retired. The intentional flooding of Lake Manitoba cut off access to their property and severely damaged their home. Richard, at 70 years old, operated pumps that protected his property and others. He waded through waist-high water daily floating gas cans to keep the pumps running.

Richard claimed a gasoline bill of \$600 and was denied because it was improperly receipted. Damage to their home was extensive, and they were offered about 30 per cent of the rehabilitation costs and told to appeal. Mr. Speaker, it's bad enough that they had

to fight the flood, but now they have to fight the government.

Does this NDP government have no compassion for—when they ruin people's lives? Why did they break their promise to the McLaughlans?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the impacts of the flooding in 2011. That's why we put in place \$1.2 billion in terms of fighting the flood, in terms of flood compensation. Certainly, when there are any issues in dispute in terms of flood claims, we encourage people to go through the claims process, including the appeals process, and, in fact, I would certainly do that in this specific case.

But without, Mr. Speaker—again, I don't want to say that I'm clairvoyant, but I think in the very next period of time, very short period of time, we're also going to be able to have some very good news for those constituents he was referencing in terms of flood mitigation, because we're also committed to a long-term solution for Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin in terms of flood mitigation. I'm not clairvoyant, but the member opposite may want to stay tuned very shortly for an announcement in that regard.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Northumberland Regional High School

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I rise today to welcome a group of students from Northumberland Regional High School, which is located in Alma, Nova Scotia. Students attend the school from the western part of Pictou County including the towns of Stellarton and Westville. They are visiting Vincent Massey in Brandon this week on a SEVEC exchange program.

SEVEC, the Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada, is a national charitable organization that was launched in 1936. It was started over 75 years ago, and there are more than 350,000 youth who have benefited from SEVEC's programs. SEVEC receives funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage to cover the cost of travel, and most of the exchanges include a homestay or billeting with a host family. This is very important because it makes the exchange inclusive and available to all young Canadians aged between

12 and 17 years of age, no matter of their background.

With a country as wide and diverse as ours, exchanges can play a pivotal role in exposing our youth to everything Canada has to offer. It also gives them a chance to make meaningful connections and friends all over the nation and learn and experience what cannot be taught in textbooks.

Thus, an exchange is a rich opportunity to make our country's history lessons come to life. Not only do youth learn these important history lessons on exchange, they are inspired by them and left with a better sense of what it means to be a Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, May 18th, over 41 students and four chaperones from Vincent Massey school—High School travelled to Nova Scotia, led by Mr. Brent Campbell, the band director at the school. They had a busy week in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and the band performed several times.

This past Sunday, May 26th, the students from Nova Scotia arrived in Manitoba for an event-filled week in and around Brandon. They will visit Winnipeg this Thursday, including a tour of the Legislative Building.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in welcoming the students, chaperones and staff to Manitoba, and I also ask leave so the names of the students and chaperones may be added to Hansard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable—[*interjection*] Is there leave of the House to allow the names of the organization the member referenced to be included in today's Hansard proceedings? [*Agreed*]

Students: Jeni Armin-Pereda, Morgan Baillie, Miranda Bowron, Thomas Bucher, Ainslie Campbell, Selena Dooley, Emma Dwyer, Malcolm Elliott, Ashley Feltmate, William Gray, Christine Ingham, Alex Ianta, Krishma Joshi, Danielle MacIvor, Fiona MacKenzie, Mark MacKenzie, Sami MacKenzie, Natalie MacQueen, Amelia Martin, Thomas McDowell, Sean McNeill, Nicholas Mingo, Himawari (Kelly) Ohara, Allyson Parker, Sophie Peters, Sadie Pitts, Lily-Rose Rankin, Jade Roberts, Lena Roberts, Rebecca Ross, Nick Stewart, Amy Ward, Katie Warren, Alicia White, Jennifer Wilcox.

Chaperones and staff: Dave Pos, Debbie MacQueen, Cori Bennett, Lauren Ingham.

Town of Roblin Centennial Celebrations

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, western Manitoba is an area rich in history, and I am proud to be able to rise today and share a little bit of that history with the House.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the official founding of Roblin, Manitoba. The first inhabitants of the Roblin area lived off the land for thousands of years. As settlers from eastern Europe began to arrive in Manitoba, many were drawn to the Roblin area by the opportunities that the region's rich agricultural land and many rivers and lakes offered.

The railway elevators and a flour mill and a lumber mill were soon operating in the village of Roblin, which was originally called Goose Lake. In 1913, the village officially incorporated. A hundred years later, Roblin is a beautiful, thriving community.

To celebrate Roblin's past and present, the Roblin Centennial Committee has some great events and festivities planned. A banquet was held May 1st to celebrate the date that Roblin officially became a village, and more events are coming up in July, Mr. Speaker. The celebrations will kick off on July 12th.

The centennial committee has worked very hard in putting the week's events together. With historical displays, pancake breakfasts, several dances, an art exhibit and a scavenger hunt running throughout the week, there really will be something for everyone to enjoy.

A parade on the 13th will celebrate Roblin through the ages and a ceremony to open Roblin's millennium time capsule will be held at Millennium Park. The Keystone Pioneers Museum will be holding their annual Museum Days at the museum grounds, and the Redcoats of the Northwest, a group that does re-enactments of life in the North West Mounted Police, will be featured.

We are also very proud that the Canadian Snowbirds flying group are coming to celebrate with us, performing on July 17th. Mr. Speaker, I am very excited to attend these events and many more events coming up in Roblin.

I invite all members of the House to join us in this July in celebrating the hundredth birthday of the Jewel of the Parkland and in looking forward to the next century, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Charleswood Centennial

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, Charleswood turned 100 this year, and it's already been a very exciting year with many events and activities to promote the celebration of our 100th birthday. A little bit country, a little bit city—that's a lure of our neighbourhood.

Volunteers from various organizations have been actively planning special events to mark this special year. The Charleswood Historical Society headed up a centennial committee which meets regularly to make this all happen. They organized a centennial lecture series once a month, including topics such as Charleswood veterans, churches, birds, native trees and plants and, most recently, a guided walk along the Harte Trail. The guided walk was a very successful event with close to 100 people showing up. Thanks to the city naturalist services for allowing Mike Quigley to give a most interesting narration of the habitat along the trail.

Another sold-out event was the fashion show in April, featuring historical costumes, as well as refreshments and entertainment.

Yet to come in the lecture series is one where we can learn about a special area in Charleswood being investigated as to its archeological significance in the history of Charleswood, as well as one featuring families that have lived in Charleswood for 100 years.

July 20th will feature an opportunity to see a variety of local gardens.

Other groups have joined in on the celebrations, such as the Charleswood Art Group with their spring art show and sale; Charleswood Seniors with their steak and casino night in May.

Yet to come is International Trails Day on June 1st, organized by the Friends of the Harte Trail, a month-long art show and sale in June and horticultural displays in August. The Centennial Committee will join with the Swedish Canadian Home to present a weekend of various activities June 21st to the 23rd.

* (14:40)

It's truly amazing to see the willingness of everyone involved step up so quickly to volunteer for a task. Congratulations to all of the enthusiastic and hard-working volunteers in Charleswood, who are joining together to make this centennial a success to remember. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Cheryl Lenderbeck

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Today I'm very honoured to recognize an individual in the area.

This week we mark the EMS Week in recognition of the medical staff that ensure that people in emergency receive proper care. However, there are many other Manitobans who have also taken quick action to protect others during crisis, and I would like to rise today to commemorate Cheryl Lenderbeck. Cheryl was recognized by the Canadian Red Cross last month for saving the lives of many by keeping calm head in face of an unexpected situation.

Cheryl is a teacher in the Winnipegosis Collegiate. Last February she was the supervisor of the girls' basketball team taking a trip to a tournament in Gilbert Plains. On the bus the bus driver suffered a medical emergency that caused him to pass out behind the steering wheel. Cheryl with her quick thinking and first aid training took action pulling the unconscious driver foot off the gas pedal and steering the bus safely off the highway into the ditch.

Cheryl then ensured that the driver received proper medical attention while the paramedics arrived at the scene. For her brave actions, she received a Red Cross Rescue award at a ceremony held at the school in Winnipegosis on April the 23rd.

Mr. Speaker, first aid training is a valuable tool that we equip Manitobans with skills needed to deal with emergency situations and hopefully save lives. However, we never know just how we will react in certain crisis. I would like the members to join me in recognizing the one Manitoban who have used just for that first aid skill training to save someone's life and her nerves of steel to prevent what had been a tragedy in the situation as I explained. So please recognize Cheryl Lenderbeck for her bravery and her involvement.

Thank you so much.

Halli Krzyzaniak

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, 17-year-old Halli Krzyzaniak has built quite an impressive hockey resume over the past year. Growing up on a farm near Neepawa, she developed a passion for competitive hockey at an early age. Naturally gifted, her focus has been on her

improvement in the game, and her hard work and dedication have paid off in incredible ways.

In 2012 Halli represented Canada at the Under-18 World Championships where Canada won gold. She also represented Canada in a mini-series against Team USA this past summer where she was named alternate captain. In November she captained Team Manitoba at the Women's National Championships where she was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player, as well as the tournament's Top Defenseman award en route to a silver medal.

In January of this year Halli once again represented Canada at the Under-18 World Championships, capturing another gold medal with a 2-1 victory over the United States, where she was named the top defenceman in the tournament as well. This fall Halli has committed to playing for the women's hockey program at the University of North Dakota, one of the top women's hockey programs in the United States where she will play hockey and pursue a degree in biology.

Halli continues to add to her impressive list of accomplishments. Recently, she was one six finalists for the Sports Manitoba Junior Female Athlete of the Year award and was the only finalist to come from outside the city of Winnipeg in the junior female category. Halli has also been invited to the Hockey Canada Under-22 development team camp which will identify potential athletes for the Team Canada under-22 team.

Mr. Speaker, the entire community of Neepawa as well as the constituency of Agassiz is incredibly proud of Halli. We wish her luck in her hockey future. On behalf of my constituents and all the members of this House, I would like to congratulate Halli and wish her the best luck in her hockey-playing future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. No grievances? Then we'll move on with—

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private members' resolution to be considered next

Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers). The title of the resolution is Class Size Initiatives.

Mr. Speaker: Under government business, it's been announced that pursuant to rule 31(8) that the private members' resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one brought forward by the honourable member for St. James, and the title of the resolution is Class Size Initiatives.

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, would you resume debate on Bill 20, please.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Mr. Speaker: To resume the debate on Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended), and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach, who has unlimited time.

Bill 20—The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yes, it's a pleasure to rise for the third day to speak on the hoist motion on Bill 20, Mr. Speaker. I had the opportunity on the first couple of days to put forward different ideas about what the government could be doing over the next six months in terms of Bill 20 and how they could be looking at getting consultation within different communities. And we know that the House may be sitting over the next six months, but we all have the evenings and different sorts of time to do consultation and to have different meetings. And so the hoist motion itself would not prevent the government, during the session over the next several months, to be consulting with Manitobans, and that's ultimately what the motion brought forward by the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) is intended to do.

It's intended to give them an opportunity, to give them a chance, Mr. Speaker, to give them something that they didn't take on their own initiative, and this is a government that needs second chances, it seems. We have a Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) who's embroiled in a—several legal disputes. I was going to suggest that it might just be one but it's more than—you know, it would be good work for one lawyer. You could almost make a career out of defending the government.

An Honourable Member: The minister himself.

Mr. Goertzen: And just one minister, Mr. Speaker. So, I don't know, he's not probably getting AIR MILES from all the money he's spending on legal fees, but it's something that he should be taking under serious consideration, that he's made some mistakes, obviously. He's made some mistakes in how he's dealt with Manitobans. He's made some mistakes in how he's dealt with things legally. And so it's a minister that really needs a second opportunity, and we're giving him, through the motion by the member for Arthur-Virden, that second opportunity, that second chance that the opposition has offered, an olive branch, I would say, to the Minister of Finance to use the next six months to actually talk to Manitobans, actually consult with Manitobans in a meaningful way, something that hasn't happened.

Now, I spoke last—the second day that I was speaking on this hoist motion, Mr. Speaker, talked about how the government could be meeting with members in a now—sort of a reset prebudget consultation meeting process, a postbudget consultation meeting in this process, but to meet with those Manitobans and talk to them about how they feel about a PST increase.

Now it seems that the message is not getting across to the NDP government, Mr. Speaker, and I'm shocked. I would have thought that all the phone calls, the emails, the letters in the—not only directly to the ministers but in the newspapers or on the call-in shows, would have convinced the government they made a drastic and radical mistake. But it seems not to have done that because on the weekend, the government cloistered itself in a convention, an NDP convention.

