

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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authority of  
The Honourable Daryl Reid  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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

Thursday, August 29, 2013

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing no bills, we'll move on to—

### PETITIONS

#### Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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 and 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.

This petition is signed by R. Childerhose, D. Hobson and K. Vivier and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

#### Provincial Road 520 Renewal

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The rural municipalities of Lac du Bonnet and Alexander are experiencing record growth due especially to an increasing number of Manitobans retiring in cottage country.

(2) The population in the RM of Lac du Bonnet grows exponentially in the summer months due to increased cottage use.

(3) Due to population growth, Provincial Road 520 experiences heavy traffic, especially during the summer months.

(4) PR 520 connects cottage country to the Pinawa Hospital and as such is frequently used by emergency medical services to transport patients.

(5) PR 520 is in such poor condition that there are serious concerns about its safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to recognize the serious safety concerns of Provincial Road 520 and to address its poor condition by prioritizing its renewal.

This petition is signed by L. Johnston, B. Young, D. Beigrel and many, many more fine Manitobans.

#### Reopen Beausejour's Employment Manitoba Office

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The RM of Brokenhead and the town of Beausejour are growing centres with a combined population of over 8,000.

Employment Manitoba offices provide crucial career counselling, job search and training opportunities for local residents looking to advance their education.

The recent closure of Employment Manitoba's Beausejour office will have negative consequences for the area's population who will—who want to upgrade their skills and employment opportunities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reopen Beausejour's Employment Manitoba.

And this petition is signed by N. Sprott, D. Scott, T. Wilton and many more fine Manitobans.

#### **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:

(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 submitted on behalf of R. MacDougall, M. Martinez, J. Papro and many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities 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.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by S. Martiny, M. Maranz, S. Margrat and many, many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum**

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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 L. Fournier, E. Klassen, A. Dreger and many more fine Manitobans.

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase—  
Cross-Border Shopping**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near the—near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito, Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent, and Minnesota's retail sales tax rate is 6 per cent.

The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax rates create a disincentive for Manitoban consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially for those businesses located close to the Manitoba's provincial borders.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoban consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

And this petition is signed by M. Wiebe, S. Courcelles, R. Arnold and many, many more fine Manitobans.

\* (13:40)

**Applied Behaviour Analysis Services**

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including timely diagnosis and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as ABA services.

(2) The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes the importance of early intervention for children with autism.

(3) The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 56 children waiting for services. That number is expected to exceed 70 children by September 2013 despite commitments to reduce the waiting list and provide timely access to services.

(4) The provincial government policy of eliminating ABA services in schools by grade 5 has caused many children in Manitoba to age out of the window for this very effective ABA treatment because of a lack of access. Many more children are expected to age out because of a lack of available treatment spaces.

(5) Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or age out of eligibility for ABA services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Family Services and Labour consider making funding available to address the current waiting list for ABA services.

And this petition is signed by J. Meglt, D. Bilodeau and B. McCallister and many, many others.

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum**

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

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.

Signed by E. Fowler, R. Fowler, L. Fowler and many other fine Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

Though Bill 20—or through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the rail 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.

This petition's signed by M. Stone, E. Zimmerman, W. Shwaluk and many more fine Manitobans.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask leave to read the petition for the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave for the honourable member for St. Paul to read the petition into the record for—on behalf of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden? *[Agreed]*

### Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

**Mr. Schuler:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and 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 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 dram—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.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by M. Santos, R. Swiegers, M. Shoemaker and many, many other fine Manitobans.

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act):** Pleased to table the first-quarter report of Manitoba Lotteries for the three months ending June 30th, 2013.

**Mr. Speaker:** And, in accordance with sections 11 and 28(1) of The Auditor General Act, I am pleased to table the auditor 'genedal's' report on the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet.

Any further tabling of reports?

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the gallery where we have with us today Hardev Sandhu, who is the guest of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha). Mr. Sandhu is the president of the India Association of Manitoba. On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here today.

And prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Thomas Seale, who has been a page with us in the Assembly. Thomas will be attending the University of Manitoba this fall and will be studying biomedical engineering, and Thomas's ultimate goal is to become a surgeon. Besides his work in the Legislature, Thomas worked at a food store and has maintained a 92 average. On behalf of honourable members, best wishes, Thomas. Thank you for your service.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Provincial Economy Tax Increases

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I hope the Premier can get 92 on this accountability quiz, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba's small-business confidence and hiring intentions have been falling for months now, while nationally these indicators continue to rise. And we see the problem; we understand the problem.

This government is cutting the income of Manitobans because they don't get that the fact of the matter is they aren't the builders of this province, but they want the credit for playing at building this province. But by cutting Manitobans' incomes as they are doing with their high-tax strategies, they are taking the tools away from the very people that could build the future of our province.

So I'll start by telling the Premier we've reduced the degree of difficulty here so that it's just yes-or-no questions today. And the biggest determinant of an economy's success is discretionary income, yes or no?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I thank the member, Mr. Speaker. I noted he didn't put on the record the Conference Board of Canada's prediction that there'll be a 3.8 per cent increase in disposable income among Manitobans. I note he's had no interest in increasing the minimum wage in Manitoba. And 'yester'—just yesterday he tabled a document of all of our announcements, of which, he said, the overwhelming majority, well over two thirds, were unnecessary.

So now he's doubled down on cuts in Manitoba. In addition to his \$550 million before we rolled out the spring infrastructure program, he's now saying, let's cut about \$800 million out of the infrastructure program. That would have created 125,000 jobs. He can add another 75 to 80 thousand people on the unemployment rolls. That's really good for Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

#### Inflation Rate

**Mr. Pallister:** If the Premier ever wants to pass one of these, he's got to improve his listening skills and his reading skills, evidently.

\*(13:50)

The reality is that Statistics Canada reported in July that there was one province in Canada—one province—that led the way on inflation, that it was the highest rate. This isn't a prediction, this is a fact: from last July to this July, 3 per cent increase in inflation. That's two and a half times the national average.

I want to ask the Premier: Was that province Manitoba? Yes or no?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the member missed the earlier announcement this week that in the province of Manitoba the bundle of home heating, electricity and auto insurance rates are the lowest in the country—lowest in the country—on average \$2,100 lower than the Canadian average. That's the affordability advantage by not privatizing Manitoba Hydro, by not privatizing the public auto insurance corporation, which some members opposite ran on in the last election as party policy.

Keeping Crown corporations accountable to the people of Manitoba adds \$2,100 to their bottom line on affordability every year. This side of the House will maintain that affordability advantage.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, the final supplementary.

### Wage Increases

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, it'd be great if the 'provin'—if the Premier would keep one of his promises, and low utilities bills, bundles, fine, except it's only a little bundle.

Manitoba taxpayers pay a bigger bundle. They pay tax, and the tax is the Saskatchewan comparison, for example, on this bundle's great; Manitoba's are cheaper than Saskatchewan's utility bundle. That's wonderful, except their taxes are a lot less than ours. So, Mr. Speaker, actually, a middle-income family in Saskatchewan loses a couple of thousand dollars versus—when all are concluded. So the fact is, Manitobans have to pay all their bills, not just the little convenient piece that the government likes to talk about.

Now, yesterday StatsCan numbers on payroll earnings were released, and one province had 0.4 per cent growth, which is one seventh as much as their inflation rate. That was a hint. Now, this province was at the bottom of the barrel when it came to wage increases.

Was this province Manitoba?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, the member missed the full story where we've got an additional 14,000 jobs in the private sector in Manitoba, where new housing starts are leading the country. Residential real estate transactions are leading the country, more people working, more people investing in housing and assets for themselves, more people able to afford sending their children to school as the fall comes up as we build the future of Manitoba.

The member opposite—the member opposite—what was his approach when he was in office? Privatize the telephone system, take the rates from the third lowest to among the highest in the country; disposable income, flat or shrinking under his time in office; minimum wage, maybe adjusted 25 cents one every—once every four years; a widening income gap, people poor while a very few are richer. Not the way forward in Manitoba.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

### Tax Increases Provincial Revenues

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The Premier's degree might have been

from the London School of Economics—wasn't in economics.

Look, when you have salaries that are going up by 0.4 per cent and your inflation's going up by seven times as much, you aren't creating higher incomes for Manitobans. You're kicking Manitobans, and that's what this government's doing with its strategies. It's reducing the income of working Manitobans and their families.

Now, let's go on to tax revenue, own-source tax revenue. With last year's broken promise, tax hikes by this government—and this is a Premier who promised not to raise taxes and then did weeks later—gas is more expensive, beer and wine, haircuts, insurance on your home, on your life, car insurance—car registration, I'm sorry, PST was broadened by this government, and it's had an amazing impact on Manitoba families, a negative impact as can be seen by these emerging statistics I quoted earlier.

Was this tax hike, which the Premier promised not to make, was it the biggest tax hike since Howard Pawley? Yes or no?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the largest tax reductions in the history of this province have been made under this government—made under this government.

An average family pays about \$2,500 less a year in taxes than when the member was a senior Cabinet minister in the Filmon government, which he described as the best government in the history of Manitoba. That's when people—32,000 people left the province. Every year hundreds of civil servants were fired. Minimum wage was repressed every single year while they were in the Province. The poor got poorer, and a very small 1 per cent got richer.

That was his approach to governing, not one that's good for the future of Manitoba.

**Mr. Pallister:** It'd be good if the Premier tried a little harder. It's apparent that his three Rs are retro, rhetoric and ribbon cutting, Mr. Speaker. That's all he's got. That's all he's got left.

Let's recap if we may: the lowest wage growth in Canada, the highest inflation rate. The highest inflation rate and the lowest wage growth, and the highest tax hikes. Add that up. What does it mean? What does it mean for the people of Manitoba? Tougher times, tighter times, and the PST going up a point adds to that damage.



Now, who's got the highest projected tax increase revenues in this country, at 22 per cent, at double the national average? Would that be Manitoba? Yes or no?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we've just seen another example of voodoo economics from the Leader of the Opposition.

His numbers cannot be confirmed by any professional economist in Canada, Mr. Speaker. No professional economist in Canada will substantiate the allegations he's made. Once again, he's playing with numbers to serve his political purposes. We've seen him do that throughout the entire session.

Our objective: build the future prosperity of Manitobans. Start by building Manitoba Hydro, which he wants to cancel. Improve the security of Manitobans by building flood protection, which he doesn't want to do, the same thing he did with the floodway in Winnipeg when he called for a halt on it. Educate more Manitobans so they have the skills to do the jobs that are growing in Manitoba, something he doesn't want to do, with his across-the-board cuts to education, his across-the-board cuts to early childhood development, his across-the-board cuts to daycare, his across-the-board cuts to health care.

That is not the future, Mr. Speaker. That's doubling down on punishing Manitobans.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

#### **PST Increase US Border Delays**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, punishing Manitobans is exactly what this government's doing.

And when you use Statistics Canada numbers, you don't expect the premier of a province to jump up and call them a right-wing think tank, okay?

The reality is the Premier can't argue against the facts, not effectively. He just has to resort to rhetoric, as he does. He just has to resort to comparisons with 20-year-ago governments, which he does. And the reality is his response is not appropriate for the people of Manitoba who are struggling under this government's policies.

Now, the natural response for smart shoppers is to get a deal, and Manitobans are smart shoppers. The NDP response is to issue a highway traffic

condition report for US I-29 urging Manitobans this weekend to expect long delays due to the construction of an additional northbound lane to accommodate more Manitoba travellers returning with their purchases.

I want to ask the Premier—and try to get this one right, please—the PST hike, will it increase border waits? Yes or no?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the member's sanctimonious approach to these questions really speaks volumes why he left the profession of education. It's not a very effective method of either teaching or learning.

Mr. Speaker, what have we seen here? We've seen a government committed to growing the economy in Manitoba, and we're getting record growth, record number of housing starts in the province, increasing people who are employed in Manitoba, a growing population, all of which bodes well for the future of Manitoba.

What does the member opposite want to do? Yesterday he released all the announcements and commitments we've made to build infrastructure in Manitoba and he said two thirds of them were unnecessary, Mr. Speaker. So he wants to put another \$800 million of cuts on top of the \$550 million of cuts that he promised when he came into the session. That means more people losing their jobs. That means less people having good public services. That means or—more uncertainty in the province of Manitoba. That is not the future; that's the retro approach of the Leader of the Opposition.

#### **Provincial Economy Inflation Rate**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, Stats Canada recently released cost-of-living numbers in Manitoba, and once again the spenDP find themselves at the bottom of the barrel.

High taxes, high inflation, low business confidence and more and more people leaving this province are this government's record. And now, for the fifth consecutive month, small-business optimism is down in this economy, unless, of course, you're shredding government contracts. It's clear that the risk capital is leaving this province.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government let Manitobans and businesses decide what to do with their own money, rather than taking every single dime from them?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think he—the member opposite is completely ignoring the fact that one of the keystones of this budget has been the kind of investment in the future of this province that's key to all businesses, small businesses—where, by the way, we've eliminated the small-business tax—and businesses throughout the province.

And I find it interesting that the Leader of the Opposition, who a few moments ago was again auditioning to be the Who Wants To Be A Millionaire quiz host—by the way, the last one in Canada was Pamela Wallin—I think he's well suited for that part of the job.

You know, he completely ignored the fact that this long weekend people will be travelling on Highway 75 where we've seen a record investment. We took a highway which was an embarrassment under the Conservatives; we've made it a model for this province.

**Mr. Graydon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP's spinners must redact or shred the numbers so that the minister can either ignore or hide whatever he doesn't like to see.

Inflation is the highest in the country. Taxes have seen the biggest increase in a generation, and Manitobans have had the worst average weekly earnings growth in the country. John McCallum, an economist at the University of Manitoba, says that, and I quote, having the highest inflation rate in the country by far and the lowest weekly earnings increases is an absolute terrible cocktail for creating a strong economy.

When will this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) listen to the economists and to Manitobans instead of the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of this province?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Manitoba economy, our actions of government speak volumes. Their words mean nothing, because when they were in government in the 1990s, we, you know—and I know members opposite applaud for the Filmon government, but, you know, I noticed even the leader of the—*[interjection]* And by the way, there's a club in Osborne that's having a retro '90s dance night later on. It's Thursday. You know, the fact is we had low and no growth; we've had some of the best economic growth in the last 30 years in the last decade in this province.

And I want to compare our agenda and their agenda. Our agenda is to develop our potential, including hydro; they would shut it down. Ours is to invest in infrastructure, a record—

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

**Mr. Graydon:** And the best economic growth has actually ended up being doubling the debt of the province of Manitoba.

Mr. McCallum went on further to add that the PST increase will add more fuel to the inflationary fire and will damage the economy long-term. Manitobans are being forced to curb their own spending to help the spenDP dig themselves out of an economic hole that this Premier and the Finance Minister have created.

Why are Manitobans being forced to pay for this spenDP government's lies, mismanagement, political activities and broken promises?

**Mr. Ashton:** I think Manitobans know that one of the reasons we had such a poor record in the 1990s, when the Leader of the Opposition was a key Cabinet minister, was because they failed to invest in our infrastructure. It's a record this year. It was \$85 million when they were in government; it's \$468 million this year. That's the kind of difference we're making.

Mr. Speaker, in our first decade, we built, in partnership with NCN, we built the Wuskwatim hydro dam. What do they want to do? They want to shut down Conawapa and they want to shut down Keeyask even before it's started. We have, in addition to all those investments, some of the lowest utility rates—in fact, the lowest utility rates—in the country because of the actions of this government.

So the members opposite can talk all they want. They can applaud all they want for Gary Filmon. The bottom line is—

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

#### **STARS Helicopter Service Quality Assurance Review**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** There are questions arising about the safety of STARS in the province of Manitoba. We've learned this week of one—at least one—new incident that was not previously disclosed, and there are probably others.

And yesterday the First Minister said that in Manitoba critical incident reviews take place where there is concerns about a patient's quality of health care and that also applies to STARS. The First Minister also said yesterday that STARS' contract has compliance requirements.

My question for the Minister of Health is: Who conducts the quality assurance reviews for STARS?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Yes, I thank the member for the question. It does offer me an opportunity to make some corrections in some items that were reported by members opposite.

First, I want to let the member opposite be aware that, indeed, there are two critical incident investigations under way, one that has been portrayed in the media and, indeed, another critical incident that STARS themselves came forward and asked to have investigated. That information was disclosed to the patient, Mr. Speaker, and to their family, as is appropriate under the critical incident legislation, which, I would remind the member opposite, was unanimously supported by all members of this Legislature.

**Mr. Friesen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. A critical investigation—a critical incident investigation looks into a system failure and asks what happened and when—what can we do to make sure it doesn't happen again. A quality assurance review assesses the performance of a service like STARS in delivering services of a standardized quality.

Now, the First Minister said yesterday that quality assurance reviews are done as a matter of routine for all health-care services, including STARS. But, Mr. Speaker, there's a problem here with transparency and accountability. The minister procures STARS, she oversees STARS, and now, it seems, she tells us that she will directly assure the quality of that service.

Can the minister explain: How is that not a conflict of interest?

**Ms. Oswald:** I'm very pleased that the member today will acknowledge the words that I have spoken in the Chamber.

Yesterday, the member got up and asked me if I had confidence that STARS was providing good service. I stood in my place, Mr. Speaker, and I said, yes, I do. Moments later, the member opposite went

into the hallway, spoke to a television interviewer, and it was run last night. When asked the question, the member said, the minister refuses to say that she has confidence in STARS. I want to say very clearly that not only is that wholly inappropriate, but it's also misleading to Manitobans who count on this critical service.

I will say to the members opposite that medical professionals and, indeed, members of the regional health authorities and Manitoba Health do quality assurance and critical incident investigations as appropriate.

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, it would seem that what the minister refuses to acknowledge is that Manitobans deserve to know that the STARS system is being delivered to the highest standard possible.

Mr. Speaker, this minister has a lot—made a lot of mistakes when it comes to STARS. She did not tender this 10-year, hundred-million-dollar contract. She indicates or seems to indicate that quality assurance reviews will be done in-house by the Health Minister. And she is reluctant to ensure that the public has the opportunity to learn about the recommendations that come out of these critical incidents with STARS.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister defend such a lack of transparency?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, some time when we're allowed to have more than 45 seconds, I will read to you the list of incorrect information that the member has put on the record this session. This might be the greatest.

I will say to you that our public reporting and transparency record on critical incidents, indeed, is observed by members across the nation. The CEO of the Saskatchewan Health Quality Council, Bonnie Brossart, says, in Saskatchewan we're committed to growing a culture of safety across our health system. Perhaps a good way to start is walking the talk—would be to follow Manitoba's lead and be absolutely transparent.

#### **Deputy Premier FIPPA Redaction**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, on more than one occasion we had asked, was the decision to redact the minister's inflammatory comment covered under section 23(1)(a) of the act, to protect against material that would reveal advice, opinions, proposals,

recommendations, analyses or policy options developed by or for the public body or a minister.

Can the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino), the minister in charge of the act, tell the House: What part of section 23(1)(a) would the redacting of the Deputy Premier's (Mr. Robinson) comments fall under?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour):** I believe this question has been asked and answered a number of times in this House.

The way that FIPPA works is—our understanding is that those responses—and the member opposite has quoted the section of the law that this response was made under—those responses are made and formed by senior civil servants. That's the way that it works.

I would draw to his attention, in the past, I remember before, when we were in opposition and sending in a request—a FIPPA request to the government for a wait-list, for health-care wait-lists, you know what the answer was, Mr. Speaker? No such information exists.

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Ewasko:** We've been asking, but we're not getting any answers.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) told this House, when asked whether the statement which was redacted was the opinion or the advice of the government or the minister or himself, and he answered no.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism: Why are they hiding behind the act? Or do they feel, once again, that they are above the law?

**Ms. Howard:** Mr. Speaker, I think, as has been said in this House many times, the Deputy Premier has expressed his regret for those words. I have been proud to serve with the Deputy Premier for many years. I know as someone who has worked in the area of preventing domestic violence for most of my life, I know as somebody whose family used the services of a women's shelter, I know that the Deputy Premier is an ally in that fight. I have no doubt about that.

Mr. Speaker, I would say, in response to the question, again, you know, it's interesting that when they were asked for information about health-care

wait-lists, which you would think that they would have, that they would be keeping, they denied any of those wait-lists exist. Today, you know what? You could go on the Internet and find that information; you don't have to FIPPA it.

**Mr. Ewasko:** It seems that the Government House Leader likes the movie Back to the Future as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism has lost control of her department, if she had it in the first place. The government won't answer questions in QP, so we as opposition have to use the FIPPA process to get factual answers to our questions. We have seen proof in the last few days that the FIPPA process has been compromised.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism admit that her department did, in fact, cover up for the Deputy Premier and is using the act as an excuse?

**Ms. Howard:** Mr. Speaker, again, this question's been asked and answered many times in this House.

The decision that was made was made in accordance with the act. Those decisions on how FIPPA's are handled are made by senior civil servants in the department.

There is more openness and transparency from this government than has ever been seen in the history of Manitoba in terms of the information that is routinely released, not only through FIPPA but the information that you can go online and find, information that the previous government, of which the Leader of the Opposition was a proud member of Cabinet, denied even existed. They wouldn't give you information on how long a wait-list might be for a health-care procedure. They're—they denied they even kept that information. That's the kind of cover-up that those members were engaged in.

So I guess if that's they—if that's the way they believe government should work, I can understand where these questions are—

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

#### **Deputy Premier FIPPA Redaction**

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, the questions, indeed, have been asked, but they have not been answered.

Manitoba's freedom of information law and regulations allow the government to redact information if it is the opinion of the government or advice to the government. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) is on the record saying that the Deputy Premier's (Mr. Robinson) racist comments were neither advice to nor the opinion of the government. The Premier also stated that this was a standard repo-response to a FIPPA request.