Now I understand, Mr. Speaker, that most of the people within that convention would be of similar mind. You know, that's how conventions are. I sort of understand that and so I wasn't expecting that there would be an uprising within the convention, but I was surprised that the message that came out of the NDP convention last week was that the PST increase isn't a hardship to Manitoba families. Now, that wasn't discussed. It wasn't discussed as it being a difficult choice, and we've heard that from members opposite here in the House. They've talked about what a difficult choice it was to increase the PST. We didn't get that message. We didn't hear how families were going to have to make difficult choices themselves because of the increase of the PST. They didn't talk about how the government was breaking

the law likely by increasing the PST on July 1st and the bill not likely having passed by July 1st, Bill 20.

* (14:50)

Now what did they talk about at the NDP convention? Well, the message they came out of that convention in Brandon with was that the PST increase is a good thing, Mr. Speaker. It's a good thing. Their chief of staff told the Manitobans and told their convention that the PST increase is a good thing.

Now I don't know how tone deaf members opposite have to be to what is actually going on in Manitoba but that they could actually, within a convention, believe and endorse a statement by a senior member of their party and their government to say that a PST increase is a good thing, I mean, who could it possibly be a good thing for? We know that Manitobans are going to be sitting around their kitchen tables or at the picnic table on a weekend and asking themselves, how is it that we're going to pay for this? How are we going to make up the difference in revenue between what we had before the increase and after the increase? Those are difficult decisions for families to make. But the message from this NDP government, from the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) or Kildonan—no, no, no, it's a good thing. The PST increase is a good thing. You should be happy about the PST increase. That's what they said on their convention.

The member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) will go back to his constituents and no doubt put out a franking piece of brochure and say, PST increase is a good thing. I can't understand it, Mr. Speaker. I don't understand how the Premier (Mr. Selinger), you know, couldn't have got up on—I don't know technicalities within their convention—if the Premier could've got up on a point of order or some sort of other sort of a procedural tactic and said, no, stop, stop, don't—my chief of staff, stop him from talking, I want to clarify this, I want to make it clear that a PST increase isn't a good thing.

But, according to all reports, the Premier sat silently. He didn't say anything, nodded his head in approval as the chief of staff of the NDP said the PST increase is a good thing for Manitobans. You know, and that's why the hoist motion is so important. Because this is a government that is completely out of touch. I mean they don't get it, and I don't understand how they could even say such a thing, how they could endorse such a thing, that the PST increase is a good thing.

Who would it be good for? Retailers? You know, we heard the examples from the member from Emerson talking about retailers in his area. I don't hear—well, you know—[interjection] Now I hear the Fort Garry-Riverview member talking about how—I guess he was obviously at the convention. He agrees that for retailers a PST increase is a good thing. I don't understand it, Mr. Speaker, I'd love to and maybe we'll have the opportunity, go and visit some of the retailers in his area and say, you know, your MLA went to the convention and then he came back into the House and said that the cost that's now going to be attributed to the PST from 7 to 8 per cent is a good thing because, by that logic, well, then moving it to 9 per cent would be a really good thing or 12 per cent, I guess, would be a great thing. I mean, where does it end?

I mean, I don't understand what it is that these New Democrats don't get about the struggle that ordinary Manitobans have often on a day-to-day basis. Are they that out of touch? Are they not dealing with ordinary Manitobans? Have those people stopped calling or have the NDP stopped listening? They don't understand that Manitoba families are having a difficult time, that it's difficult decisions that have to be made by these Manitoba families, Mr. Speaker. But, no, the message that the NDP want to send to government, to the good constituents in the Interlake, is that a PST increase is a good thing.

I look forward to hearing the member for the Interlake stand up and say on the record what his party endorsed on the weekend, that increasing the PST is a good thing. He could take the next six months and try to sell that [inaudible] pass the hoist motion. Please, you know, go to Arborg and go to Vidir and go to these great communities and tell them, oh, increasing the PST is a wonderful, wonderful thing. What better thing could we have done for you than increase the PST?

People would be astonished, Mr. Speaker, as I was. You know, I couldn't believe it reading the newspaper, you know, the government says PST is a good thing. You know, my proverbial jaw, it dropped. I couldn't understand it. I couldn't believe. I thought I must have—somebody must have did the headline wrong. It happens sometimes, you know. Sometimes the headlines don't actually reflect the story. So I read it, you know, because it must have been a mistake, some headline writer, the copy editor didn't get the whole gist of whatever—what happened at the NDP convention. But, no, there it was in black

and white. I saw it with my own two eyes. The NDP chief of staff said the PST increase is a good thing, and then he went even further. He said they wanted to campaign on it. They were running their election based on this. Well, you know, I mean we have—if the government waits that long—we have another two or three years to an election. You can imagine, you know, I guess, because if they want to raise an issue or want to run on the PST increase, I guess they'll then increase personal income taxes and they'll increase PST again as we get closer to an election.

We—you know, Mr. Speaker, this is not a job to be speechless in and, in the particular role that I'm in, this is not the job to be speechless in. But I was actually speechless; I was actually speechless at that moment when I could see—and, you know, I waited for the first couple of days because, you know, I expected that somebody on the NDP side would stand up and say—the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) who sometimes, you know, has some reasoned thoughts, that he might have stood up and said, okay, the chief of staff was completely, you know, he shouldn't have said that; he's a senior official in our government; he's not really representing us on this particular issue, but they didn't.

They co-opted this position; they embraced it; and they said, absolutely, we think raising the PST is a good idea, each one of those members. And so, I guess, now it's up to us, and we've got to go to their constituents and say: Do you know what the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) said? He said raising the PST was a good idea. That's what we have to go and tell them. You know what the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) said? He said raising the PST was a good idea, in his own community. They went and said that raising the PST was a good idea.

The member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson)—I had the opportunity to visit the great community and not long ago, I didn't hear anybody out there saying, you know, you know what would be a really good idea? Increase the PST. I didn't hear one person say that. Nobody came up to me and said, I've got a great idea for you: increase the PST.

In fact, you know, what's astounding is the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) mentions that during the last election in 2011, when these good ideas should be talked about, during a campaign—I mean, if you're ever going to talk about good ideas, you'd think you'd talk about them during an election—they didn't say that; in fact, they said the opposite. They said that raising the PST would be outrageous;

it would be a terrible idea. And now, all of a sudden, a 180, you know, conversion on the road to Brandon, I suppose, on the way to the convention, and all of a sudden now the PST is a good idea. It's a wonderful thing to raise the PST.

I don't understand it. So, I mean if there's ever a government that needs another six months to think about things, it's this government, Mr. Speaker. I mean, surely, they could go and talk to people, you know, go talk to—find a hundred people in each of your constituency, randomly choose a hundred people, invite them to a coffee and conversation at your local Smitty's or at your local restaurant and ask those 100 people: Do you think raising the PST is a good idea? Now, don't just, you know, do it—don't just do what you did at the convention; don't just reach out to fellow New Democrats. Randomly take, you know, a hundred Manitobans in your area and ask them: Is it a good idea to raise the PST by 1 per cent?

And I'm willing to—not wager because that probably isn't even legal here in the context of the debate—but I'm willing to state that I don't think you're going to find a constituency group like that, that's going to say, yes, I agree. I agree. It's a good idea to raise the PST. Most of them aren't going to do it, and that's why they didn't raise it at the prebudget consultation meetings. That's why it didn't come up, wasn't raised there at all. You'd think if there was a place to raise good ideas, Mr. Speaker, it would be at the prebudget consultation meetings. Silence, not a word on raising the PST. Oh, it comes at the convention, you know, among all the like-minded thinking individuals where the chief of staff stands up and says, hey, what a great idea we had here, raising the PST. Anybody say anything contradictory to that? No.

So, here's an opportunity, course it didn't come up at the prebudget consultation meetings so have these postbudget meetings. Go to the individuals and say, what do you think, good idea, bad idea?

I would challenge the members to first make a stop at some seniors homes, you know, with some great—the great Manitoba seniors that we have in the province of Manitoba. Go to some of these seniors homes and say, you know, in your lifetime experience—and many of them will be seniors who've served Canada nobly in different confrontations that the country's been involved with, maybe served as peacekeepers overseas, and it's a great opportunity to commend all of the seniors that we have in the

province of Manitoba and what they've done to build our province, and many of them have served within our military or in different ways, but in different ways they've built our community. They're the reason that we have the strong communities that we do, and so, go to these seniors and say to them, you know, we believe that raising the PST is a good idea because that's now the new mantra from the NDP and see what you get back from these hard-serving Manitobans, these seniors, over the years.

I doubt that these seniors would say that raising the taxes is a good idea, that increasing the PST is a positive thing. I bet the majority of them would say, well, you know, in our experience, over time, that causes a lot of hardship. It causes a lot of hardship to individual families, and then, you know, they could—because they'll have a little bit of extra time and there'll be some doughnuts and some coffee and you don't want that to go to waste, they could ask them about whether or not they actually think that there's enough revenue within government, whether or not there's enough revenue within government, to find savings to not have to waste the PST or to not have to increase the PST, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:00)

Now, I bet you if you brought those two questions together—if on the one hand you said, do you think raising the PST is a good idea, like the NDP said at their convention on the weekend, and do you think that there's enough savings within government so that we wouldn't actually have to raise the PST—you'd find some very interesting answers, and it'd be remarkable, I think. I think it'd be an eye-opener for all the New Democrats. And I—you know, it shouldn't be, of course, because you'd think common sense would dictate that you'd know what those answers would be. The common sense, which is apparently short on the benches of the members of government, that it would be obvious that of course it's not a good idea to raise the PST—only bad things, mostly, can come from raising taxes unnecessarily and putting a new burden on Manitobans—and, yes, there can be those savings found within government, Mr. Speaker.

And this is, of course, the message that the government doesn't want to anybody to hear. They want Manitobans to believe that the government is operating a mean, lean organization that, you know, there's nothing that they could trim, you know, in terms of any kind of savings. That's the message they actually want Manitobans to believe, but nobody's

buying it. Nobody's buying it, Mr. Speaker. When you talk to Manitobans and you say to them do you think that the government could have found some savings so that they didn't have to increase the PST, they'd say of course. They'd say of course. Even, you know, the most generous Manitobans who would say, well, you know, I'm not sure, do you have any examples? And well, of course, we have examples. We'd raise the issue of the vote tax, and we explain the vote tax. And many Manitobans now know, of course, what that is, but if—for those who don't, who might not have been paying attention or may be new to Manitoba, and you explain to them what the vote tax is all about. They'd go, well, yes, that's not necessary; you know, there's enough public funding of political parties in the system we don't really need to add any more to it. They'd get that. They would understand that. And they would say to the government, well, no, you know, you could have found some savings internally; it would have been easier for you to do.

So it's an opportunity for these government members to go and meet Manitobans, to go to these seniors homes, and I think all of us have seniors homes within our constituencies, within our communities, Mr. Speaker. All of us could make that outreach over the next six months, and, yes, we'll be busy here during the day debating legislation through June, July and August and September, but there's evenings. And during those evenings all of us can return to our communities—or on the weekends—and go into these personal care homes and say, you know, we had this Bill 20 that was before the Legislature, but we passed a hoist motion that delayed the bill for six months. And so now we're using this opportunity to come to you and to ask you questions, to ask you what do you think about this. Well, this is an opportunity, and I—again, I feel sometimes that I shouldn't have to come here and do the government's job for them, but on the other hand I also feel it's the right thing to do. *[interjection]*

Well, they're already convinced, so I'm glad to hear that the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) is listening to every word. And I suspect that maybe I have an in there in terms of she maybe is willing to agree to the hoist motion. She might be on the fence on this issue, and if I could convince her to go back to her caucus and to her Cabinet and to make the case because I know that those seniors in Seine River, lots of common sense, lots of great world life experience, they would certainly say—and I'll make the offer I'll bring the doughnuts and I'll bring the

coffee if the minister wants to set up the meeting. And the members, I think, there if you ask them whether or not it was a good idea—not my phrase, but the phrase of the NDP—a good thing to raise the PST they would say no.

But I would extend it beyond that. I wouldn't just visit the seniors homes in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the members opposite to go to their businesses within the community, whether they're small businesses or more likely medium-sized and small businesses in Manitoba, and to visit the proprietors of those businesses and to ask them. And, you know, you're going to find some very interesting stories. I always love visiting with small business operations and the men and women who started them up. And you hear some wonderful stories of risk-takers, those who—often they're new Canadians and they don't come with an awful lot, but they come with a dream and they come with an idea and they're willing to put capital into that dream and into that idea.