If that is the case, is it the standard response of this government to hide racist comments made by a senior minister?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand up and talk a little bit more about what the opposition actually believes about FIPPA.

You know, it's interesting that during the week that access to information is talked about, the Right to Know Week, do you know how the members opposite decided to recognize that week and celebrate it? Well, they tried to amend the municipal conflict-of-interest act to let municipalities off the hook on any kind of disclosure for another year. They used that week to tell citizens that you don't have the right, actually, to get information from the municipal level of government.

That's their commitment to transparency. We take transparency very seriously on this side.

**Mr. Helwer:** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have now come to expect that if they place a request for information under the freedom of information law, portions of that response will be blacked out, removed or not provided at all. It is the standard response of this NDP government to hide racist comments made by a senior minister.

What else are they hiding?

**Ms. Howard:** When we came to government—and I think part of that was probably informed by time in opposition when we were repeatedly stonewalled on information that you could reasonably expect that a government would be keeping. I mean, they had no problem standing up every day saying that health care wait-lists were not a problem, but when they were asked for any information that they might have based that opinion on, their response was, we don't have it, we don't have any information, we're not keeping any information.

So coming from that kind of experience, in 2000, when we became government, we actually extended freedom of information legislation to public bodies that the opposition when in government had specifically excluded—municipal governments, school divisions, universities, health regions—so that people could get the kind of information that they're looking for.

But we've gone beyond that. There are now regular releases of information that previously—

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

**Mr. Helwer:** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans no longer trust what this government says. And its actions in hiding information further betray this trust.

It is the standard response of this NDP government to hide racist comments made by a senior government minister.

What else are they hiding from Manitobans?

**Ms. Howard:** I know the member opposite may be trying to play at being Woodward or Bernstein, I don't know which one over there. But, really, there is no problem looking at our government when it comes to its history of access to information and the members opposite.

We also have on this side of the House—it is now the practice that anybody who's dissatisfied with a disclosure made under FIPPA has a right of appeal, can go to the Ombudsman and express that dissatisfaction and the Ombudsman will look into that.

We also, for the first time, have made things available like ministerial expenses, made that public online. You can go and look that up. Under the previous government, when the Leader of the Opposition was a minister, he never made his expenses public; that wasn't something that he thought was appropriate to do.

So our transparency, Mr. Speaker—

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

### Expectant Mothers DHA Levels

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, school is starting next week for many children in Manitoba, and we need to focus here on what

makes a difference in the cognitive and learning development of children.

A psychological development study at New York University showed that many of the many factors that could be involved, that four are most critical for cognitive development of children.

One of these, interestingly, is ensuring that pregnant women and children are receiving sufficient levels of long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, particularly one vital for brain development, docosahexaenoic acid, or DHA.

I would ask the Premier if he can help us and provide details on what proportion of pregnant mothers in Manitoba are deficient in DHA.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, unlike any other province in Canada, we actually have a prenatal benefit that's available to every pregnant mother in this province to ensure that they have proper nutrition and access to any nutritional supplements they might require. And that puts us ahead of any other jurisdiction. I know the member's aware of that.

If he has specific recommendations he'd like to make to the Healthy Child program on the types of nutrition that should be available to people, we'd be pleased to receive it.

Public health nurses do home visits out to these homes. Public health nurses are well informed of the requirements of young mothers. And if he has any additional information he'd like to share with them, we'd be happy to get it to them as soon as possible.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The Premier well knows too many children are not even receiving those nutritional benefits. And we need to make sure not only do they get the benefits but they're using them in ways that are going to be most effective.

The Canada Food Guide says that pregnant mothers need adequate DHA during pregnancy. The international Perinatal Lipid Intake Working Group recommends a minimum of 200 milligrams per day of DHA during the latter half of pregnancy when the infant's brain is growing rapidly.

Canadian studies show that the average DHA intake in pregnancy is far below international standards, averaging only 80 milligrams a day, less than half.

I ask the Premier: What is his plan to address the DHA deficiency present in too many in Manitoba?

**Mr. Selinger:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the member knows that we have a strong complement of public health nurses in the province of Manitoba. They organize and provide many prenatal courses for young families, mothers in particular. They're able to provide all kinds of important information with respect to nutrition as well as other basic requirements for having a child and raising a child in Manitoba. And, again, if the member thinks that there's a—something they should be aware of that would help them in providing good advice and good support to young pregnant mothers in Manitoba, we'd be happy to receive that information.

\* (14:20)

But we do have a strong public health-care system in the province and we will continue to support it and not do the across-the-board cuts that we've seen the members oppose promise on so many times. They were planning to lay off public health nurses. That's part of their broad-based approach to cutting government: putting a chill on things and showing the tough love.

We're trying to support young families and we will continue to do that.

#### **Nutritional Deficiencies Call for Task Force**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, this is not just about pregnant women and infants. A randomized control trial of children who were slow in reading concluded—and I table it—that DHA supplementation offers a safe and effective way to improve reading and behaviour in healthy but underperforming children from mainstream schools.

Mr. Speaker, I've called for an all-party task force to come up with a better plan to eliminate nutritional deficiencies in our province. How many nutritional deficiencies do I need to bring forward before the Premier acts?

I ask: Is the Premier ready to be part of an all-party effort to eliminate nutritional deficiencies in our province and help children, particularly those who are struggling?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Thank you for the article from the leader of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. It is the only one in the country that's required by legislation. We have a minister of children and youth and very capable staff

over there that do a variety of longitudinal research studies on the effects and the positive effects of the investments we're making in young children and families in Manitoba, about \$400 million, a very significant increase over the last several years, and targeted.

Yes, with respect to nutrition, the member knows that we have over 900 community gardens in northern Manitoba now where there was just a handful a decade ago. He knows that we're a lead investor in the Nourishing Potential Fund which provides a variety of different forms of food security throughout Manitoba, community gardens, breakfast programs, nutrition programs for children, and we have our public health nurses which we continue to fund. We're not cutting these programs.

And even the Leader of the Liberal Party was not in favour of the budget. He was opposed to that and wanted to support the members of the opposition in cutting those programs.

If he has good information, we'll be sure to pass it on to the people in the Healthy Child subcommittee of Cabinet. They will take a look at whether the prenatal benefit and other programs we have can support this kind of research and whether it will have the desired outcomes. But we're all very interested in seeing—

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

### **Ste. Anne Hospital**

#### **Expansion Announcement**

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Merci, Monsieur le Président.

#### **Translation**

*Thank you, Mr. Speaker.*

#### **English**

Our government is investing in better health care closer to home for rural Manitoba families, rather than freezing health capital expenditures as was done in the 1990s.

Aussi, notre gouvernement travaille avec les communautés rurales et avec la communauté francophone. Monsieur le Président, je veux poser une question au ministre de la Santé.

#### **Translation**

*In addition, our government is working with rural communities and with the francophone community.*

*Mr. Speaker, I want to put a question to the Minister of Health.*

#### **English**

Could the Minister of Health please advise the House of the exciting new developments for the Ste. Anne Hospital?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Merci, Monsieur le Président.

*Cette extension va donner à la communauté accès aux services de santé plus près de chez eux.*

#### **Translation**

*Thank you, Mr. Speaker.*

*This expansion will give the community access to health services closer to home.*

#### **English**

Mr. Speaker, we were absolutely delighted to be with the community of Ste. Anne today to cut the ribbon on—*[interjection]* Listen to the reaction from members opposite who only know about cutting, know nothing about ribbons.

We were there, Mr. Speaker, to open the two brand new state-of-the-art surgical suites that are going to bring even more surgeries to that region of the province. We know that an additional surgeon has already been recruited as a result of this splendid facility. We give our thanks to the fabulous members of that community who have dedicated themselves to bringing more health care in partnership with—

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

### **Manitoba Hydro Biosecurity Protocol**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Manitoba Hydro has informed landowners about requiring easements for the circular Bipole III route. Now, biosecurity is a huge concern for landowners.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture provide me with the—Manitoba Hydro's current biosecurity protocol for agricultural lands and livestock operations?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

The member knows full well that with respect to biosecurity and security generally, one of the things Hydro wants to do is to have an additional bipole in

the province which will provide much more security to the Manitoba economy, a \$62-billion economy. And to have that additional bipole will make a phenomenal improvement in the security of hydro transmission in Manitoba and other forms of security for the Manitoba economy.

So that's one of the things that we're doing that the members opposite oppose. They would like to put Hydro at risk. They'd like to put the Manitoba economy at risk.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Speaker, I'll try one more time.

This'll—I'm talking about biosecurity, not electrical security. This is biosecurity. This is disease control in—on both land and livestock. So, Mr. Speaker, I—apparently the Premier's unable to provide a current hydro biosecurity protocol.

Can the Minister of Agriculture provide me with a contact within Manitoba Hydro? Maybe somebody in Manitoba Hydro knows about biosecurity. Can they provide me with a biosecurity control?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question.

He doesn't want to have security for Hydro. He doesn't want to have security for the Manitoba economy, but I can assure him this: Manitoba Hydro, when they're moving around Manitoba to provide services, including the maintenance of lines or any surveying that relates to that, they're very careful on approaching any private property. They're very careful and respectful of landowners. They do try to make sure that those landowners have access to electricity, but they're very mindful of biosecurity issues and will take those fully into account in the way they do their job.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Speaker, I'll just try one more time.

This is about biosecurity, and I will make sure that I've sent the Premier's answers out to all the landowners—all this—the livestock operations who take biosecurity very, very seriously. But apparently the Premier doesn't care about agriculture and agricultural disease control.

Will Manitoba—will he direct Manitoba Hydro to send me their biosecurity protocol that they will be using when they build Bipole III?

**Mr. Selinger:** I know the member had a prepared question there; he didn't hear my last answer.

My last answer was—my—the last answer was, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba Hydro's very respectful of biosecurity. They don't enter people's private property without first contacting them and making sure that there's a comfort level with doing that. When it comes to their heavy equipment, they do biosecurity procedures on heavy equipment to make sure it's safe when they move it from one piece of land to another. And they will certainly follow all the terms of the environmental licence which has recently been issued, which has even more conditions on it than were recommended by the Clean Environment Commission.

So I can assure the member opposite, as we secure energy for the people of Steinbach, for the people of Winkler, for the people of southern Manitoba, we will do it in a safe and responsible way, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired. Order, please. Time for oral questions has expired.

It's time for—

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Mahatma Gandhi Way

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** There are many people in the world whose strength of character is an inspiration to me and to all of us. But no worldly being do I respect more than Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, known across the globe as Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi embodied the philosophies of non-violence and advocated the social justice in the face of extreme adversity. Though—through his words and actions, he taught people from every nation, every race and every religion that peace and understanding can combat the world's injustices.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased that, earlier this month, a portion of York Avenue leading to the Canadian museum of human rights was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi Way. Mahatma Gandhi symbolizes the fight for human rights, and this honorary street designation will help guide travellers across the world and our nation towards the Canadian museum of human rights. Nearby will stand the statue of Mahatma Gandhi.

\* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest honours in my life was taking part in the unveiling of this statue along with other dignitaries at The Forks in 2004. I thank Dr. Dhalla, whose work, along with the



government of India, resulted in this historical donation to our city. It is spiritually uplifting to know that Mahatma is with us in our city, both through the statue and now the road that bears his name.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Winnipeg City Councillor Devi Sharma, Deputy Mayor Russ Wyatt, Mayor Sam Katz, as well as Dr. and Mrs. Dakshinamurti, who's up in the gallery, and all the board members from the Mahatma Gandhi Centre of Canada who worked extremely hard to help deliver this dream long held by the community to honour the memory of Mahatma Gandhi.

I would also like to thank the Indo-Canadian community leaders and all the hard-working people who believe in circulating Gandhi's ideals. This is a remarkable step to the road of success for those who—from some of us who dream about building a better world.

To everyone in the gallery and to all of us, thank you for being here and let's—in Gandhi's words—be the change we wish the world to see.

I request all members of this Chamber to stand and give a big applause to the people who have come here to witness this member's statement.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

#### **Pinawa's Pen Pal Program**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** I rise today in the House to acknowledge the thriving Pen Pal program at F.W. Gilbert School in Pinawa.

This exciting program connects young students with older adults in an effort to break down the barriers between age groups. The Pen Pal program is organized by the Pinawa Age-Friendly Committee as part of their commitment to intergenerational participation.

Three years ago, Pat Porth, a long-standing member of the Age-Friendly Committee, presented the idea to Darcia Light, principal of the elementary school, based on her experience of being a pen pal in Whitemouth. The idea was well received and very quickly the program was established, and it's been successfully running at the school for the last three years.

The program is a very simple: students and older adults exchange letters five to six times during the school year. The program begins with the students writing an introductory letter to their pen pal and then the adults write back a response. Letters are

exchanged around seasonal holidays like Christmas, Valentine's Day and Easter, so students are able to share their creativity with cards or drawings.

The program has been described as a confidence builder for students by teaching them proper writing skills and how to print and spell correctly. But the most exciting part of the program is when the students get the opportunity and meet their pen pals face to face. Students will often prepare a video, perform a skit, play musical instruments or share what projects they have worked on at school throughout the year to their pen pal.

Mr. Speaker, the Pen Pal program in Pinawa is an excellent example of teaching intergenerational communication through showing participants the value in understanding each other's life experiences beyond age-based stereotypes.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage the members of the House to congratulate the efforts of the Pen Pal program in Pinawa in breaking down age barriers. I look forward to seeing the day when similar programs will take place across Manitoba. Thank you.

#### **Sher-E-Punjab Sports Club 5th Annual Sports Tournament**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, the Sher-E-Punjab Sports Club hosted their 5th annual sports tournament at the Valley Gardens Community Centre. This family-friendly tournament brought-together people and teams from all over Winnipeg to play sports and spend time with the community.

This year's two-day tournament was a great success. Hundreds of community members from all walks of life were in attendance. The tournament included sports familiar to many Canadians, such as soccer, basketball, volleyball and field hockey, and also kabaddi, a game that originated in India but has gained many international participants. There was also a shot put, tug-of-war, three-legged races, foot races and a large dancing tent for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, the Sher-E-Punjab Sports Club is an organization based out of East Kildonan. Led by Indo-Canadian parents in the community, the club provides opportunities for children and youth to participate in a variety of sports. Sports help to develop not only athletic skills, but also the leadership and team-building skills while promoting healthier lifestyles and creating safer, more connected communities.

Mr. Speaker, nothing brings together a community like sports. Sport also helps build bridges and create connections between communities. Many people from across the city and from various backgrounds came out to join in the activities together.

I want to thank the many organizers, sponsors and volunteers that helped make the tournament a success. Through their efforts, our community was able to come together for an exciting, fun and hot weekend of summer sports. In particular, I'd like to thank the board of directors of the Sher-E-Punjab Sports Club, including Harkamal Saggi, Jagdev Buttar, Sinder Gill, Kuljit Gill, Baljinder Jawandha, Randy Dhaliwal, Baljit Sandhu, Dilbar Pandher, Nirbhai Dhaliwal, Karam Sidhu, Nachhater Sangha, Mohinder Sidhu, Kanwarjit Rakhra, Gurmit Dhillion and Tony Panchhi.

Congratulations on a great event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Christie Lavallée**

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an amazing young woman, Christie Lavallée of St. Ambroise, who has 'quali'—recently qualified to participate in the 2014 North American Indigenous Games. Ms. Lavallée will compete with the Manitoba team in the sport of archery.

This remarkable young woman has been receiving awards and accolades in the past few years. To name a few: the Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievement Award for her personal achievements, the Spirit of the Earth Award from Manitoba Hydro, an academic award from the southwest region and the Metis Role Model Awards, the National Aboriginal Role Model Award and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples' Annual Youth Achievement Award for culture, arts and dance.

Not only is Christie culturally involved, she dances; she is a musician and an archer and a cancer survivor. She was diagnosed with cancer 15 years ago. She underwent surgery which left her visually impaired. She has no vision in her right eye and only 40 per cent remaining in her left. But, even through all this, she has been able to do everything she would like to do.

When Christie heads off to Regina in 2014 for the North American Indigenous Games, she will have the opportunity to compete with archers from all over Canada and the United States. One of the

major reasons why Christie will be wearing the brown and gold for the first time is because she recently won the gold medal at the provincial championships for the junior women's compound division.

Mr. Speaker, this wasn't all from her standout summer. She also won a silver medal in the junior compound category in the 2013 national outdoor 3-D archery—'co'—championships in Woodstock, New Brunswick, improving from a fourth-place finish in the 2012 tournament. Not only improving in the tournament, but she also moved into a different category where her distance maximum was increased by 50 yards.

The Indigenous Games will be Christie's biggest competition yet. Throughout the many 'tournaments' and competitions Ms. Lavallée has taken part in, she has picked up may—different skills and met different archers who have given her pointers, which, in turn, has helped her make the best shots possible.

Ms. Lavallée begins university in the next few weeks, but her plan will be to continue training throughout the fall and winter as much as possible, with the summer of 2014 high in her mind.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Great Manitoba Duck Race**

**Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James):** Mr. Speaker, Assiniboine Park is one of Winnipeg's great community places. Accessible to anyone, the park is a beautiful place to take in events, enjoy the outdoors, connect with friends and witness the diversity of our province.

The Assiniboine Park Conservancy has been working hard over the past four years to redevelop Assiniboine Park, adding many new delights and attractions to this wonderful public space.

Next weekend, the 'Assiniborne'—Assiniboine Park Conservancy is bringing back a favourite community event: the Great Manitoba Duck Race. On Saturday, September 7th, up to 30,000 yellow rubber duckies will flock to the Assiniboine River by the Portage Avenue footbridge. Anyone is welcome to purchase a duck and enter the race, and prizes will be awarded to those lucky ducks that finish first.

The event will raise funds for the Assiniboine Park Conservancy's wonderful redevelopment of Assiniboine Park and the Assiniboine Park Zoo, including the Journey to Churchill northern species exhibit now under construction. The most

comprehensive project of its kind in Canada, Journey to Churchill aims to teach the public about issues related to polar bears, other northern species, conservation and climate change.

Other projects that the Assiniboine Park Conservancy has undertaken in redeveloping the park have included the children's garden, popular with my own kids, the expanded duck pond and the Qualico Family Centre.

The Great Manitoba Duck Race is also a great opportunity to enjoy some time in our park. I'm attending the event with my children, and we are very excited for what is sure to be a real nail-biter of a race.

In today's world, many of us find ourselves spending more and more time indoors, increasingly bombarded by technology, yet disconnected from our neighbours. Events like the Great Manitoba Duck Race bring people in the community together to enjoy the outdoors, to have fun, to support improvements to the park, a place that is free, accessible and dedicated to the experience of being engaged with the outdoors.

\* (14:40)

I would like to recognize the Assiniboine Park Conservancy for putting together this event and for their vision for Assiniboine Park to ensure it remains a treasure in the heart of Winnipeg. I invite other members to join me in—at the race, and may the best duck win. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** That concludes members' statements. We'll now move on with grievances. Any grievances?

Oh, sorry. The honour—before we get to grievances then, I didn't see the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** I'd like to stand and rise on a matter of public importance, please—urgent public importance.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a matter of urgent public importance.

#### MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), in accordance with rule 36(1), that the regularly scheduled business of

the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the provincial government's violation of the freedom of information and privacy protection act, section 23(1)(a), redaction powers to protect itself from ministers who utter remarks that are inappropriate and the need for the Ombudsman to investigate the violation.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye, in accordance with rule 36(1), it's been moved that the regularly scheduled business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the provincial government's violation of the freedom of information and privacy protection act, section 23 point (1)(a), redaction powers to protect itself from ministers who utter remarks that are inappropriate and the need for the Ombudsman to investigate the violation.

And, before recognizing other members that may wish to add contributions to this matter, I should remind all members that, under rule 36(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other recognized parties in the House are allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in Beuchesne citation 390, in quotations, urgency, end of quotations, in this context means urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion.

In the remarks members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is an urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

Are there further contributions?

**Mr. Ewasko:** Mr. Speaker, in the next few minutes I'm going to try to prove to you and this House why this is a matter of urgent public importance.

All week we have been demanding that questions be answered surrounding the government's misuse of section 23(1)(a) of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. They have had ample opportunity to answer as to which parts of section 23(1)(a) applies to the redacted comments made by the Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson).

There were many questions asked of the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino), who is in fact the minister in charge of the act, Mr. Speaker.

They have denied that these comments that the Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson) had put in the record in the FIPPA request that was—that we've been talking about all week, Mr. Speaker. They were denying the fact that they were the advice, opinion, proposals, recommendations, analyses or policy options developed by or for the public body or a minister, all of which are exemptions under the 20—under section 23(1)(a).

The point is, Mr. Speaker, is what else could it be? In fact, the FIPPA office had actually stated that the reason why the redacting was done was due to that particular section of the act.

And the fact is, is that we've asked many questions throughout the week to—for the—whether it's the minister in charge of the act, Mr. Speaker, or any of the other ministers or Deputy Premier, to stand up and basically put forth how come that was blacked out. It just so happens that just because they used a less-than adequate Sharpie in their eyes, that is why it's come to our attention.

The fact is that this government and their staff has broken yet another law, Mr. Speaker, and this requires immediate debate and action by this Legislature. This is a grievance offence by this government and shows—in regards to some of our other conversations today—it shows complete and utter disrespect for this Legislature and what it stands for and the people—and for the people of Manitoba.

It is clear that the only reason that these comments were censored was to protect the reputation of this government, the reputation of the staff involved and the reputation of an NDP MLA, who made racist and completely inappropriate comments as a minister of the Crown, no matter how much good this minister has apparently done in the past, according to the Premier (Mr. Selinger), Mr. Speaker. And it seems to me that the fact of the actions of the past are irrelevant in this, because we have seen the actions of the Premier taken upon backbenchers on the government side immediately.