And I think that that is remarkable because they already risked coming over to a new country—and it is a risk even though Canada is a wonderful place, one of the most desirable if not the most desirable places to come to in all of the world. It's a risk for them and their family to come here because they don't know always what it is that they're going to be able to do and where they're going to find economic opportunities, Mr. Speaker, but they're willing to take that risk. And so they come to this country with all—a bushel full of dreams and a basket full of ideals, but not always with a wallet full of money. Often they don't have that financial wherewithal, but they work towards something and they work towards starting up a business. Sometimes it's related to the business that they may have had in their home country or some ways it's related to their own unique culture. And it's wonderful that they do that and they—it great—it really adds to the mosaic, to the fabric of our great province, something that I've seen within my own community with a—many new Canadians who have come to the city of Steinbach and the surrounding area. It's been wonderful to see that diversity.

And certainly my wife, Kim, and I have really enjoyed getting to know many of the new Canadians, Mr. Speaker, and to learn about their home countries and the places that they called home and to learn about their individual traditions. And we've shared with them some of ours and it's a great thing.

So this would not be time wasted for the members opposite. Over the next six months, Mr. Speaker, they could certainly go to these businesses and learn about their traditions, to learn about the different things that they're involved with, but more importantly, to hear their stories, to hear their stories about they came to this country with dreams and ideas and how difficult it was for them to start up their small businesses. Because it often is a struggle, I mean, it's not only a risk as an entrepreneur and you're putting things on the line. You know, it's a great risk for your family and that's the truth even when it comes to those who have lived in Canada all their lives.

I remember hearing often from my friend and my predecessor, Mr. Penner, about how when he started up his store, Penner Foods—was actually part of it. He took over from his dad, Jake Penner, Mr. Speaker, and grew the company. There was a time in the early '80s when the interest rates were north of 15 per cent—and interest rates is another issue I'd like to speak to you about to this government. But, when interest rates were north of 15 per cent, I remember him telling me that he gathered the kids up together at the kitchen table one time and he told them: You know, kids, I don't know if we're going to make it through this. I don't know if the store in the mall is going to be able to survive because the payments were much higher than when they had a mortgage, and he sort of prepared them. He prepared them for the fact that they may not have any money if the bank took over the business. And one of the things he said that actually saved him was that there was no bank in Canada at the time that really wanted to take over a rural mall because it was a—difficult to operate and there wasn't a whole lot of value in it, and so it was one of the things that saved his business. But he—you know, I loved listening to the stories that he would tell about the early days of his company and his corporation and then the challenges that came from that.

And I know the members opposite, if they would visit with these many new Canadians, they'd hear the similar stories. They'd hear the same kinds of stories that—how people put everything on the line, how they risked everything, how they struggled, how there was difficult sometimes making a payroll, how sometimes it was difficult for them to pay for the inventory that they had within their stores, probably how sometimes they sat down their own families and said, you know kids, this might not work out and, you know, we might have to go and find different

occupations and the family business might not work out. And what do you learn from those discussions and from those stories, Mr. Speaker, is that an increase in taxes, it hurts them. It has a real impact.

Now, the members opposite, you know, they scoff every time anybody on this side of the House talks about an economic impact, about how something can actually have an impact on an individual, a family or a business. They laugh about it. To them it doesn't mean anything because they sit around the Cabinet table and the numbers that they're talking about on their orders-in-council or on their Treasury Board submissions aren't numbers that they relate to ordinary Manitobans. They aren't individual families who are having to—in front of the members opposite—write those cheques, Mr. Speaker. So they lose all perspective about how it is that that impacts an individual family.

So taking the next six months, if this hoist motion is approved—that the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) has brought forward—would be an opportunity to go and to hear those stories, Mr. Speaker, to be at the individual companies, to be at the individual stores to hear what a struggle an additional 1 per cent could be.

*(15:10)

And there's additional thing, Mr. Speaker, that I would suggest that members opposite have the opportunity to talk to these great Manitobans about as well, and that's about the principle of democracy. One of the things that I love about meeting with my new Canadian friends, both in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba, is their love for our democratic system.

And I know sometimes—and you caution us, Mr. Speaker, about students who come to the Legislature. And, at some times, things get heated in here, and I always caution members to keep it down and to we have decorum at a certain level. But sometimes, I know, students, they'll be listening to things, and they don't always appreciate the context of how things happen within question period. But it's interesting because the ones often who I speak to who seem to enjoy it more are the new Canadians, because they come from countries where they don't have this freedom. And they're amazed that you can actually have this discourse, even though it's often aggressive and it can seem sort of unruly at times—but they're amazed that politicians can actually do this, that they can actually argue ideas and that it doesn't become physical violence—or it normally

doesn't, anyway. And they really appreciate that, and so that's a lesson to me sometimes.

I love talking to these new Canadians because they say: It's amazing that you can do that. In our country, the country that I've come from—different countries around the world represented from different people—you can't have that kind of dialogue and discourse. So I recognize that for many Canadians, when they view the proceedings that happen in question period, they don't always have a favourable impression, but we also have to remember there are many people who live in Canada who come from countries where they would almost literally give their lives for this sort of dialogue. They'd give their lives for the ability to have this kind of dispute.

And I know many members have often used the phrase that we settle our disputes with words. We don't do it violently with guns, as often happens in other countries. And people who come from those kind of countries, they understand that. And they treasure this, and they don't always look at it as being a negative but as something that really is a sign of a mature democracy, that you can actually have that dialogue. That doesn't mean things can't improve—I'm always one who is interested in improving the democratic system and how things operate here in the Legislature, but it's a different perspective, Mr. Speaker, and a perspective worth having.

And so I say that because during the next six months, Mr. Speaker, during this hoist motion, it would give the government the opportunity to go and to meet with these new Canadians who maybe don't have the same sort of democratic background that we do, and to talk to them about taking away a referendum. You think it's a good idea to take away a referendum; a democratically, in law, guaranteed right for a referendum. And I bet a lot of my friends—and, in fact, I know this because I've talked to a lot of my Filipino friends, in particular, about this—they find it offensive, because they know that the erosion of democratic rights is often and not all in one day, doesn't always happen because of a revolution.

Sometimes it happens over time, Mr. Speaker, the democratic rights are stripped away. And so, if you would talk to these new Canadians and say to them, well, what do you think about the idea of taking away democratic rights of a referendum, I bet you the vast majority of them would raise concerns. And they would give you their life experiences, and I'm sure they would talk about the different countries

that they used to call home, where they used to reside in. They would say that those are the sort of things that happen within our countries that we would be concerned about, losing those democratic freedoms, because they cherish the right to vote—they absolutely cherish the right vote.

I—it's always—it's a heartwarming experience when you see new Canadians when they not only become Canadians, but, of course, when they vote for the first time, and they take such pride in it. And they know that it's such a treasure to be able to go and democratically vote during an election, Mr. Speaker. And yet here we have a government who at different times has purported to stand up for these new Canadians, and I don't think that that's case anymore—but a government who is saying to these new Canadians, we're going to take away a right—we're going to take away a right to vote on a particular issue; one that's been there and that has been in legislation since the mid-1990s.

And I think that if the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who, I know, represents many new Canadians, if he went and he spoke to them and he said to them, I'm looking to vote for a bill that strips away a democratic right for a referendum, I think that he would hear from many of those new Canadians, that they would say, I don't think that's a good idea; I don't think that that's a positive idea.

Certainly, when I talk to my friends in the Filipino community, Mr. Speaker—and often, you know, their democracy is, I think, a bit more complex in terms of how it works. And I do have friends in the—in this Chamber from the Filipino community, and their democratic system, I think, is a bit more complex, but they certainly don't have the type of freedoms that we have here in the country of Canada. And those Filipino friends would be concerned and are concerned that there is a democratic right being taken away, because they treasure and they value the democracy so much.

I would ask them to go and talk to retailers about the impact of cross-border shopping. We heard an example from the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) earlier today in question period, where he was talking about the price of gasoline. And in fact, it reminds me, Mr. Speaker, as I think about the price of gasoline, that the government last year increased the price of gasoline by putting another two cents per litre tax on it, so I think it's important that Manitobans remember that it's a government that is partially responsible for that high price that they're

paying at the pumps, because of the increase of tax that they put on last year.

I think the Premier (Mr. Selinger) at one point last year, just before he increased the price of gas by putting on the new tax, said that he would be writing the Prime Minister. He was so upset at the high price of gasoline last year at about this time, or maybe a little bit earlier, he was going to write the Prime Minister and demand that something be done. I don't remember what he was going to demand, but he was going to write a letter and say that—how outraged the NDP Premier was at the high price of gasoline.

Well, is that the height of hypocrisy? Because only a couple weeks later, the same Premier, who was going to demand from the Prime Minister that the price of gasoline be examined, increased the price himself by putting in a new tax. And it doesn't—now, of course, I don't know if it was debated at the NDP convention, Mr. Speaker—the high price of gasoline—but I'm sure that given the logic of the NDP on the PST, they would say that having gas at a high price at 138—or whatever it was this morning—is a good thing, because they believe that high taxes and high prices are a good thing. That's their mantra. That's what they came out of the convention. Today's NDP: high taxes are a good thing. *[interjection]* Well, here's another invitation to attend the NDP convention next year, this time from the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), and I, you know, I might take her up on the invitation. I'm not opposed to observing how other things operate.

I—in some ways, I regret not going this year, Mr. Speaker, because I would've liked to have seen in person how anybody could actually say and how a convention could endorse that increasing the PST was a good thing. It would've been a remarkable thing to watch in real time about how individuals could actually try to spin each other. You know, they must've been like a tornado—they were spinning so fast—how they could spin each other into believing that increasing the PST is a good thing.

I don't know if all 192 communicators were at the convention, Mr. Speaker. They should've been because you would've needed 192 communicators to actually get somebody to believe—let alone the average Manitobans—but to get somebody to believe that having a PST increase is a good thing. *[interjection]* Well, you know, I have no problems putting up one communicator against 192 government communicators. I know that this is a government that is so out of touch with Manitobans

that it didn't—wouldn't matter how many communicators they had. They might ramp it up to 250; I wouldn't put it past them. If they hired another 60 communicators over the next little while, that would only be for the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald). You know, she's an expert at hiring spin doctors but has a real hard time keeping real doctors. But I know that's a little bit off topic, and I don't want to be called for relevance.

But, I—it'd be difficult—it would be difficult for 250 communicators to actually get the message across to Manitobans that increasing the PST is a good thing, because Manitobans will see that individually. They'll see it on each receipt that they get when they go to the store.

Now, my concern, Mr. Speaker—and this is the point that I was trying to make—my concern is that the receipt that they're looking at won't be from a store in Canada—in Winnipeg—but it'll be a store in Grand Forks or in Fargo or in Minneapolis, because those Manitobans are going to be leaving because of what the government is doing with increasing the PST.

In fact, I've—talking to many people, often some—*[interjection]* Oh, you know, now we've got the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) whose concern—who's concerned about trade agreements, you know. The anti free trader is back at it again, you know. I thought they'd tried to bury the anti free trade rhetoric, but it comes back again. They can't help themselves. The member for Gimli, you know, he—it's like a bone. He sees the bone and he goes after it and hammers down on free trade. You know, I bet there's a number of companies in his own area that do well by free trade. I bet there's a number of industries—I know there are in the province of Manitoba that do well by free trade. But that's the mantra of the government. The government wants to ensure that free trade doesn't happen anymore.

* (15:20)

So what's the solution? What's the solution from the member for Gimli? We'll shut down the borders. We'll increase taxes here to such a level and we'll shut down the borders. We won't allow anybody to leave Manitoba. We'll keep them captive, so they can't go to Grand Forks and to Fargo.

Well, I've got a unique idea—I've got a unique idea: Why not try to actually compete? Try to compete. You know, try to—*[interjection]* I know, I know—somebody get a dictionary; somebody get a

dictionary so the member for Gimli can look up the word compete, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think it actually shows up in the name of his ministry, and yet he doesn't even know what it means to compete—to compete, actually, with—*[interjection]* Oh, I'm sorry. I'm mistaken. He doesn't have anything about competing in his ministry, so I guess I can understand why he doesn't understand what the word means. All he has to do is try to make sure Manitoba's competitive. Well, that's not his solution. That's not his solution at all. His solution is to put up the big barrier at the Manitoba border, shut down Emerson; let's not let anybody cross. Let's shut down Piney; shut down all the borders so people can't go anywheres else; they have to pay our 8 per cent.

You know, I think he's living in the 1700s, Mr. Speaker, you know, where there wasn't the ability to travel around, that you couldn't actually see what was going on in a jurisdiction next to you. I would ask the member to join us in the year 2013. He might enjoy it.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that it is important—it is important to ensure that we are competitive, and if the government really believed that increasing the PST from 7 to 8 per cent is a good idea, I think they're going to find out something different. I think they're going to find out something different. And they're going to find out that many people are voting with their feet. They're just going across the border; they're going somewheres else. They're finding a way to go to Grand Forks; they're finding a way to go to Fargo.