And—but what I want to do—or what I want to talk about for another couple of minutes, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this is in addition to the comments put on the record by the Deputy Premier. We're actually talking about something

even bigger than that, and that's the lack of democracy. We want to talk about how many other times has this government abused section 23(1)(a) or any other part of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

How can this Legislature know and have confidence in the practices and procedures of a system which can be in complete shambles, have zero credibility? The entire FIPPA system has now come into question, as well as the so-called standard procedures and practices which this government seems to follow and hide behind, Mr. Speaker. The freedom of—freedom to information and transparency of government is an important part of our democracy, especially on this side of the House. We, on this side of the House, as I stated earlier in question period, we ask questions to the government side and nine times out of 10—maybe even more than that—we don't get answers from the government side. So, then, what is—what tools do we have? What tools do other Manitobans have? They have the ability to do a FIPPA request and get a response back. And so, if we're now seeing over the past week that some of this process has been compromised, we're wondering what do us on opposition plus other Manitobans—what other avenues do we have to go?

The Premier has stated that FIPPA applicants have the right to appeal to the Ombudsman if they feel the response by government was lacking, inappropriate or if they feel something was being hidden. I know that the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) had stated that in an answer in QP today as well. The fact is when you get a document like that and it's blacked out, in the past, how do we know we're supposed to appeal it? We are putting the trust in the services of the FIPPA office to be going and handling the process properly, and, so that when they go and they black out something, we're under—we were under the assumption that, under the act, section 23(1)(a), it was to protect—the reason why it was blacked out—it was to protect against the material that would reveal advice, opinions, proposals, recommendations, analyses or policy options developed by or for the public body or a minister.

If this would not have come to light, due to the lack of judgment as far as the quality of Sharpie—I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker—how would the public know to appeal it to the Ombudsman?

Now, here comes another Pandora's box wide open, Mr. Speaker. The public, Manitobans,

opposition members, even government people, are going to then now start questioning if they get a piece of FIPPA—a FIPPA document back after their request was made and it is blackened out, they're going to be automatically appealing it to the Ombudsman. Is the Ombudsman's office prepared to deal with this?

\*(14:50)

It's going to be interesting in the next few minutes to hear somebody from the government side stand up and defend or answer some of these questions that have been brought up this past week. It's simple. The purpose of the MUPI today, Mr. Speaker, is that we want the government to stop breaking the law. They broke the balanced budget legislation with 2013 budget, no legally required referendum; breaking the laws under FIPPA, inappropriately applying exemptions and censoring of information. The NDP have a history of shredding important and official documents, as well as missing video footage, has all become commonplace under this watch of the NDP. It is a blatant disregard for transparency and accountability.

Over the course of this government's regime, the civil service has increasingly become politicized and partisan in nature. This has led to cover-ups and other inappropriate actions, exactly as what has happened here in the misusing of section 23(1)(a) of the FIPPA.

Mr. Speaker, this has to be stopped, and this is why I stand today. The neutrality of civil servants must be upheld, and these same civil servants and their actions must be held accountable to the people of Manitoba. There must be a full debate on this issue and a review of the government's procedures and processes when it deals with FIPPA requests by members of the public, as well as any public body.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** I am pleased to be able to get up and respond to the member's motion.

First of all, on the question of urgency, certainly this has been a topic of debate now for some time in the Legislature. For several days we have answered the member's questions about this topic, and certainly I do not see that the test for urgency is met, based on the fact that this is the first time that he's bringing it but also based on the fact there are many other ways that if you wanted to advocate for

changes to FIPPA legislation, he has the power to do that in many places in this Legislature. He has the power to do that in question period, as he's been doing. He has the power to do it in any of the speeches he makes. He has the power to do that by bringing forward legislation if—as private members' bill, if he so chooses, and having a debate on that. So this requirement for urgency I don't believe is met.

I will say I know we're not to actually debate the matter at hand. I'm going to be perhaps more careful than the member opposite to not do that, but I will say on this I think that members opposite are coming very, very close to attacking the civil servants who make these decisions based on the law, and that's how it works in departments, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how it worked under them. I know how it works for us, and the decisions about what goes out in response to a freedom of information request are made by civil servants. They look at the law; they're trained to apply the law; those decisions are signed off by senior civil servants. That's how it works. And I get that they don't—many, many times in this Legislature, when they don't like the answer to something, their response is then to go after civil servants or to go after independent officers. And I know that that's the way that they want to conduct themselves. I don't think it's entirely fair.

I spoke in question period, certainly, of the differences of opinion when it comes to freedom of information between our parties. I don't think I need to go into that again. I know the members don't like the answers they've been getting, but they have been getting answers. And I don't believe that just based on the fact they don't like the answers they're getting, I don't believe that this meets the test of urgency and I don't believe that it's something that we need to set aside other very urgent business for this House such as getting on with the debate on Bill 18 and protecting kids who'll be going back to school soon. I don't believe that's something that we have to do today, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to start by thanking honourable members for their advice on the matter of urgent public importance raised by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) on whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet should be debated today. The notice required by rule 36(1) was provided. Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given

immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward by honourable members. However, I was not persuaded that the ordinary business of the House should be set aside to deal with this issue today.

Although this is an issue that some members may have concerns about, I do not believe that the public interest will be harmed if the business of the House is not set aside to debate the motion today.

Additionally, I would like to note that there are other avenue—that other avenues exist for members to raise this issue, including question period and member statements, and, in fact, this issue has been raised in oral questions over the past several days.

Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I must rule that this matter does not meet the criteria set out by our rules and precedents, and I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Now we'll move on to grievances. Seeing no grievances—

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, would you please resume third reading debate on Bill 20.

### DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READING

**Mr. Speaker:** Now, resume debate on concurrence and third reading of 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 Midland, who has 17 minutes remaining.

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

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Interesting, the Government House Leader was, in speaking to the MUPI or cause for the MUPI, blamed us for not debating Bill 18, and then two minutes later stands up and calls Bill 20. So we know where the priorities—where their priority is. Their priority is to obtain more tax money for themselves, to pay them a

vote—pay themselves a vote tax. And it's—there's no doubt about it, Mr. Speaker, this government is all about the money, but the difference is the money is for them, it's not for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, during question period, I had a guest up in the gallery, and she was watching question period, and she just sent me an email afterwards, and she says, thanks again for lunch and a show. She says, wow, what would they do without a past to refer to, and it was retros '90s day today. I think they batted a hundred per cent on mentioning the '90s with every non-answer that they gave.

And so, you know, it—I can understand this, makes it easier for the spin doctors. Like, they don't have to think up anything original; just go back to the '90s and how about that. And, instead of talking about their own record of mismanagement, I guess they will leave it up to us to do that, and, believe me, there is no shortage of material to talk about the mismanagement of this government.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, just going back to question period again, asking the government about biosecurity for agricultural land, fairly simple question, I thought. I thought it was a simple question. And he gets up and talks about electrical security. Either he didn't understand or he didn't hear. I gave him another chance. He still didn't understand. This is a serious issue for landowners. It's the equivalent of me walking into your house with my muddy boots on and not thinking twice about it. Who would do that? Who would walk into someone else's house with muddy boots on and not even think twice about it? This is the same for landowners; whether it's plant diseases, whether it's animal diseases, they're very easily transferred. And our agricultural producers, be it—whether it's crop production or for livestock operations, are very, very sincere and very strict about biosecurity on their land and in their operations.

\* (15:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, to hear this government's flippant, negative attitude towards agriculture, towards private landowners, it is concerning. It is concerning, and I know that the concern will be even more so when I send out that non-answer to the landowners.

*Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

And when they read that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province, the man in charge, doesn't even understand anything about biosecurity. And not

only is he not interested—fine, be not interested if you don't want to be interested, but at least take it under advisement and ask someone—until he gets the note brought in, and then he gives another non-answer. Like, that is just totally wrong. And I know that the landowners who are affected by Bipole III will certainly not be at all heartened when they read that non-answer from the Premier (Mr. Selinger) about a serious concern for them. This—and it's just a reflection back again on this government. They really don't care.

This—it's been quite a week this week. We started out with racist comments from the Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson) to be defended by the Premier, to be covered over by the freedom information office trying to redact comments that apparently they're—as the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) says, they should have bought a better Sharpie or something in order to make it cover over better. That's how we started the week.

We learned later, as the week went on, we have the highest inflation across the country—and Manitoba now has the highest inflation, 3 per cent. We learned that we have lowest wage growth, which translates into less money for families. As we talked yesterday about school starting next week and a lot of parents out there buying school supplies, and now they're—you know, they have lowest wage growth, we have the highest inflation. And there's less money to be put into those households and into those school supplies and into the extracurricular activities that our children should be engaging in. In—for—whether it be for the arts, or whether it be for physical ed—physical activities to promote better health, it's—those are important to our children coming up in this province, and yet here we have less money into those families.

And it's not just less money into the families, but it's the huge growth in income for this government—22 per cent increase in income. Imagine what those families could do, as they're looking at back to school, if they had—suddenly they had a 22 per cent wage increase. It would make a huge difference for them. But what are we getting out of this 22 per cent wage increase to the government, to this Province? It's a continuing parade of ribbon cuttings. And they're cutting ribbons using the money that those children and grand—and our grandchildren will have to pay, because somebody has to pay for that. I know this government doesn't care about tomorrow or the next day. They've only worried about today and themselves, but someone has to pay for this.

In spite of a 22 per cent increase in their way—in their—in the income, the revenue to this government, we continue to have a \$500-million deficit on an annual basis. We continue to not only borrow more money in this province and go into debt farther, but this government is not repaying any debt. This is going to have serious implications down the road when interest rates do rise, and they—they're at historic lows now—interest rates will rise. How much and when, we don't know. We can only hope that it's not too much, because this province is going to feel that effects of that and Manitobans are going to feel that effects of that very quickly from a government that's out of control in their spending. They've maxed out their credit card. There is no money at all left to rebuild Manitoba and to build on our core government services.

They seem to have lost all track of reality from this government. And not only—and that's today's income. The 22 per cent rise in the revenues, this—today, and yet you go back to flood compensation, there are hundreds of Manitobans that have still not got flood compensation worked out with this—between this government and themselves, from the 2011 flood. Two years and we still have over 2,000 people homeless from that flood.

In fact, I talked to another person this—just at noon down in the cafeteria, a fellow who used to live near me, and he was telling me that he bought a piece of property out between south—southeast of Ste. Rose, along Lake Manitoba. And he had just barely got his small property and he had a little bit of livestock there, and he was retired. He was on top of the world there, and then 2011 flood came along and his property is gone now and he's back living in Winnipeg.

And, you know, we didn't talk about the financial loss, but, obviously, the financial loss is there because he had invested in that property, he had put his retirement hopes in that property. And now—but being the upbeat person that he was, he says, well, there's also consolations in everything. He says, at least he's closer to his grandchild in Winnipeg now, being—having to live in Winnipeg, but you could tell that the hurt was there from him, that he—from losing his property and not being able to go back there.