Now look, I understand. I'm not Pollyannaic about this. I understand people are going to want to travel and they're going to want to go on vacation and that's understandable. We have people from the US who come and visit us here in Manitoba. But I'm concerned about our people who are deliberately going to shop in another jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, because they know that the taxes are higher—or lower, in another jurisdiction, or that they might go to North Dakota because they can claim back the sales tax. And I know many people are looking to do that who are looking to shop in these different jurisdictions.

So, the vision of the government is extraordinarily short-sighted. I mean, we don't just have a member, the member for Gimli, who is against free trade, Mr. Speaker, but we have, in fact, a government that can't see a year or two into the future. They can't see what the cost of having a PST

increase really is. They see the revenue side and they sit down with the Treasury people and they say: Well, if we increase the PST, how much do you think we would get in? How much do you think more money we would get in that we could spend? But they don't actually look at those long-term costs. They don't look at what money might be leaving the province of Manitoba because they're short-sighted. They don't have vision for the province of Manitoba. They're just trying to find a way to get more money from ordinary and average Manitobans.

I would ask them over the next six months and after they approve this hoist motion by the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) to visit the soccer fields, to visit the ball diamonds, and to talk to some of the—*[interjection]* I know my friend from St. Paul has a great passion—a great passion for youth sport. In fact, he read a—he wrote a great article in the *Parliamentary Review*—I don't know the exact edition, but I would encourage members opposite to read the submission that was made by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) about the importance of youth sport. And if they would read—*[interjection]* and, well, you know, and still the member for Gimli is still trying to fight Brian Mulroney in the Free Trade Agreement, Mr. Speaker. Whenever he gets out of the early 1990s, I'll welcome him to join us here in the Manitoba Legislature.

And maybe he doesn't feel the same way about the passion that the member for St. Paul does on youth sport, Mr. Speaker. But if you would read the report that the member for St. Paul put into the parliamentary review, you would find that there are some great benefits that come from participation in youth sport. And if these individual members would visit those different soccer fields and the baseball diamonds over the next little while, what they would find out is that these individual families who have young kids who are participating have some pretty tough choices. They make tough choices.

Now, the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) seems to think that he can't make a difficult choice. He doesn't think that there are choices to be made. But I would challenge him to go and to speak to these young families and to ask them whether or not they think that there is any way that the government could find savings within government. His idea of a difficult choice is taking the vote tax, Mr. Speaker. His idea of a difficult choice is taking \$7,500 for his own benefit politically as opposed to going and raising money. He doesn't want to go—he doesn't

want to go and ask people to support his party individually, to ask them for their own support. Because, I don't know, maybe he doesn't want to be bothered. I—you know, maybe he just feels that his time is better spent somewhere else. But that's certainly one way. And I would challenge him and we could go together. We could go to the soccer parks and we could talk to the young families, and we could say, you know, do you think the government could find savings? And the minister could say, oh, absolutely not. There's nothing we could do. And I would talk about the vote tax and let's see what people think—let's see what people think. And that's only one example. Of course, they would know that there are many other examples within government. That's just the most obvious one that we could talk about.

An Honourable Member: What about the lawsuits were going to have to pay for the minister?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, you know, the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), you know, raises a good point about lawsuits. And I, you know, I don't want to disparage any of the friends that I might have in the legal profession. I mean, it's an honourable profession. The one that I have left, I think, I'm repairing some of those relationships over the last seven months, Mr. Speaker. But they, you know, they do good work and then they play a role in terms of ensuring that we have accountability.

But we could save a lot of money by the government just following the law—just following the law. You know, it's not a—and now, who would be harmed by that? You know, the minister from—or the member for Gimli and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), you know, they stand in this House and they say, well, you know, what could you do? How could you save money? Well you could save money by the government just by following the law, that's it, by not having to be dragged into court all the time by these, sort of, clandestine meetings that the member for—the Finance Minister has, threatening the Jockey Club, Mr. Speaker. Telling them that he's a politician. He's going to fight all these different things. Well, my goodness. What kind of a message is that to send to Manitobans? What kind of a message is that to barge into a room with good Manitobans who are operating an institution that has operated in the province of Manitoba for many, many years and to pit them against another organization like the Red River Ex? I mean, to sully two good organizations into one sweep. You know, I mean, somebody—I admit, I don't know what will

happen with the court case involving the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), but I certainly hope that he learns a lesson from this whatever happens, whatever the outcome is. We just certainly hope they learn a lesson.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So that's what the—if I'd call it a friendly motion from the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), is all about—to give this government time. To give this government an opportunity to reflect, to say that maybe they've made a mistake, Mr. Speaker, that maybe this is something that they shouldn't have done, that maybe this is something that on sober second thought that they'd want to retract.

Well, you know, I actually think that the decision could be made right here in this Chamber. You know, I don't think we have to make it anywhere else. I don't know why it is now, I guess, when you spend the weekend talking to people who believe that the PST increase is a good thing, when people applause or they'll—maybe even tepidly who—to a message that the PST increase is a good thing, maybe you lose all perspective and you think that somebody else has to make the decision. I'm not actually asking them to make a decision that's extraordinary. I'm not actually asking them to make a decisions that's difficult. No, all I'm asking them to do is to not break their promise, to follow their own promise. These aren't my words. These are the words from the member opposite, and the members opposite went door to door in all the different ridings.

You know, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), I mean, talk about a phony mandate. I mean, the member—the land—the landslide member for St. Norbert who actually got elected by going around and telling people he wasn't going to increase taxes. Well, I'm sure that of the handful of people that got him to the Legislature here by voting for him, there'd be many of those who would say, if I had known—if I had known that the member for St. Norbert was going to back down on his word so shortly after getting elected to the Legislature, that they wouldn't have done it. They would have changed their mind. But that's the legacy that the member—the very brief legacy—is going to have to defend. He's going to have to defend. He's going to have to go to those individual Manitobans in St. Norbert at the farmers' market and in different places within his area and explain to them why he broke their promise barely a year—or less than a year

actually, because they raised taxes last year too—so less than a year after getting election—get elected—and then a second subsequent year—why he broke his promise twice. I mean, it's like an MLA who just can't keep his word, Mr. Speaker. And that's what he's going to have to do.

* (15:30)

Well, and the vote tax, of course, is a raise by another—I don't remember one member—one member opposite running on the vote tax. Now, the member for St. Norbert, he can correct me if he's got brochures that talked about the vote tax. He should bring them in, I'd like to take a look at them, and I'll admit to him that I'm wrong. If he ran on the vote tax, I'll admit to him that I'm wrong, Mr. Speaker, but this is a member—and all the members opposite who ran on a phony mandate, who didn't talk about taking the vote tax, who didn't talk about increasing taxes, who didn't talk about any of that at all. In fact, not only did they not talk about it, they promised the opposite; they promised that they wouldn't raise taxes.

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, all the—*[interjection]* well, and, you know, I hear members chirping and they make my point. They make my point when I've already said, and I've said it in this House dozens of times and I'll repeat it dozens times more, there's already enough money that's being contributed by Manitobans for the political system. There's only one party that's asking for more; it's the NDP. We're not suggesting that there needs to be any more. We've never said that there needs to be any more, just the NDP. Hands out, it's never enough—7 per cent wasn't enough; the current system isn't enough. They always want more money, there's no end to it. There's no end to it until Manitobans put an end to it, and Manitobans will have to put an end to it in the next election.

So I've only had three days to debate this resolution, Mr. Speaker, but I want to give time for other members who I know who want to speak to the hoist motion. I look forward to, perhaps, having unlimited time at different parts of the debate on this bill to cover off the many issues that I didn't have a chance to finish with today. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): In the 2011 election campaign there were 57 New Democratic candidates who went door to door and they made a commitment. They knocked on the door and they said, open up please, I want to give you my commitment on taxes. And they said, read my lips:

no new taxes. In fact, the Premier, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) went door to door and he said very clearly that any discussion, any concept of raising of PST was, in fact, nonsense—those were his words. And, Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady), Southdale, Seine River, Dawson Trail, amongst others, went door to door and said, open the door, I want to give you a message, I have something I want to tell you. Read my lips, said the member for St. Norbert, no new taxes. And any idea of raising a PST, he said, was nonsense. And what did they do when they got into this Chamber? They didn't even survive one year—they couldn't even hold their word for one year.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't even know if it was for six months. They could barely, barely get past the election and already that commitment went overboard. And the member for St. Norbert wishes to debate me on it, and I would debate him any time anywhere in this Chamber.

Fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if he wishes to get up, I'll sit down and he can debate. He should get up and put his thoughts on the record, and if he feels that he got elected and didn't make the commitment to not raise taxes, he should get up and defend himself, but we know that is not the case. He went door to door and he made a commitment; he went to every door in St. Norbert and we could list the streets for him if he wants; he went to every one of those houses and he said, open the door—open the door, I have a message for you, I have something I want to tell you. Read my lips: no new taxes, the member of St. Norbert said.

And it brings us not just to the last budget, which raised all kinds of taxes, but it brings us to this budget. And what's even more poignant is then to raise the PST this year, the government had to bring in a bill to cover its wrongdoings. And we have a government that does that continuously.

Bill 20 is basically a bail-us-out bill—get us out of trouble, and this government is consistently done these kinds of things. The member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) says it's a get-out-of-jail-free bill. Well, you know what, I have to tell you—far be it from me to criticize the member for River East, but when it come to the NDP, there's nothing free. It's not even cheap; it's very expensive.

This PST increase and all the taxes from the last budget will cost an average family \$1,600 in new

taxes, and they are going to be burdened with it year after year after year. So far be it from this being cheap or free this is going to be very expensive.

And that's why we ask members opposite—*[interjection]* That's why we ask the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), who has lots to say from his seat—he has spoken more since I've gotten up than I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we'll put words on the record that's why we put a hoist on Bill 20 for exactly that reason. Because then the member for St. Norbert doesn't just have to speak sitting in his seat with his seat belt on—then maybe they'll let him loose. Maybe his caucus chair or the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak)—the disgraced campaign manager from the 1999 campaign, the member for Kildonan—maybe they'll let the member for St. Norbert take off his seat belt and get up and put some of his comments on the record. He speaks more than I do when I'm up speaking, and we would like to give him the opportunity. That's why we need this host—hoist motion. That's exactly why we need it.

And then there's the member for Kirkfield Park. We know the member for Kirkfield Park went door to door up and down all of—in all those streets that we know so fondly, went up and down all those great streets, and committed to her electorate and said very clearly, read my lips, no new taxes. And then there would have been a door—if not one, there would have been many doors—where people would have said, well, what about a PST? And she would have said, in the words of my boss, the Premier, in the words of the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), the grise éminence of the party—she would have said—a PST increase is nonsense. That's what she would have said. And it didn't take her more than a couple of months—she was in this Chamber advocating for more tax increases until we got to this budget in which they actually even increased the PST, something they said they wouldn't.

So I would say not just in honour of the member for St. Norbert, not just in honour of the member for Kirkfield Park, we bring this hoist motion forward so that the two of them could get up and explain to Manitobans, explain to their constituents, why it is that they believe this PST should have occurred, though they ran against it, why they believe that we should have more taxes even though they ran against them. And then, for instance, there's the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby). And we know for a fact that the member for Southdale went door to door knocking on each door and said, open the door, please, I have a message for you; I want you to know

that I stand for no new taxes. In fact, there would have been people at the door that would have said to her, ah, but what about a PST? Like, how are you going to pay for all those commitments of yours? And she would have said, in the words of my leader, the member for St. Boniface, the Premier, I can tell you that a PST increase is nonsense. And she barely got into this Chamber and already was voting for tax increases until this last budget in which they went after PST increase. And she should get up and have the opportunity to put on the record why she ran an election campaign in which she committed no new taxes, including no PST increase, and then comes into this Chamber and votes each and every year for more taxes and for a PST increase. The member for Southdale owes her constituents an explanation.

In fact, they had an opportunity a couple of weeks ago on a chilly Thursday evening; they had the opportunity to go out the front door and hear their constituents. There were hundreds and hundreds of Manitobans protesting in bitter cold weather against Bill 20 and against the PST. And what did each and every one of those 37 members do, Mr. Speaker? They slunk out the back doors, and then they found out that there was some entrepreneurial individual at the one door was taking pictures of them sneaking out the door. And then you can hear the communicators—quick, quick, quick, go out the other door, and then they would quickly charge to the next door and try to get out the doors. But they would not—they would not—go out the front door and look the—into the eyeballs of the individuals that were frustrated, that are being hurt, that are being challenged financially by this government. *[interjection]* The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), so far, I think, has spoken more on this issue in this debate than I have from his seat. You know what? We would recommend he take his seat belt off and that he have the opportunity to speak on Bill 20 on this hoist motion. That's why we've hoisted it. That's why we've done it. We've done it so that we could free the member for St. Norbert and give him the opportunity to speak. I mean, not just these scripted little questions that are written out for him by the 192 communicators in his caucus who weigh every word and make sure every word is right, and then they put it through the minister, and then they rehearse it with him. And before question period he stands in front of a mirror, and he says—then he reads his question: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the minister.

* (15:40)

No, no. Not that kind of stuff. We would like him to actually get up and have a—in this debate—*[interjection]* There he goes again. Again, I would say to him, he should get up and debate this motion, put on the record, not heckling, not these scripted little questions that they give him which he rehearses in front of a mirror, makes sure he gets it right, and even those he doesn't get quite right.

He—the member for St. Norbert—it's for him that we have this hoist motion. It is for him that we are doing this. And it is for the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) that we are doing this, and for the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby).

Then there's the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald). Now, she went door to door and knocked on every door and said, open the door. I'll huff and I'll puff, open the door, I want to speak to you. And she said to them, oh, I just want you to know my campaign, it's built on two promises, said the member for Seine River. Two promises, she said: I won't raise any taxes, and we won't raise the PST. And people said, well, how would you pay for all your taxes? Well, she said, certainly not a tax increase, not the PST increase. Oh, no, she said, those are my commitments. She barely got into this Chamber and already she was voting for tax increases until we got to this moment where now we even have a bill in front of the Legislature that not just goes after a PST increase but even strips the right of individuals to have a vote on it, which they had previous to the last election.

In fact, I would like to go back, and there's a Guy Smiley on a brochure here, the former premier, Gary Doer, and he ran on a campaign—Premier Doer at the time—he ran on a campaign in which he said, and I quote: Today's NDP will keep balanced budget legislation and hold down taxes. They ran on that campaign in 1999 and they ran on that campaign—same promise—in 2003. Then they ran on it in 2007. Then they ran on it in 2011 and they went even further. And it says, today's NDP will balance the budget and continue paying down the debt without raising people's taxes.

And what have they done? They come in and in two budgets—twice—raise enough taxes to hit the average family for \$1,600 a year. That's what they've done. Where is their commitment on the balanced budget legislation?

The hoist on Bill 20 is not just for the member for St. Norbert, not just the member for Kirkfield

Park, not just the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), but also for the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald).

And then there's the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux). Now, we like the very jovial, effervescent member for Dawson Trail. Very, you know, very friendly, would have went—the bridge bomber himself, he went door to door in Dawson Trail, knocked on the door and said—and he went to coffee shops and had his thumbs under his suspenders and he swaggered into the coffee shops and said, listen to me, listen to me, all you coffee drinkers. I want you to know I will not raise taxes. I will not raise the PST.

That's what he said, and then he would have been questioned and they would have indicated to him, how are you going to pay for all your promises? Oh, no, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), the leader of our party, he said no tax increases. In fact, the idea of a PST increase is nonsense. And he also ran—he was one of the team of '99 who ran on the commitment to keep balanced budget legislation. He kept it—he ran on that particular promise, Mr. Speaker.

And the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau)—*[interjection]* Maybe I should sit down? He wants to speak. He's given more of a speech today than I have, and that's from his seat where he's got his seat belt on. He's given more of a speech. We would like to see him get up and put some words on the record.

But the member for Dawson Trail comes into this Chamber and had barely been elected in 2011 where he was already throwing his commitments and his promises under the bus, voting for tax increases, voting for the PST.

And that's why, it is for the member for Dawson Trail that we have this hoist motion, so that he, too, can get out of his seat. He should undo his seatbelt and he should get up. We'll give him the opportunity today. He can get up and put some words on the record. But, you know, I'm not clairvoyant. I suspect he won't put any records on the—words on the record today. I'm just saying I don't think he will. But, you know, we'll give him the opportunity. The member for Dawson Trail, we would like to hear what he has to say.

This hoist motion is for every NDP member, every 37—every one of the 37 members who would have the—should have the opportunity to debate. We

would like to see them get up and address their constituents' concerns.

In fact, you know what, we have the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) in our Chamber today. The member for Elmwood is known—he was—he's on record. He's a historical figure in Ottawa. He spoke the most words of anybody. Not like the member from St. Boniface, sitting down with his seatbelt on, oh, no. No, the member for Elmwood actually put it all on the record. He spoke the most words of anybody. I think he spoke more than any three MPs combined. And now we give him the opportunity to get up and speak, and he's silent. Mr. Speaker, you got to wonder how you can go from the most words spoken a couple years ago to nothing—nothing. We hear silence. It's like a whisper.

You know, what we need, Mr. Speaker, for all 37 NDP MLAs is—you've heard that movie, *The Horse Whisperer*. We need an NDP MLA whisperer, who will somehow get them, you know, get them the courage. We need to get an NDP MLA whisperer to somehow get them to take off their seatbelts and get up and put some words on the record. It's just unbelievable that we have one of the greatest word speakers of the House of Commons sitting in the Chamber, and he says nothing.

This hoist motion is for the member for Elmwood. And, Mr. Speaker, what about the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau); the member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), who we've heard nothing from; the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick); the member for Fort Richmond (Ms. Irvin-Ross)? Oh, and the member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), where's the member for Rossmere on this issue? The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), we've not heard him speak on it. St. James, the Interlake, The Maples, Selkirk, Swan River, Fort Garry-Riverview, St. Vital, and the list goes on and on and on.

For each and every one of you, we—the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), the member for Maples. But the member for Tyndall Park—you know, we would love to hear what he has to say, but you know what? They have a seatbelt on him, and they won't let him up.

You know, he gets up and he mimes, but there's no words on the record, unlike the member for Elmwood, who was the opposite in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, we move this hoist motion in honour and in memory of all the 37 NDP MLAs who have been muzzled, who have been kept silent, who

are not allowed to speak, who are in their seats with seatbelts on. The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) is bursting at the seams to get up and put words on the record, and they just won't let him. The seatbelt's on tight.

So I would say, Mr. Speaker, this is the right motion. We should support this motion. We would recommend the NDP speak to this motion and put it through so that the members opposite have an opportunity to speak and clarify why they ran on something that they voted against, every time it put taxes in, that they said they wouldn't. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure to stand up today and follow the member from St. Paul to put a few records on the—or a few words on the record. Broken records already. We have many broken records from the other side of the House today, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:50)

I'd like to thank the—my colleague, the member from Arthur-Virden, for bringing forth this hoist motion on Bill 20, and I'd just like to go through, basically, what's the point of the hoist motion. And that's basically that Bill 20 has been brought forward to try to squash Manitobans and the grassroots, the hard-working people of Manitoba, squash their voices in order to speak against tax hikes in the province of Manitoba.

And so what we're asking—we're asking for the government to take a six-month hold, put a six-month hold on Bill 20, go and take some extra time, go and speak to your constituents on the government's side. We have been talking with our constituents; they are not happy in regards to the PST increase. Take the six months, go out and do those public consultations that I know that the Finance Minister had spoke on quite a few times, matter of fact, almost daily, on the fact that he went out and did prebudget consultations.

I don't think that out of all the questions that we've been asking—I know that the member from Tuxedo had asked the Finance Minister quite a few times for him to name and to number off the amount of Manitobans that would attend those preconsultation meetings and name them. Tell us, how many people that attended those meetings would actually stand up and had wanted the PST increase.

That PST increase, a one point increase, 14 per cent on top of the many, many taxes and fee

increases that happened last year in the Budget 2012. During the election of 2011, I know that we were campaigning. We were quite—we were campaigning quite heavily out my way, and the NDP candidate spoke on many of the occasions where we got together for the candidate forums and she had put on the record stating that they were going to be able to balance the budget—balance the budget—by the year of 2014 without raising any taxes.

So what does that tell me? These people, the NDP, 30–57 candidates for the NDP had gone door to door knocking and putting on the record that they were not going to raise taxes. What ended up happening just six months after that? Fee increases, tax increases, the biggest tax increase in 25 years, totalling \$184 million on insurance, home insurance, automobile insurance, birth and death certificates. They had you coming and going.

An Honourable Member: Marriage licences.

Mr. Ewasko: Marriage licences. Thank you.

On top of that, in the 2013 budget it wasn't good enough that they snuck in those fees and those tax hikes in the 2012 budget. They went ahead now and they were feeling very confident and arrogant, and they decided to, in this year's budget, throw in a one point increase onto the PST from 7 to 8 per cent, which is basically a 14 per cent increase. That totals a \$277-million increase to hard-working taxpayers of Manitoba. So what does that mean to everyday Manitobans? Sixteen hundred dollars for a family of four.

So when you take the PST increase and you add that PST increase to the fees and the tax increases from the previous year, we're looking at a half a billion dollars—a half a billion dollars. Simple math, I know that the—a few of the members across the way, the member from St. Norbert often questions the math. But you're looking at a half a billion dollars a year of increased revenue. You've got a million—1.2 million people in the province of Manitoba, just do a quick divide there.

I know the member from Gimli's trying to help me out right now as well, and he's agreeing with me that that's exactly true, that that's the math. I know he was a math—he was a teacher at one point as well, Mr. Acting Speaker. *[interjection]* I don't think the member from Gimli was a math teacher. I believe he was a history teacher, but, nonetheless, he was a teacher, and that was great.

So what we want is the fact that we want the government to back off on Bill 20, push it for 20—for six months, give us some time to talk about—to talk to the grassroots, have them go out and do those door knockings again, because I think they missed the boat in the last election.

And I know that the member from St. Paul and the member from Steinbach had already mentioned on how the door knocking from door to door, and I'd like to also mention that I'm sure that the MLA for Tyndall Park also went ahead and did some door knocking. And I don't think on his brochures that he actually had on there that he was going to be asking for a tax hikes and the PST tax hike as well.

So we get to the fact that this government doesn't seem to want to be listening to the grassroots or those hard-working Manitobans, and we have many, many, many examples of that, Mr. Acting Speaker. Another example, I know, that we touched on earlier today was the forced amalgamations with municipalities. I know that the member from Selkirk referenced the fact that, myself, I'm not opposed to amalgamations. I don't think anybody on this side of the House are opposed to amalgamations. The fact is, is that this government is doing forced amalgamations. And what does that mean? Forced amalgamations is during the Throne Speech, they stood up in the House and they announced that any municipalities with fewer than a thousand permanent residents were going to be forced to amalgamate. That, in my eyes, without the consultations, without the collaboration process, that's bullying—forcing good, hard-working citizens to do something that they're not necessarily having to do.

Now, I know that the member from Selkirk—he probably doesn't think the same way I do, and that means that he'd rather push something forward, bully his constituents, bully municipalities and force them into amalgamations, as opposed to actually sitting down and having those public consultations.

I know that the Minister for Local Government says that he went around the province and had some meetings with reeves and mayors and that, but I also know that some of those meetings did happen. But what was the message being brought forward to those reeves and mayors? The message was, was this is a top-down decision that we're making from the government. Suck it up. We don't respect you. We don't care what you have to say. You're going to have to follow these rules and policies that we're putting into place.

Matter of fact, the Minister for Local Government also said, do not go back to your ridings or constituencies or municipalities and have town hall meetings, because all that's going to do is cause 'undued' hard feelings, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it's going to take us longer to get through this process.

So here we have municipalities that have been in the works for, you know, 90-plus years, 100 years, 120 years and, basically, Mr. Acting Speaker, we're asking them to then amalgamate with certain other municipalities where they don't necessarily want to get together, and do that not in a year from now, not in two years from now, but in 10 months. And with that, we also—excuse me—now also what they're forcing them to do is to get it done in 10 months.

And, again, we on this side of the House are not against amalgamations of municipalities. Matter of fact, I've got Lac—the RM of Lac du Bonnet and the Town of Lac du Bonnet that are in favour of amalgamating, and basically those municipalities are asking for some guidance from the provincial government. So, on one hand of my constituency—one side of my constituency, I have Victoria Beach, which has under a thousand permanent residents, but they have 2,200 taxpayers. If you combined permanent residents with seasonal residents, 2,200 taxpayers. And I believe that because all those people are paying taxes to their municipalities, that they do have a voice. They get to vote in the municipal election, so why would they not have a voice in regards to the amalgamation.

* (16:00)

So, all the efforts that the government of the day is trying to put into amalgamating municipality of Victoria Beach—which is self-sustainable, they've always balanced their budget on time each and every year—take those efforts and put them into the RM of Lac du Bonnet and the Town of Lac du Bonnet and let's make sure that those amalgamations are done right. It's a lot easier to work with groups that are—that feel that they're part of that process.