So, you know, and, again, this morning—Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton), maybe it was in question period today, he's talking about the rebuilding of 75 Highway, and I'm sure

that all those cross-border shoppers that are headed down to North Dakota and Minnesota for the long weekend are certainly going to appreciate that upgrade to 75 Highway. And I know that they'll certainly be hoping that the lines aren't too long when they come back on Monday from their shopping, their cross-border shopping.

This cross-border shopping comes at the expense of our local businesses, and it's going to hurt our local business. It's hurting them already. They're already feeling the pinch of that. We've heard from different communities: the community of Roblin talking about the amount of shopping that's going—moved over to Yorkton and now they're treating the local stores as convenience stores. And this hurts local business, and it's money out of the Manitoba economy because when it's spent out of province it's gone. It's not going to recirculate here, so we need to—we need this government to at least begin to try to address this. They need to slow down their ribbon cutting and start thinking about the debt in this province, about their out-of-control spending.

Of course, we continue to debate Bill 20 and—which is actually ripping up the taxpayer protection act, and so Manitobans will know that we will be headed into even more tax increases once this government is able to get this bill through because that's—without taxpayer protection act—we should have been having a referendum right now on the—we should be out there debating a referendum rather than be debating Bill 20. And that's what the law is right now, and because Bill 20 hasn't passed, the law says that there should be a referendum prior to any major tax increase.

And yet here we are, debating a bill that's illegally—while they've illegally raised the sales tax and \$5 million a week coming out of the Manitoba economy into this government's coffers to help their self-congratulatory ribbon-cutting parade, and that's hurting Manitoba economy. It's pulling money out; it's not creating jobs because when people are overburdened with taxes they don't—they have to spend only on the necessary and even some of the necessary gets cut back when the taxes become too high. So we need to—we need this government to pull—they really need to pull Bill 20 and call a referendum.

And I know, again, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) didn't seem to like my suggestion for Bill 33, another bill that they don't seem to be calling these days. And I gave him a very

good suggestion for Bill 33, I told him, the best amendment for Bill 33 is to pull the bill and go back and consult with municipalities. I know the municipalities would certainly be interested in speaking with the government if they were to do that, but, no, they're—I think that they would be quite keen to engage in some conversation with government if they were to pull Bill 33 and begin 'consultive' consultations with them instead of trying to use the heavy hand of government to demand what they should be doing.

\* (15:10)

And we have so many municipalities around the province that are well run, and, you know, the longer the story plays out, too—there was some articles in the Free Press recently about the oil boom in southwest Saskatchewan and in North Dakota, and one of the communities that was highlighted in that article was the town of Waskada.

And the town of Waskada has seen the minister's wrath, the Minister of Local Government's (Mr. Lemieux) wrath before, because he said that there was a community out there that had four councillors representing 35 residents each and he thought that that was terrible. He didn't think that was very economical and he thought that he had a better plan. Well, it turns out that that's the town of Waskada, and they've actually very well managed and they have a huge budget. They—unlike this government, they have a surplus every year. In fact, they don't just balance their books, they actually have a surplus every year, and due to—also due to a—the commitment from a late resident, an endowment from a late resident, that they're actually building a huge community centre. And I was through Waskada here about three weeks ago and it is absolutely booming out there.

And this government seems to have lost track. They don't realize that there are—there is an economic reality out there that's—that can function, and they fail to realize that they would function even better if this government would just back off their taxes and control their own spending. We know that their budgets continue to skyrocket every year. They're out of control on their spending. They—in spite of a 22 per cent revenue growth, they are still not projecting to be able to balance the budget.

We know that they've raided Manitoba Hydro so that there's no money left in Manitoba Hydro to raid any farther, and with their ill-conceived plans for



Manitoba Hydro, trying to Americanize Manitoba Hydro and sell power into the US at a loss at the expense of Manitobans, because our hydro rates have gone up 8 per cent already in the past year. They're going to continue to rise just to pay for this—for the subsidization of selling power into the US, and yet this government does not seem to want to back off and at the very least put the Bipole III under an NFAT.

And, if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) needs an explanation of biosecurity, I would be happy to provide that to him. You know, I don't even need to go to the dictionary, I can just write it out for him. I can type it if he can't read my handwriting. You know, I would just do anything so that he would understand what biosecurity is, you know, because here's the person who's running the province who seems to—either he doesn't care or doesn't want to know, and so we're—you know, that's not reflective of a \$12-billion company that's headed up by a person who really doesn't care about what is happening to this province, and that's a sad state.

This government needs to pull Bill 20 and call a referendum. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** I was hesitant to get out of my seat. I was wondering if members opposite were going to get up and speak to this hoist motion brought forward by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), and I want to thank the member for Steinbach for bringing this forward for debate today.

And, indeed, I think there's so many issues with respect to this bill and I would hope that members opposite would get up and stand in their place so that their constituents would know where they stand on this—on respect to—with respect to Bill 20 and with respect to this hoist motion. I think it's a very important thing for this Legislature at this time. We've been here for several months now. We've had the opportunity to debate this bill several times, but members opposite are refusing to put on the record why it is that they are opposing this—or that they are support—they are in support of this bill, why they are in support of hiking the PST for hard-working Manitobans and why they are doing so while at the same time stripping Manitobans of their democratic right to vote on a tax increase, which we know is currently required under existing legislation in the province of Manitoba.

And so I think it's unfortunate that members opposite are refusing to put on the record why they

are in favour of a tax increase. I think I know why, though, because I think it's not in the best interest of them to put on the record the reasons why they're in favour of a tax increase.

I know members opposite, of course, went door to door in the last election campaign—all members opposite. And they knocked on the doors of their constituents and not once did they mention to their constituents that they were going to raise the PST.

In fact, they said it was nonsense. I will remind members opposite: they said it was nonsense. Their Premier said it was nonsense that they were going to be raising any kind of taxes after the next election. So they went door to door, they made a promise and what did they do? They 'boke'—they broke that promise to Manitobans.

Not only they—did they break their promise to Manitobans but they were incredibly disrespectful in doing so for Manitobans. And I think that they—their disrespect to Manitobans by not listening to Manitobans—whether they came in the way of a rally to the front steps of the Manitoba Legislature, whether they were at the doors, whether the emails that they've been sending; all of these things—all of these emails and letters and phone calls and people showing up at the Manitoba Legislature, at rallies and to speak at committee; members opposite have obviously refused to listen to what Manitobans are saying with respect to this bill and this PST hike.

And I think it's unfortunate. It's incredibly disrespectful, but I'll get more—get into more of that later, because we do see that there's been a lack of consultation as well that had—that took place prior to the increase of the PST. And that, again, is disrespectful as well.

I also want to talk this afternoon about the PST increase and how it affects and has a negative impact on all Manitobans, when it comes to seniors, when it comes to families and their children, when it comes to businesses and, indeed, when it comes to individual taxpayers in our province, when it comes to young people who are making a decision who are coming out of university who are getting jobs in our province, it—when they are deciding whether or not they are going to stay here if they can get a job here in Manitoba whether or not they're going to stay here.

And they look at other provinces like Saskatchewan; they look at other provinces across our country, and they'll start to compare their income

taxes that they have to pay and this—and the living and the standard—or the cost of living as well. They'll do that. They'll look at it all as a package. And you have to look at it all as a package.

Members opposite like to pick out certain things where, you know, maybe it might be beneficial for Manitobans. But, if you look at the overall big picture and how we compare to other provinces and with taxes and fees and services and all these things that Manitobans have to pay, we are not in a competitive environment here in Manitoba. And, Mr. Acting Speaker, when we compare to other provinces like Saskatchewan and our other western provinces—indeed most other provinces across Canada, with the exception of maybe one or two, we are near the bottom of the barrel.

And when those youth in our province—which, of course, we know are the future of our province—when they are making the decision to whether or not to stay here or leave, they will look at those factors and they will make their well-informed choice as to whether or not they stay here in Manitoba.

And so I would think members opposite would want to do what they can to encourage Manitobans and especially young people in this province to stay here and work and raise their families here in Manitoba.

And by supporting this bill and not supporting this hoist motion, I think they're sending a very clear message to Manitobans that they don't care about the future of our province. They don't want to keep Manitobans here in our province. They don't want to keep our youth here in our province. And so that's the message that they're sending to our youth and our future of our province.

But not only that, I'll get into talking about the various ways that the NDP have broken the law with respect to this increase in the PST. Of course, we know that they were supposed to bring about this PST hike according to the existing laws of our province right now. We know that—and members opposite know full well—that they were supposed to bring this forward by way of a referendum to the people of the province to allow them the ability to have a say when it comes to the PST increase. But they didn't do so because they were afraid of what Manitobans would tell them in that referendum.

\* (15:20)

I also will talk this afternoon a little bit about the fact that we have the highest inflation rate in Canada

with the lowest wage growth, and that is a nasty combination for disposable income in Manitobans' pockets in this province. It means that they will have less disposable income, which means that they will be spending less money here in the province of Manitoba, and that is not the way to grow an economy.

And so—and, of course, one of the last things I want to speak to today is the focus on—by this government and the obsession that they have about speaking about the 1990s, and about—also about their ribbon cuttings and their—their—you know, the way that they just want to go out and spend money on their various pet projects to make them, you know, look better. It's all about their political—how they look politically to Manitobans. That's what—they care more about that than they do about what's actually in the best interest of Manitobans.

And so that's, I think, an important thing to raise when discussing this bill. But, you know, and I would encourage all Manitobans that, if they were really interested in what's in the best interest of Manitobans, that they would support this hoist motion. This is an opportunity that members opposite and all members of this Manitoba Legislature have now. They have the opportunity today to vote in favour of this, or at least stand in their place and say why they don't support this hoist motion.

What this hoist motion allows is an opportunity for the government to go back to the people of Manitoba. This would be hoisted for six months. We could revisit this in six months. It doesn't mean it won't come back to the Manitoba Legislature. We have ample time for it to come back to the Manitoba Legislature. But this is an opportunity for this government to do the right thing here, allow for this hoist motion to go through, and go back and give them the opportunity to go back to their constituents and perhaps ask their constituents, are they in favour of this PST increase.

Maybe, perhaps, go and consult various businesses in Manitoba, businesses in their community. Maybe, perhaps, ask, you know, for various non-profit organizations. Ask—ask people in Manitoba what they really think about this and not be so afraid to go back and do the proper consultation that should have taken place many, many, many months ago. And I think, had the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) done his proper due diligence with respect to this PST increase prior to introducing the

bill in the Manitoba Legislature, I think he would have found from Manitobans that they weren't, in fact, in favour of this PST increase.

But, again, members opposite believe that they know best. They think that they know what's in the best interest of Manitobans more than Manitobans know what's in their own best interest, and that is fundamentally the difference between the NDP party and our party, because they believe they know best and we believe that Manitobans know best. And I think it's the sign of an arrogant government who chooses not to consult Manitobans in any kind of meaningful way. It's the arrogance of a government that has been in for too long that believes that they know what's in the best interest of Manitobans.