Now, again, in 2011, in the election we chatted about—we're talking about no new taxes, broken promises of the spenDP government. No new taxes, that was the promise. So, again, \$500 million in new taxes after this year's Budget 2013, \$1,600 for a family of four. I can't help but think what many families around this province would be able to do with \$1,600 a year. Now, many young families—and whether it's extracurricular activities with their kids or, you know, possibly seniors going on vacations or

absolutely all hard-working Manitobans, \$1,600 is a big chunk of change there. And it would sure worry me if all of a sudden those families had to make the hard decisions and not have one or both or how many ever kids that they possibly have, have to sit out in regards to some extracurricular activities.

Because this is a rich province—rich—I mean, we do have a lot to offer our youth and our families, but what worries me is the fact that we're driving these families out of the province. And I think it's mainly because this government is getting to the point where they're arrogant, they're making these decisions—these top-down decisions, without actually talking with the grassroots.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I hear the Minister for Child and Youth Opportunities has come in, and I—you know what, I do understand that he probably, as well, did not go into his constituency when he was doing the election and door-knocking. And I'm almost certain that he didn't run on the fact that he was going to raise the PST by one point. Matter of fact, I know for a fact he didn't, Mr. Speaker.

Now, taking a look around the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, I would just to like to ask some of the members right now, today, how many members, by a show of hands, told the truth to their constituents during the last election about their tax hikes or PST?

So, Mr. Speaker, let the record show that none of the—I saw no hands raised, and so what does that tell me? None of them had actually ran on the truth. They had a mandate, they had their election mandate and they had to—the government in a whole—as a whole had to lie to Manitobans in order to get re-elected.

Now, some people, as the member from St. Paul and Steinbach had mentioned earlier, some of the members in the government side, you know, didn't win necessarily by a whole lot of votes. But I guess, really, in the big picture, they—you only need to win by one, and that's our democratic right here in Manitoba. And that's the problem with Bill 20, that's why we're doing the hoist motion today and we want the government to hold off on Bill 20, just six months, and let's have those consultations and then bring it back into the House.

Now, again, I started saying about the democratic right here in Manitoba. Basically, it's having Manitobans, or giving Manitobans that vote,

their voice, on a referendum for any major tax hikes here in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that we're failing Manitobans, the government of the day is—that it may. I know that a few weeks ago we had—on a chilly evening, for that matter—we did have a—there was a PST rally outside the front steps of the Legislature and many of us had gone out to chat with constituents and hard-working Manitobans who were there to voice their concerns, and there wasn't one member from the government side, the NDP side, that had ventured out the front steps to listen to any of the hard-working Manitobans' concerns. There were a few, I think they were peeking out behind the curtains, and I know that there was maybe a few of the 192 spinners that the NDP have hired—192 at \$12.5 million a year.

Now, I'm just going to touch on this today, but what could we do with \$12.5 million if we cut back just the amount of communicators that the NDP government has? Mr. Speaker, we're short of doctors in almost every health association or region in the province. So how about put some of those efforts, the efforts that they put into spinning this PST hike—the reason for not holding a referendum—how about put some of those dollars into actually going out and resourcing and trying to hire some of those doctors for our rural areas as well so that we don't necessarily have to be closing emergency rooms, et cetera?

So, with that, I would like to just speak again and say thank you to the member from Arthur-Virden for bringing forth the hoist motion on Bill 20. I'm encouraging all members of the House to stand up and to support the hoist motion on Bill 20. I look forward to it passing and possibly in six months or so—*[interjection]* Oh, I've been asked to continue speaking a little bit longer, so we could do that.

So you know what? There are a few other things that I'd like to put on the record and, I guess, let's get into some other things such as, oh, maybe the vote tax, Mr. Speaker, the vote tax. So we're looking at a million dollars, or \$250 of our hard-working Manitobans' money that the NDP government is thinking about taking on. Seven thousand dollars per sitting MLA on the government side, that's what they're willing to take—that's per year, \$7,000 per year. So instead of going out and talking again with the grassroots, like the PST increase, like the amalgamations, the vote tax, they're not going to go out and ask those hard-working Manitobans for either a donation or for some support. They would

much rather just go to those Manitobans and take it out of their back pockets, or go to those Manitobans and take it out of their kids' piggy banks, or go to those Manitobans and take it out of their grandkids' piggy banks. These are things that we're going to be paying for for many, many, many years to come.

And speaking of that, Mr. Speaker, now we're looking at a government who, when they took over had—you could not have had a better situation in order to come in as a government. We're looking at savings accounts; we had money in the bank; we were at 12—roughly \$12 billion in debt. Now we're at 30-plus billion dollars in debt. Increased revenues, lowest tax—interest rates in forever—forever—absolutely forever, and I don't even know what else. What else? We've got—and we've got PST increases. How much more?

*(16:10)

I know that—I know now that the member from St. Norbert did take a break a little bit ago, but he's speaking up again. So he is maybe going to put some words on the record in regards to this hoist motion. I know, Mr. Speaker, that not all the 37 members on the other side of the House are in favour of this PST increase. I know for a fact that not all those 37 members are very happy with the decisions that the Finance Minister and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has made with this PST hike because they are going to have to go back, and many of them have not been here necessarily for more than a term, or possibly two, and I know that they'd like to continue on.

But, with that, it's going to be a tough go next election, going and meeting their constituents face to face, door to door, and saying: You know what, I apologize. The last election I know that we, as a government, we lied to you at the door the last time, but you know what, honest, trust us this time; we're not going to lie again.

And that's another thing, Mr. Speaker, the PST increase, one point, 14 per cent increase. The Premier has not ruled out another tax increase for next year. Matter of fact, under the balanced budget taxpayer protection act, if this Bill 20 goes on, they—and they strip the rights of Manitobans, we have no idea what's going to happen. I would say that you better lock your money in some sort of mattress because they're going to be after it. They're going to be after your wallets. They're going to be after your kids' piggy banks, your grandkids' piggy banks.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I encourage both sides of the House, all parties in the House, to support the hoist motion on Bill 20. I'm going to give the option to some members on the other side of the House, the member from St. Norbert or Tyndall Park or Rossmere or Elmwood to stand up and put their words on the record. So, thank you.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member from Arthur-Virden for bringing forward the hoist motion for Bill 20. I would ask all members opposite to support this motion.

Mr. Speaker, this motion will probably solve some of the problems that members opposite have. By putting Bill 20 on hold for six months, it will give the NDP a way out of this predicament. It will give them enough time to call a referendum on Bill 20. It will give them enough time to have proper consultation in the communities on whether or not people want Bill 20.

After all, the major flood threat is as good as over. This will give the people of Manitoba their democratic right to vote on this major tax increase. This will give the people of Manitoba a chance to vote on how they feel about an increase in the PST. By calling a referendum on the PST increase, this will save the NDP from breaking the law. This may give them back some of the credibility they have lost since the last election.

Mr. Speaker, the more we debate Bill 20, the more members opposite put words on record about it. The longer we debate Bill 20, the more I see Manitobans opposed to Bill 20. More and more, Manitobans are seeing through this NDP—governments and their lies.

Mr. Speaker, lies is something that we should not have to be using in this House. This House is an honourable House where we shouldn't have to speak like that. But I was talking to an old uncle of mine last week, and he offered me a little bit advice. He said if they wouldn't lie, people wouldn't call them liars.

Manitobans are seeing that this spendP government does not care about the people of Manitoba. They only care about themselves. During the 2011 election, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stated, and I quote, our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases and we'll deliver on that. We're ahead of schedule right now.

Mr. Speaker, how could the Premier (Mr. Selinger) make such a huge mistake to be that far away from the truth? Perhaps the Premier and the Finance Minister should hire some financial experts who actually know things about finance and get rid of some of their spinners who are trying to spin things in the wrong direction. Coming from a business world, I have little faith in someone who on October 11th stated—2011—stated, and I quote: Ridiculous ideas that we're going to raise the sales tax. That's total nonsense. Everybody knows that.

Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2012 and now in Budget 2013, if Bill 20 passes, this NDP government wants to take close to a billion dollars out of the pockets of Manitobans. That's last year's increases and this year's increases. That's a lot of money. One can only conclude from the election campaign of 2011 it was nothing but a big lie. They obviously—everyone across the hall knew what they were saying about no tax increases was not true.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members opposite if they knew the promises they were making were lies, if they thought there would be any tax increases—and now they're inflicting members of Manitoba with the highest tax increases two years running that they have not seen since the last NDP government. What are they going to do about it? What are they going to tell their constituents? What are their constituents saying to them? Did they all want tax increases? I doubt that very much. Do the members opposite feel it's okay to be untruthful with their constituents, or were they knowledgeable that this was nothing but a big lie?

The other night there was a rally in front of the legislature building, right here on the front steps, Mr. Speaker. More than 500 taxpaying Manitobans came out to give their opinion on the spenDP's government's tax raise. They all said, enough is enough. I walked through that crowd and everyone I talked to was unhappy with the government and Bill 20.

Many of these were constituents of members opposite. They could not believe that this spenDP government was acting like a dictatorship, not a democratic government. They wanted to know why the government was not at the rally, instead chose to peek out their office windows, or some of them sneaked back—out the back door so as not to face the crowd.

We hear from members opposite about how good Manitoba is doing, that in a lot of areas we're

running third behind Alberta and Saskatchewan. The one thing they forget to tell the people of Manitoba is Manitoba is like a province on income assistance. Manitoba receives extra funding from the federal government that Saskatchewan and Alberta don't. This isn't a fair competition.

This spenDP government does have a problem with being truthful with the voters of Manitoba so hearing some of the rhetoric coming from across the House is not a surprise. Under this spenDP government an average family of four is facing an increase of \$1,600 in taxes and fees, and if they take the math and just add what the total cost of the tax increase is and divide it by the number of families in Manitoba they will all be able to figure that out. This is a lot of money for a family that's struggling to pay their bills.

What can they cut from their budget? Will it be sports programs? We all know that sports programs are important in the development of our youth. Even the government—this government—admits sports programs are important. Will this family have to cut piano lessons or dance classes or other arts programs? Will more families have to cancel their household insurance policies because they can no longer afford them?

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker, this spenDP government has no respect or regard for the impact that taxes have on Manitobans' ability to thrive and survive.

Mr. Speaker, under The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection Act, Manitobans have the democratic right to a referendum whenever a government wants to make a major tax increase. If Bill 20 passes, it will gut this act and leave the door wide open for more major tax increases. The taxpayer protection laws are there to safeguard Manitoba families from governments like the NDP.

In Brandon last—this past weekend, the Premier would not rule out more tax increases in future budgets. So much for his election promises of 2011.

Mr. Speaker, for the second month in a row, Manitoba has had the worst inflation rate in Canada. In April, Manitoba's 1.8 per cent inflation rate was four times the national average rate. This trend is directly connected to the increased taxes and fees imposed by the NDP in Budget 2012.

What can we expect to see inflation do after the tax increases from this budget? This government doesn't realize what an effect a 1 per cent sales tax increase will have on both the citizens of the province and also on small businesses. They don't understand small businesses. A tax increase, a PST tax increase, does not do any good for them. We can expect to see inflation do nothing but climb from here.

Manitobans don't need another tax increase. They need a government that spends strategically and grows the economy, not one that only sees taxes as a way to solve their problems.

Mr. Speaker, the spenDP would rather raise taxes from hard-working Manitobans than look at its operations to determine if it's spending wisely. What this government needs to do is a complete review on its spending. We are paying for a 58th elected MLA as Manitoba's special envoy for military affairs, almost \$200,000 for a job that one of the present MLAs could be doing.

This government brought in the vote tax. This will provide a million dollars for the NDP and their political activities. That is close to \$7,000 per member per year coming out of the pockets of Manitoba taxpayers who are already struggling with the PST and other taxes this government has imposed on them. The list goes on and on. This government does not have an income problem. They have a spending problem. It's about time this government admitted they have a spending addiction and did something about it.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that this spenDP government answer to a problem is to throw more money at it. We have a health-care system that is in trouble. Every day we hear more and more about wait times in emergency rooms, wait times for ambulances, wait times for unloading ambulances, the closing of emergency rooms in rural hospitals, people leaving the ER after being there for six hours, going home and dying. This is not acceptable.

After 13 years of the NDP mismanagement and broken promises, the system is not getting any better. They are failing Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the health-care system budget keeps growing, but the level of service Manitobans are getting is less and less. We have a management problem in this NDP government. The NDP government needs to look at the health-care system

and do what's best for the system, not just for photo ops for themselves.

In this budget, the NDP government tried to justify the 14 per cent increase in PST by first saying they needed it for flood mitigation work to protect Manitobans from the upcoming flood. But, when pressed, they could not come up with a list of projects they would use the money for. Again, NDP mismanagement: Ask the people for money, but not knowing how much you need or where you're going to spend it.

There's flood protection work that needs to be done in this province, but any responsible government would have a plan of what they wanted to do and how much it would cost, and I would hope the Minister of MIT would know this. He should also know that you don't start flood mitigation work in the middle of a flood. Mitigation is to prevent the flood from occurring. And the minister should know that this past winter was an opportune time to do some of that mitigation work. They should've learned something from the flood of 2011. If this spenDP government was so concerned about flood protection, they would've had a number of projects ready to go.

Instead of keeping their promise not to raise taxes, the spenDP is raising taxes and trying to use Mother Nature as a scapegoat. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) even admitted that no new flood projects can be built this year, because the environmental and planning had not been done on these projects. He had no shovel-ready projects. The spenDP failed to complete the required engineering and environmental work to allow for work to begin anytime soon—more spenDP mismanagement.

When the NDP spinners could not make a case for flood-mitigation work, the focus went to transportation infrastructure. We know that PST is not going towards transportation infrastructure. The budget shows that the highways capital spending is only going up by \$28 million; that's only 14 per cent of the PST increase.

Mayor Sam Katz had it right when he called the PST increase a PST spin. It's obviously—it's obvious the PST is not going to flood protection or infrastructure. If it's going to build an NDP slush fund, so they can spend, spend and keep funding their spending addiction.

From flood mitigation, they went to transportation. From transportation, they went to

schools and hospitals. How many times will this spend government change their direction as to the reason for this cash grab? How many times will this spend government reannounce projects just to get a photo op?

In a report released by the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief), Manitoba's population has the highest percentage of people 19 years or younger in Canada, this percentage being 26 per cent. With a population of 1.2 million people, that means we have about 312,000 19 and under, and again, Mr. Speaker, these youth are our future. This spend government's provincial debt load is approaching \$30 billion.

The government doesn't think that this is a problem, and they don't seem to be lower-looking at lowering this debt. They're only thinking about raising it. This is some gift for our youth. Each one of them will inherit about \$100,000 in debt.

In the last 13 years, we've had the lowest interest rates in decades. We've had reasonable growth and we've had record transfer payments from the federal government. In the last 13 years, this province should be on top of the world with everything that has been happening here, but instead this spend government has let our debt grow to almost \$30 billion.

Our transportation infrastructure and our crumbling roads and bridges are in need of repair. We need more personal care homes. Where has this government been the last 13 years? We are taking almost a billion extra dollars out of the pockets of Manitobans with the excuse they need the money for things they should've been doing over the last 13 years.

This Finance Minister went to war with the Jockey Club. He broke the law. Judge Dewar ruled that, and I quote: "The Minister must act in accordance with the law as it now stands. In my respectful opinion, he has not done that."

In the post-question period scrum, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) said, and I quote: Clearly in an organization that is dependent on government subsidy should not—today is not sustainable.

* (16:30)

I would ask the Minister of Finance, since his government gets 31 per cent of the revenue from the federal government, does this mean the NDP government is not sustainable either?

We hear a lot from this government about global economic uncertainty. We hear about countries in Europe that cannot pay their bills; they're as good as bankrupt. When you look at the spend government's spending habits, where is the spend government taking this province? We have a province that I am proud to live in. We have a have province, but we have a have-not government. This government says it knows and helps small business, but that's nothing further from the truth. They say they've lowered the taxes for small business, but, Mr. Speaker, when you take the ability, the spending ability, away from the consumer, this leads to lower sales in the retail sector. This usually leads to less profit and a business that's not functioning to its proper—what it can do.

So what happens? The business cannot further expand. It cannot look after its own. It has to lay off people. This is not good for the economy. This NDP government, with its tax increases, is slowing down Manitoba's economy. They talk about a economic downturn, but they're the ones that are creating it.

I would ask all members opposite to listen to their constituents and support this hoist motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It is indeed a pleasure to rise today, talk about budgetary matters and talk about the motion that was brought forward by the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

And, you know, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we're in interesting times here in the province of Manitoba, and the Minister of Finance has found himself in some very interesting times here in Manitoba. And I will certainly talk about the Minister of Finance and the situation I've—we've seen him in over the last six weeks since he brought forward the budget, but that'll be a little later on in my speech. In—it'll be lots of fun; I know the minister'll want to stay tuned to listen to what I have to say, and he probably knows where I'm going to go in terms of some of the things that he's been undertaking over the last several weeks.

But, Mr. Speaker, I digress. I just want to say about the interesting times we were here in the province of Manitoba, and we look at the provincial budget, and the budget that the Minister of Finance brought down. Certainly, we see some interesting trends there, and the big trend is the NDP kept spending—keep spending money. You know, the budget of the Province here is gone from a \$6-billion budget in 1999 to a—over a \$12-billion budget

proposed for this year. So, clearly, spending is certainly outpacing inflation by a very dramatic amount. It's very substantial. And I think that's what Manitobans will notice, and I—when I send my articles out to people in the newspapers and the people will read them and they'll come back and say, that's quite interesting how the minister and the NDP government can actually spend that kind of money, how they can increase their spending year over year, in the course of 13 years, in essence, doubling their budget.

And most people associate, you know, the provincial budget with their own home budget, and, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, very few of us have the opportunity to double our budget over the course of 13 years. You know, we may, in fact, go and double our budget and spend twice as much as we did 13 years ago, but I think most of us would find ourselves probably in the same situation as the NDP. We would probably end up owing a bunch of money.

In fact, a lot of Canadians, I think, are finding themselves in that same predicament. Over the years they kind of got caught up in trying to compete with their neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Brown or Mr. and Mrs. Smith down the road and have—and probably got themselves maybe a little overextended. And, clearly, it's not too significant when interest rates are low, but we know there certainly could be a dramatic change in terms of interest rates in the future.

So, in my view, you know, the NDP have basically done the same thing. They've determined that they are going to spend X amount of money and year over year—and ended up creating themselves a bit of a debt load. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a significant debt load.

The other problem too when you do a budget, whether it's a provincial budget, or a family budget, as we would do, the intent is to live within your means. Live within that budget. And I think Manitobans, for the most part, try to do that and do a pretty good job of it.

The NDP have clearly identified the fact that they have trouble living within that balanced—that amount that they've put forward on their budget. And, Mr. Speaker, that's created quite a problem for them. And I think it's only been about one year out of the last 13—and I'd love to see the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) get up and correct me on this if I am wrong—but I think it's only been one year of the last 13 that they've actually lived within the amount they set out in their budget.

And that's a very important point, Mr. Speaker, because I think Manitobans should recognize that. What the minister is putting down in his budget six weeks ago, the figure that he's going to try to spend, to live within, is that it's a \$12.1-billion budget. So we're assuming—they're going to take the minister's word that he is going to spend within that \$12.1-billion figure.

Well, the fact of the matter is, over the years, Mr. Speaker, the minister and the minister before him have actually overspent the money that they've allocated on an annual basis. And that's helped lead to the part of the problem and the situation we're in here at this point in time.

Now I'm not going to blame the Minister of Finance today—today's Minister of Finance—I know he has inherited a bit of a mess, and he can look to his seatmate, the First Minister, who has been the Minister of Finance for quite a number of years previously, who certainly helped get him into this situation we're in. So I'm not hanging all of this at the feet of the Minister of Finance. But certainly he's got some involvement in this thing.

And the minister, the First Minister, certainly he was the architect of this in terms of where we are at this point in time. He was fine with spending more money than he was taking in. And he did that year after year after year after year. And that's helped us get to the situation we're in.

And the fact of the matter is now, Mr. Speaker, we're in to a situation where the Minister of Finance is saying we're going to have a \$30-billion deficit by the end of this fiscal year. And that's very substantial. That's very substantial, especially when you compare to where we were back in 1999.

But, when the NDP came into government in 1999, we had a \$13-billion deficit. And that's just the core deficit of the Province. So basically that's kind of the operating capital deficit, if you will, Mr. Speaker. And that's a very substantial amount—a very substantial amount of debt that we are carrying. And, again, we've more than doubled that debt in the terms of those 13 years.

Now, as you know and as those of us who have a mortgage know, you have to pay the bank back. You have to make those mortgage payments. You got to pay interest on the money you borrow. And this is the scary part. And I'm not sure the members opposite understand how substantial the interest

payments is on the money that we have borrowed at this point in time.

I hope they would take the time to read the budget this year that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) brought forward—in fact, the government passed. I hope they would take the time and have a look at that. There's a lot of pages obviously in the budget, Mr. Speaker, but the important one to me in there is looking at the page of spending. And we can go through department by department by department and tell what the government is purposing to spend in each of those departments.

The interesting line in that spending to me is the \$850 million that we're going to pay in interest payments this year—\$850 million in interest payments that we can't use for any other investment. We can't use that \$850 million for health care. We can't use that \$850 million for education. We can't use that \$850 million for infrastructure. We can't use that \$850 million for economic development, Mr. Speaker. That's money that is gone. It's completely out of the budget.

So we have \$850 million out of a \$12-billion budget that is already committed. And it's committed to pay the interest on that \$30 billion of debt I talked about.

* (16:40)

Now, Mr. Speaker, we had a—quite a discussion in Public Accounts the other night about the state of the debt and the interest, and the fact that we right now are in the lowest interest rates we've had in many years. And Manitobans and Canadians recognize that, and they recognize the fact that that's not going to stay low forever. So a lot of Canadians and Manitobans are trying to pay down their debt, recognizing that the situation is probably going to get worse and they don't want to be carrying a lot of extra debt.

But that's not the approach the NDP are taking. They're taking the approach that, well, we'll just keep borrowing money and we'll worry about paying the piper later. The problem is that we as taxpayers are the ones that are going to have to pay the piper. You and me and our children and our grandchildren are going to be forced to pay the piper. And paying the piper is going to cost a lot more money once the interest rates go up.

And, just to give you an example, on a \$30-billion debt, a 1 per cent increase in the interest charges on that, means an extra \$300 million a year

to service that debt. So, if interest rates turn around fairly quickly, we're going to see a significant increase in terms of our interest payments on that particular debt, Mr. Speaker, and that's very significant.

The other thing I just want to just tuck on—touch on briefly, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that was kind of the operating side of the government. We also have Crown corporations that we deal with. And the Crown corporations, such as Manitoba Hydro, also borrow money. And Manitoba Hydro have, you know, they have a debt of about a \$9-billion debt. As a result of that, they are paying in the neighbourhood of \$400 million a year interest—\$400 million a year of interest, again, which they can't use for capital investments. So, if you add the \$400 million to the \$850 million, we're paying \$1.25 billion a year in interest. Again, that's interest that can't be committed to other infrastructure or health care or education. So that's a significant amount of money that's not being able to be used where Manitobans would like it to be used.

And those decisions, Mr. Speaker, have evolved over the last 13 years. That's—those are conscious decisions that this NDP government have been making. They have made the decision they're going to borrow more money to go further in debt and, as a result, obviously, pay more in interest charges.

The scary part related to Manitoba Hydro, if I will, is another political decision that's going forward, and that's the premise of a \$21-billion capital expansion. And that's a significant amount of money, Mr. Speaker, especially when you consider that every dollar of that will have to be borrowed, and that is a very large amount of money. So we could have Manitoba Hydro, in the next few years, with a \$30-billion debt as well. And, again, that is going to be very expensive to look after that debt, to service that debt.

And the scary part is, too, with that infrastructure going forward—in fact, the Public Utilities Board has said this with—in regard to Wuskwatim that there's no way Wuskwatim is going to be able to make money for 16 to 20 years down the road, before it even sees the opportunity to turn around and make some money.

So it's certainly—when we look at capital investments, we have to be very sure that we know what we are getting into. And, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that's part of the challenge because we're not sure exactly what the future holds. We know

what the demand is like in the United States and the US market there. The demand has certainly dropped off. There's other sources of energy there that the Americans are pursuing, and it's relatively economic, relatively cheap, and it's certainly a challenge for Manitoba Hydro now to sell their commodity into the United States.

Clearly, we do have a nice green product in terms of hydroelectricity and hydroelectricity development in Manitoba, but, at the same day—same time, at the end of the day, you have to sell it at a reasonable amount to make some money. And those are the challenges going forward—is to secure economic and fiscally responsible markets into the US.

So that's the context in terms of forging ahead with capital investments. There has to be a payoff at some time down the road, and that's where the Public Utilities Board has raised the issue about, you know, the financial viability of long-term capital investment in Manitoba Hydro.