And I think it's important. I think this hoist motion is a perfect opportunity for members opposite to take a little time out, maybe go back to their communities and perhaps speak to people in those communities. Go door to door; go and knock on their doors as they did in the last election; and maybe go knock on those same doors again and ask the people when they're going door to door: Now that this PST increase is on the table in the Manitoba Legislature, you know, we voted in favour of it—you could say that you voted in favour of the hoist motion because you wanted to come back to your own constituents and give them the opportunity to have a say in this PST increase. And I think, if members opposite did support that, it would give them the opportunity to go door to door and really ask Manitobans and their constituents when they go door to door, really ask them if they are in favour of this PST increase.

But I suspect members opposite—the reason why they're not standing in this Manitoba Legislature today and they're not wanting to—and yesterday and weeks past—they're refusing to debate this hoist motion. They're refusing to debate Bill 20 because I think that they're afraid what their constituents would say. They're afraid to listen to their constituents, because I think they know that their constituents would say that they're not, in fact, in favour of this PST increase.

And so, you know, of course, there is an easier way too. I mean, this is one way. They've already refused to hold a referendum which is the existing law in the province of Manitoba. So the NDP, by not holding that referendum, when it comes to the question of the PST increase, by not holding that referendum, what we are seeing from this government is that they are afraid of what

Manitobans would say if that referendum were to be taken place. Well, we have asked day in, day out in this Manitoba Legislature—we have asked members opposite if they would call the referendum, if they would do the right thing, if they would stop breaking the laws in our province, if they would call that referendum and go back to the people of Manitoba and ask them for their vote on the PST increase, but they have refused to answer those questions. They've refused to call for a referendum, and so we have really—this is another opportunity that we're giving members opposite to take a time out by supporting this hoist motion here before the Manitoba Legislature today. If they support this, then they actually have a chance to go back and ask their constituents whether or not they agree with the PST increase. And, you know, it's just another opportunity that they have.

And we know—I want to go back to the first point that I spoke about earlier, and that is that this government is a government of broken promises to the people of Manitoba. They are a government that likes to go out and say one thing to Manitobans during an election campaign. They are desperate and they wanted to get elected, and they were so desperate that they would say anything they could to Manitobans in order to get elected. And I think Manitobans are starting to see past that, because not only did they break their promise when it came to this—when it came to raising taxes in Manitoba, they broke their promises to children who have autism and who need—who have autism spectrum disorder and who need those much-needed ABA services. They broke their promise in so many different ways for Manitobans. Manitobans who perhaps voted for them in the past and voted because they heard them say, no, we're not going to raise taxes—voted for them because they said, yes, we're going to support those ABA services, voted for them for so many other reasons because they went door to door and they lied to Manitobans and they said—and as a party they spread the lies to Manitobans and they told them one thing during the election, and they turned around right after getting elected and did quite the opposite.

But I think Manitobans are starting to realize what this government is all about—that it is not a government with integrity. It's a government that is desperate and is out of touch with reality, out of touch with Manitobans. It is an arrogant government that believes that they know what's in the best interests of Manitobans more so than Manitobans know what's in their own best interest.

And so the longer they go out and they make the promises—the longer that they go out and they cut the ribbons in all the ribbon-cutting ceremonies, we know that half the ribbon-cutting ceremonies that they hold in this province—half—more than half of them—probably 80 per cent of them don't even come to fruition in this province. Or it's a second or third ribbon-cutting for the same project that's been announced over and over and over again. And there are so many examples of that. I could bring forward a binder that I have of all the NDP press releases since 1999 when they came into power and the duplication of those press releases is uncanny.

\*(15:30)

And I think we just need to go back and I'll certainly—and for the next opportunity that I have to speak on this in the House, I'll perhaps bring some of those press releases forward and remind members opposite of how many times they have reintroduced projects over the years. And then they try and hide behind—that those projects, the only way to pay for them is through this PST increase. Well, several of these projects were projects that were introduced six, seven, eight, nine, 10 years ago, projects that haven't even seen the light of day. Now, members opposite have gone out and cut the ribbons for them two, three, four times over, sometimes even five times over. But those projects have yet to see the light of the day.

Presumably, when members opposite and Cabinet ministers opposite and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) go out and they cut these ribbons and have these ceremonies and make these great announcements and these grandiose announcements, presumably, they have the money in the budget at the time that they make the announcement.

So these reannouncements that were made three, four, five times over, from six, seven, eight, nine, 10 years ago, when those were announced at that time, the money should have been in the budget for that project in that given fiscal year. But, because they didn't, because they overspent all the way along in this province, because they overspent, a lot of those projects that they promised Manitobans haven't even yet to see the light of day. And now they're hiding behind a PST increase to say that that's why we need all these projects in Manitoba.

Well, had they properly managed the finances in this province over the past 13, almost 14 years now, I don't believe the NDP would be in the position, and

that Manitobans would be in the position, today of having to pay for this NDP's mismanagement of the finances of our province.

But, beyond that, I want to talk—I want to read, actually, a letter that was written, and it's a letter to the editor, so it's in the Free Press, so it's already in the public domain, and so there's no need to table it here in the Manitoba Legislature. If members opposite want to read it, they can just read it in the Free Press. But I'd like to read it for you today because I think it's a great summation of what Manitobans are thinking out there with respect to the NDP and with respect to this PST increase.

Now, the caption underneath a picture of the Premier and his colleagues here in the Chamber that sit next to him, it says, the Premier has raised the PST despite his campaign promise. And then the headline goes on to read: Adding up to serious money. And serious money is actually in quotes.

And so this Mr. Friesen goes on to say: I wish to address those—and it's Mr. Dan Friesen; so it's Mr. Dan Friesen—and he goes on to say: I wish to address those who feel that the PST hike does not pose a hardship to the general population.

Let's assume, he says, for a moment that the hike was not in direct contrast to a promise made by the Premier, and let's also assume for a moment that the hike did not circumvent legislation designed to prevent exactly this type of thing.

He goes on to say: Factor in the PST hike with last year's PST expansion: fuel-tax hike, annual increases in Hydro rates, Bipole III, liquor price increases, increases in fees to enter camps in provincial parks, increases for fishing licences and on and on, and you start to see why so many Manitobans have had it. Sure, it's all nickel-and-dime stuff, but it adds up to some serious money in a year. And, while most can absorb the cost, it has come at an expense of something else. If you're of average income, odds are this year you will maybe save a little less for your retirement, maybe pay off a little less of your own debt, maybe a vacation will have to wait. In any rate, all these hikes erode the one thing I work hard for, and that is being able to provide a certain quality of life for my family. I am the silent majority, and I've had it, he says. And that's end quote.

And I want to thank Mr. Friesen for coming forward because he is absolutely right. He—this says it all. He is the silent majority out there that—maybe

they don't necessarily come down to the Manitoba Legislature and speak in committee. Maybe they don't come out to demonstrations on the front steps of the Legislature. Maybe they don't send emails or maybe they don't send letters, but this was obviously a decision that he made. He took the time out of his schedule because he believes wholeheartedly in what he is saying, and he believes that this PST hike will have a negative impact on he and his family. And he is absolutely right. And, you know, I commend Mr. Friesen for coming forward and for putting that letter to the editor, and I want to thank him because I know it's not an easy thing to do, and it's not something that, you know, maybe comes naturally to all of us. But, if we believe very strongly in issues, then we will stand up for those issues in whatever way that we can.

And so I think that—I believe that, like Mr. Friesen has said, this all adds up to serious money. This affects seniors in our province. This affects families. It affects low-income Manitobans. It affects those most vulnerable in our society who can't afford the luxuries of many things. They can't afford—they live on fixed income, and every little bit of tax increase, every little bit of a fee increase, an expansion of a PST, expansion of other taxes in this province has a negative impact on the disposable income that those Manitobans have to spend in our province. And they are being forced now, because this NDP government couldn't make the tough decision around the Cabinet table and around their caucus table. They didn't make the tough decision to perhaps see where they could rein in their spending in certain areas. They've now forced that hardship into the family home.

They're forcing families—and here we are on the eve of our children going back to school, and I know my children are going back to school next week. And I had the opportunity, I went out and I was buying 'soo'—school supplies this week, and I ran into one of my colleagues. It was a member opposite, but I won't say who it was. But we ran into each other in the aisle of Staples while we were buying our school supplies for our children for school. And I know that—I know what we paid last year and I know what we paid this year for their—those school supplies, and every little bit, as Mr. Friesen said so appropriately earlier, every little bit of this adds up, whether it's that or these hard-working families sitting around the tables trying to decide how they are going to make ends meet because of the less disposable income in their own households. How—what do they need to cut

in their own budgets, in their own homes, in order to make ends meet?

So they're having to make the tough decisions as to whether or not their children can play hockey this year or maybe it's only one of the children—and then, which one? And how do you choose? Maybe it's volleyball. Maybe it's basketball. Maybe it's a piano lesson or a violin lesson or a music lesson or a singing lesson, whatever—maybe it's an art lesson—whatever those extracurricular activities are that are so important to keep our young people engaged in these extracurricular activities, to keep them focused on the important things of life, to ensure that they are kept occupied, so that they can continue to enhance and—their own lives. And they can learn from those extracurricular activities. But what's happening here is that members opposite are forcing them to make those tough decisions and taking those extracurricular activities away from those children which will have a negative impact on society. And so I—it really—it does bother me that members opposite have done that to our families.

\*(15:40)

Families have enough hardship in our province in order to make ends meet. And we know—and I'll just touch on, you know, being the highest inflation rate in Canada and being the lowest wage growth, that in and of itself, regardless of the PST hike—the PST hike only makes that worse. It affects inflation in our province, so it makes it worse.

But the very fact that the—we have the inflation rate is seven times that of wage growth in our province, it means that there will be less disposable income in the families of Manitobans and in individuals in Manitoba. When they have less disposable income they spend less in our province and that has a negative impact on our economy. It means less tax revenues to this government, and we know how much they love to spend. But that's what will happen. And so, until this government learns to rein in their spending, we are going to continue in this negative, downward spiral in this province.

And so I just want to talk briefly about the lack of competitiveness and the disadvantage we have when it comes to being competitive in Manitoba, when it comes to other provinces, and I touched on this earlier and I think it's important to mention it again. But we do know members opposite like to stand up and say oh, well, our hydro rates are lower, and this and that, but they're picking out one little piece of the puzzle.

And I think what you need to do—and members opposite, if they were going to be honest, they would look at the entire pie, they would look at the whole puzzle and they would look at that puzzle and they would say they take into consideration income tax, they took into consideration all of the expenses that an average household has in Manitoba.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, when you compare that to Saskatchewan, you know, that same family in Saskatchewan is making over \$2,000 more just living in Saskatchewan, just because they're in Saskatchewan. Well, why can't we try and strive to achieve to be better than Saskatchewan rather than being, you know, continuing in this downward spiral under this NDP government?

And so, of course, I am very concerned about the direction that this government has taken. I am very concerned in the—and it's a tax and spend government. I'm concerned about what it is doing and the kind of impact it's having on families, on seniors, on low-income Manitobans, on the most disadvantaged in our society, because they're going in the wrong direction with this PST hike.