So, certainly, that's something that Manitobans should be concerned about when they hear about the \$21-billion capital investment in Manitoba Hydro. *[interjection]* Well, it's looking forward to this—looks like maybe the members opposite are going to engage in discussion on Bill 20, and I think they're going to maybe engage in our hoist motion here.

Now, there was very little consultation prior to the minister's budget. I know he went out and did a little dog and pony show and he heard from a few people. He gave us the numbers in public accounts the other night and we asked him, like, how many people actually asked for the increase in the provincial sales tax. Well, he didn't have any answers for us. He didn't have any answers for who actually asked for the provincial sales tax increase.

We don't have constituents—I have not had constituents knock on my door and say, you know, we better help bail out the NDP. We better pay more money. We better pay more taxes. I haven't found one constituent of mine has either phoned me, stopped to the office, phoned me at home, knocked on my door and said, boy, I think we need to help the NDP. You know, they're such great managers, even though they got a \$30-billion debt, maybe we can help them out. That hasn't been the case. In fact, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) can't point to anybody that has backed the provincial sales tax.

Well, I stand corrected. I think there was some kind of a resolution at the NDP convention last weekend about this, but I'm not sure that the PST was actually part of that resolution. I'm not sure it was actually involved. I'm not sure they actually put the question to their own membership, would you support a increase in the provincial sales tax by one point or a 14 per cent increase?

You know, I think if their membership would have been asked that question, I think they would have got a pretty clear mandate back and you'll—even as we, as NDP supporters, our pockets are only so deep, too, you know, we don't want to spend any more money on taxes.

Anyway, there we are; we've got nobody that really supports the PST increase. And, clearly, the Minister of Finance is scared to ask the people of Manitoba if they support a provincial sales tax increase. If he would have thought the provincial sales tax was a good idea and he could sell it to Manitobans, he would have asked them to vote on it. He would have asked them to vote on it and he would have followed the legislation. He would have followed The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection Act as it was originally written. But we know the Minister of Finance doesn't necessarily pay attention to legislation. He doesn't pay attention to legislation, and he should have paid attention to this one because this is a fundamental tax increase on the backs of all Manitobans.

You know, it's one thing to come out last year in his budget and broaden the provincial sales tax so he's collecting—oh, it was \$225 million more in that broadening of the sales tax, bumping up a few fees here and there, collecting more money. But, at the end of the day, he still had a \$500-million deficit to deal with. So he realized this year around, well, I've got to find more money. I still short on my books last year. I've got to come up with some more money this year, so that's where he came up with the idea of increasing the provincial sales tax. I got it broadened out last time; I'm going to make it higher this year. This is going to be great. I'm going to collect \$280 million over the course of the year in found money. The unfortunate part for the Minister of Finance—even collecting an extra \$280 million this year, over and above the \$220 last year, he's still \$500 million short on his budget this year. He's still going to have to borrow an extra half a billion dollars just to cover his operating line. So it's a substantial amount of money.

So it's unfortunate that's the predicament we're in, but that's the way it is. And we've had organizations come to us and say, you know, we can't afford the increase in PST. Our membership, our business membership says we can't afford the NDP increase in the PST. And the fact of the matter is, when governments make decisions that impact Manitobans, they have to stop and realize what those impacts are going to be. And we're trying to be competitive here in Manitoba. We're trying to compete with other provinces. We're competing with other States.

You know, we had a great discussion this morning about funeral arrangements and some of the immigration policies that have happened and the great number of people that are coming to Manitoba. The challenge for us is to keep people in Manitoba, because it's easy now for people to move to a place that's a little greener. They don't mind travelling and having a look and seeing where the green pastures are. And they look easily to Saskatchewan, where Saskatchewan has a—going to have a 3 per cent less PST in Saskatchewan.

*(16:50)

And I know the members from Dauphin and the members from Swan River whose ridings butt up against Saskatchewan, I'm sure they've heard that from their business community. I'm sure they've heard that from their people. It's going to be easy for them to just travel across the border, go to Saskatchewan, pick up some goods and services there, and pay that 3 per cent less in the provincial sales tax. At least I hope the members—the constituents in those members' ridings are calling them and letting them know just the—what the repercussions are of increasing the provincial sales tax by that 1 per cent. It's very substantial.

I just want to bring up a point that was brought forward today. In fact, it was a news release from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. And, obviously, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation is certainly a watchdog, if you will, for the government of the day. And, clearly, they're opposed to the PST because they understand implications to average Manitobans.

They understand what it's going to cost them on a daily basis. And they understand what it's going to cost Manitoba families, and that Manitoba families themselves are going to be forced to make decisions because of that increase in the provincial sales tax. They're going to have less disposable income to

spend. And that's a substantial amount of money, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we've calculated, when you take into account the broadening of the provincial sales tax of last year, and all those different goods and services, and you take into the—account the 1 per cent increase, or the 1 point increase, if you want, the actual 14 per cent increase in PST this year, and if you factor in all the fees and service charges that the NDP government have added in in the last two budgets, that works out to an average of \$1,600 per family of four. That's a substantial amount of money.

Mr. Speaker, and it's one thing to pay tax where you see it. You actually see the tax on your receipt when you go to buy something. It's another thing when you go and you have those, they're almost like hidden fees that you don't expect, and those sort of things like, I'll pick an example, vehicle registration fees. I can remember when you go to insure your vehicle, register your vehicle, it was, like, a \$35 fee, the service charge just to register your vehicle. Well, I've lost track now. I think it's like \$135 is what it costs. And that's a substantial increase in just a matter of few years. You know, I've been out of the insurance business for a few years, but I'll have to have a look. And I think my wife just renewed her auto insurance, and I'll have to pay closer attention in terms of what that vehicle registration fee was.

Now, that money goes straight from Manitoba Public Insurance and collected on behalf of the Province of Manitoba. It goes to MPI; they collect it from ratepayers; and then it goes right over to the coffers of the NDP government. And you would know, Mr. Speaker, as well as anyone, how that transaction works, with your background with Manitoba Public Insurance. Obviously, there was changes made a few years ago, and that's how the financial implications are. And, quite frankly, it's just another tax grab for the Province of Manitoba.

But I digress. The taxpayers' association said today Canadians pay 42.7 per cent of their income—goes to taxes; 42.7 per cent goes to taxes, Mr. Speaker. That's in the year 2012. Now, if you compare that to 1961—I know it's going back quite a while, 1961. But—

An Honourable Member: Were you born in '61?

Mr. Cullen: Nineteen sixty-one was way before my time.

In 1961, only 33 and a half per cent of income was paid in taxes, Mr. Speaker. So we've had a very

substantial increase in terms of the tax rate on the backs of Canadians. And that's something that—it's going to be nice to hear the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) get up and talk about Bill 20 and talk about the hoist motion. And this will give her constituents six months to go out and have a good conversation with the member for Kirkfield Park, and, in fact, the NDP Cabinet, about what they think about the increase in the provincial sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, we're just giving the government an opportunity for them to be better stewards for their constituents, get to know their constituents a little better over the course of the next six months. And we might as well go out this summer and spend some time with our constituents and really listen and hear what they have to say. I'm sure the member for Kirkfield Park is looking forward to getting out there, going door to door and seeing what her people are really saying about that increase to 8 per cent on the provincial sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, clearly, you know, and I go back to this news release by the Manitoba taxpayers' federation. They said, you know, we've got too much government. We've got too much government. If we're spending almost 43 per cent of our money, giving it to the government, whatever level of government it is, we've got too much government.

And they're saying maybe it's time for governments to roll their sleeves up, dig in there and sharpen their pencils and see if they can find some way to, you know, reduce the implications on us as taxpayers, and that's what we're doing.

We're asking government and we're asking the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) to get down there, roll up his sleeves, sharpen his pencil and give us value for the money that we're paying as taxpayers, and that's really what it's about. We know the NDP can spend money. They're very good at spending money. We're interested in results on this side of the House.

The NDP are good at spending money and the motto is their spend more, get less. We're bottom in the barrel in terms of health. We're bottom in the barrel in terms of education. We're heading down the wrong road in terms of mining, and our economic development policies need some work, Mr. Speaker. So we know the government can spend money. Anytime we ask them about an issue, well, don't worry we spent money on it. Well, yes, we know you spent money on it. What about results? And that's really what it's about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the Minister of Finance, and this is a point about getting results. The Minister of Finance thought he could do some things to get his hands on some extra revenue for the Province, and he had his eye on the Manitoba Jockey Club who operate Assiniboia Downs. So he saw over there, there was some revenue coming in through VLT revenue there, about nine and a half million dollars, which is what the Jockey Club used to keep horse racing going in Manitoba. So the minister thought, boy, there's, you know, there's some money there I could get my hands on. I'd have to tear up the agreement, mind you. There was an agreement signed by the Jockey Club and the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation just a year and a half ago or two years ago. I could tear that up, though, and we could start over and I'd get my hands on \$5 million, and I can use that somewhere else. Even though that money is generated right at Assiniboia Downs, the minister thought he could get his hands on that.

Now, if that wasn't enough, Mr. Speaker, he thought, you know, there's about two and a half million dollars a year that is collected by—the through The Pari-Mutuel Levy Act. That's legislation that's been in existence for quite some time, and the idea behind that legislation is to enhance horse racing here in the province of Manitoba. So the minister thought, boy, I'll just hang on to that two and a half million dollars and maybe I can use it for something else, so he kind of tucked it in his pocket. But he was surprised the Manitoba Jockey Club said, well, listen, Mr. Minister, you can't just bully your way in here and try to push us out of business, and he got caught. He got caught with his hands in the cookie jar, and that's exactly what Judge Dewar said: Mr. Minister, that money is designated for horse racing in Manitoba. You have to turn that money back over to the Manitoba Jockey Club to be used where it legislatively belongs.

So the minister got caught for that, and I think the Jockey Club appreciates that, that the minister actually did turn over the money just before he was in contempt for not turning over that money. But anyway—the from there the plot thickens, Mr. Speaker. The Jockey Club is certainly afraid that the minister is going to push them out of business altogether if he carries through with his promises as outlined in the budget.

So what we're thinking, you know, in this hoist motion maybe we could give the minister six months, give him six months to cool off and maybe

he can go back and have a good long discussion with the Manitoba Jockey Club and see if they can resolve their differences here, and we could sustain that industry into the future and save the \$50-million industry and save those 500 jobs and save those families the repercussions of losing their jobs.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know he's maybe pushed the limits a little bit too far. We now hear that he's been subpoenaed to go to court on Friday morning, and we're certainly curious to see how that works out, and, you know, certainly, I think by this—and hopefully the minister would agree—the minister should agree to this hoist motion that we've put forward on Bill 20.

Clearly, he's going to—he wants to force this provincial sales tax through in the next month or so

and I know he wants to force it through. I know the Legislature says he's supposed to have a referendum. He obviously wants to change that referendum under Bill 20. He wants to take people's ability to vote on a referendum away and that's the way they're operating. I would just suggest to the minister he should pay a little more attention. Certainly, he's got some legal ability over there and I'm just telling the minister the facts.

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

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Conference Board of Canada Report	
Bill 211—The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act		Friesen; Oswald	1747
Ewasko	1739	Emergency Care Task Force	
Bill 210—The Seniors' Rights Act		Friesen; Oswald	1748
Cullen	1739	Minister of Finance	
Petitions		Cullen; Struthers	1748
Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum		Mitchelson; Struthers	1749
Goertzen	1739	Antibullying Initiatives	
Ewasko	1740	Gerrard; Selinger	1750
Driedger	1741	Human Rights Code	
Mitchelson	1741	Gerrard; Selinger	1751
Eichler	1742	Mental Health	
Schuler	1743	Altemeyer; Oswald	1751
Stefanson	1743	Bill 33	
St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park		Pedersen; Ashton	1751
Wishart	1739	Flooding (2011)	
Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal		Briese; Ashton	1752
Pedersen	1740	Members' Statements	
Cullen	1741	Northumberland Regional High School	
Smook	1742	Helwer	1753
Helwer	1742	Town of Roblin Centennial Celebrations	
Maguire	1743	Struthers	1754
Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review		Charleswood Centennial	
Graydon	1740	Driedger	1754
Friesen	1742	Cheryl Lenderbeck	
Tabling of Reports		Kostyshyn	1755
Justice, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, Departmental Expenditure Estimates, 2013-2014		Halli Krzyzaniak	
Swan	1744	Briese	1755
Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, Departmental Expenditure Estimates, 2013-2014			
Kostyshyn	1744	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Oral Questions		<i>(Continued)</i>	
Tax Increases		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Pallister; Selinger	1744	Debate on Second Readings	
PST Increase		Bill 20—The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended)	
Driedger; Selinger	1745	Goertzen	1756
Graydon; Struthers	1746	Schuler	1765
		Ewasko	1769
		Smook	1772
		Cullen	1775

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