And I think that members opposite have a good opportunity today. They have an opportunity not only to get up and speak to this motion if they are opposed to it, then let us know why, and why they are opposed to taking a time out for the next six months and going back and consulting Manitobans.

But they also have another opportunity; they have an opportunity to vote in favour of this. And it would give them that opportunity to go back and properly consult with their constituents and see what they say in terms of this bill.

And maybe after doing a little bit more homework, maybe after consulting with their constituents, they will start to see that perhaps the bill should just be pulled and that this PST increase should not take place here in the province of Manitoba because Manitobans have spoke out loud and clear that they are not in favour of a PST increase. But the problem that we have here is that we've got an arrogant NDP government who refuses to listen and that is inherently the problem with this government, is their lack of respect for Manitobans. Thank you.

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** I am indeed pleased to rise to speak to this hoist motion in the House today and that when you look up what a hoist

motion is I appreciate that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) brought it forward.

When you look at a hoist motion and what it does indeed mean it talks about an elevating movement. And I do appreciate the Speaker's attempt to elevate the discourse in this Chamber over the last couple of weeks. I'm not sure, it's a work in progress, so it's something he's still working on as we all are. But it will be something we work on for a while.

But, nonetheless, the hoist motion that we are discussing, while not necessarily elevating, will hopefully elevate some discourse about the sales tax increase, the government's proposed increase and its attempt to take away the rights of Manitobans to vote on that increase.

You know, I think it will give an opportunity for government members to step back, take a second look at what they're doing and talk to Manitobans because Manitobans have a lot to say on this issue. We heard many of them at the committee hearings on Bill 20 and we heard a lot of what they had to say there. I appreciate that some of the government members were there, although the Premier (Mr. Selinger) did not see fit to attend those committee hearings. I'm—I would hope that he has read some of the Hansard and seen some of the discussions that he can hear from people of Manitoba, even though he chose not to listen to people directly.

And it was a very emotional time for many of those people. They came to present in committee, and they, in a very—a place where they are not used to being and in an environment where they're not used to presenting and following rules and those types of things. But they did an admirable job to a T, each and every one of them whether they spoke in favour or against, and indeed the vast majority were indeed against the sales tax increase and the things that Bill 20 planned into the fore here.

So it's a very emotional time there, and I have, you know, I am really quite impressed with the presentations we had there. Some very dramatic, I would say, presentations and a lot of disgust with the government that the government lied to them in the election. They lied to them about the sales tax increase. They promised at the door—each and every NDP candidate went out there, knocked on doors, and promised that the government would not raise—that the NDP government—or the NDP, should they win the election, which they did, would not raise the PST, and, of course, we found out that that is not

true. And that was one of the things we heard at committee that was disturbing for these people, that this government lied to them at the door, on their doorstep, in their homes, and does not see anything wrong with that.

And then we have the attempt by the government here to remove the democratic right of Manitobans to vote on the sales tax increase because, as I've said in the past, Manitobans believe they were protected from government excess. They believe they were protected by the balanced budget legislation which meant that, if the government wanted to raise the sales tax, they had to come back to Manitobans and ask for their permission. They had to ask Manitobans, do you agree that we should raise the sales tax by 14.3 per cent from 7 per cent to 8 per cent; that would be one form of the question 'perhax'—perhaps. But they would come to Manitobans and ask that questions and—that question, and now through Bill 20 the government is trying to take away that right of Manitobans to vote—away, and that is disconcerting to many Manitobans. They feel betrayed, and we heard that loud and 'quear'—loud and clear at the committee hearings, and it is indeed something that they hold dear to their hearts that they felt they had the ability to vote on this and have a say. And that's attempted to be removed by this government here, and that's disappointing to see that that may come to the fore.

So I do encourage the government to take this time to step back from this legislation that they have proposed and go out and consult with Manitobans. We know they have had limited consultations in the past, and some of those consultations have been one way or not listened to. And the ministers come back here and they do as they plan without really taking into account what those consultations were. And I did attend some of the budget consultations where the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) was there, and there was no discussion about sales tax increase. That was not on the books. That was not there at all, and then to come back just a few months and to propose the sales tax increase in such a dramatic form and in a way that really doesn't accomplish very much.

There's talk of the government putting into infrastructure, and then we see them extending the definition of infrastructure to things like splash parks. And I don't know that historically a splash park is a piece of infrastructure. Usually, you would think of the road that you drive down perhaps to get

to a splash park, would be considered infrastructure, and the sewer and water underneath that road, those types of things, would be infrastructure, but not the splash park. And, of course, a splash park is a lot of fun for families. So I would, you know, I don't—I imagine that people are happy to see a splash park. But what we find here is the government is taking away more and more money from Manitobans.

\* (15:50)

And, by broadening the sales tax last year to many things that it now applies to that it never used to apply to, and now this year by proposing to increase the sales tax by 14.3 per cent, they're taking more money away from Manitobans, and then they come up with some plans and they go out and they make announcement after announcement and they expect accolades from people. They expect Manitobans will thank them for spending their own money, you know, and some of these things are things that the government is supposed to provide. They are supposed to provide infrastructure, and by infrastructure—roads, sewer, water, those types of things, bridges that, you know, we've seen many fail in Manitoba over the years because of this government's inability to manage its infrastructure. Those are the types of things.

But the government has also put things into infrastructure that are—such as schools and, indeed, schools are important and we see pressure on schools in Manitoba, certainly in Neepawa and in Brandon and in Morden-Winkler where there are—there is population growth. There is a certain pressure on school expansion, but, traditionally, schools and buildings are seen as superstructure not infrastructure, and hospitals the government talks about as infrastructure as well and, again, hospitals are a necessary part even though this government has closed 18 of them during their time in office—they are—18 closed ERs—they are a necessary part but they are not historically infrastructure, they are, again, superstructure.

So those definitions are fast and loose how this government plays but, you know, and then we do see things, that they make announcements, reannouncements because they did announce during the 2011 flood that they were going to help protect Brandon with a new dike system, and, even though they had broken the promise made by Premier Doer at the time, that Brandon would be protected at a particular level, and when they built the bridges on 18th Street, the Thompson bridges, they did not

complete the structure to the point where Brandon would have had that protection. They had the opportunity to, but they reneged on that promise. Shouldn't be surprising, it's what we've come to expect from this government, and so Brandon had to fight that flood, certainly with the federal government and the Province, and build dikes—temporary dikes to try to protect Brandon and it was, in whole, mostly protected.

A lot of angst happened there and, indeed, I was out on the dikes several times with other Manitobans, people from Brandon and area that came to help make sure that Brandon would not be flooded, but then we saw those dikes sit there. We saw a promise from the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the current Premier, that Brandon would have one-in-300-year protection, and then Brandon was told, you know what, this government really doesn't have time to deal with this issue so what about you guys in Brandon take over the engineering and here's your budget. Your budget is \$20 million, which is what we set, you know, two years ago, that's it, nothing more, perhaps a little more, we don't know, but not really anymore for one-in-300.

Okay, so Brandon went out there and designed it. Umm, question of whether the whole consultation process was appropriate or inappropriate with the RM around there, and they needed to talk to them a little bit more, but they followed the Province's guide and lead on that one and then they came back with this plan that was affordable within the \$20-million budget and it's certainly not one-in-300. Even though, in this House, during debate, during question period, the Premier has promised one-in-700-year flood protection for Brandon as the rest of the province. They said Brandon would be the same, but I'm not sure if he just kind of misspoke or if this is another promise that the government plans to break, but, indeed, we're not even going to see one-in-100 around there.

So they make these announcements and then they find they can't fulfill them and again we see the broken promises time and time again. And the danger here is that we cannot maintain our current infrastructure with this government because they have ignored the infrastructure for so long and it has deteriorated past the point where it can be just glossed over with a little bit of pavement or, you know, to shore up a bridge a little bit. We've gone past that point and it has been allowed to deteriorate to the point where it needs more serious construction and that tends to be very expensive. It is much less

expensive to maintain things as we go along than it is to rebuild them every 10 to 20 years, and that is what has happened with this government. They've ignored that infrastructure in rural Manitoba and across Manitoba, and now we're finding that the infrastructure—the roads, the bridges have deteriorated to the point where they need replacement and they need serious structural work. So that is, of course, much more expensive.

And, indeed, we found out that over 80 bridges had been damaged by the 2011 flood. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) was not able to tell us what the—what they'd written down on the books. And we heard several different stories from different ministers. One minister said, well, you know, we don't write down any bridges; we just put the new structure on the books, when we put that there, when it's done. And, well, what do you do with the old one? Well, they weren't really all that sure, so.

They have to follow generally accepted accounting practices. And I know government accounting does move to a different—differently than business, but, nonetheless, there are standards out there that they do have to follow. And, when a piece of infrastructure is either damaged beyond repair or depreciated to the point that it's written off, then you do have to make those allowances. And no one, so far, on the government side, has been able to tell me how that process works or where and, indeed, it does work.

So, if we have 80 bridges that are damaged beyond repair, or need repair, that's a substantial amount of money, and it should be a substantial writeoff for the Province. But we haven't seen that there anywhere.

And then we see some of the numbers that have come out here recently, and I would hope, with these numbers, that the government would step back and really look at this hoist motion as an opportunity to step back and have some rational debate over where they're going, because we've seen recently the 3 per cent inflation numbers, highest in Canada, over double the national average. And this is driven from last year's sales tax expansion—is a portion of that. This does not include the increase of sales tax, the 14.3 per cent increase in this current budget, from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. That is not included in that inflation.

So, certainly, we're going to see this government's actions drive inflation even further high over the next year. All the while, we see



earnings in Manitoba decrease. The lowest earnings increase we've seen here of any province. Far, far less than inflation.

So what it means is that Manitobans can't keep up to inflation. This government then again takes more money away from them, so they fall further behind. And then they have to make those very, very difficult decisions at the cash register. Can I afford to buy this product, or do I have to put it back, buy something less expensive, when we're buying products for—or buying things for our children to go back to school, or anything else? Those decisions are all going to have to be made because we have less money to deal with as a family than in previous years. Lower disposable income, higher inflation, and the government wants to take more of it away.

So those difficult decisions are being forced on Manitobans, and all Manitobans are asking that—is that the government live within its means. But we've seen time and again that this government has failed to do that. And they don't seem to be able live within their means.

They certainly, it would seem, have more than enough money to do so, but no plans to do so. They look at what they want to do, and they make several announcements. And they continue on above the rate of inflation, and away we go.

And they say that all these things are necessary, and they may well be. But, if they are necessary, like the sales tax increase, ask the public. The public has a right to have a say in this so that they can have an opinion. And we want to make sure that things can be done well here.

But I'm sure there are others that want to speak to this motion, and the stress that it puts on Manitoba families. So thank you.

### House Business

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Acting Speaker, can you canvass the House to see if there's leave to sit 'til 6 p.m. today?

**The Acting Speaker (Mohinder Saran):** Is there a will of the House to sit until 6 p.m.? [*Agreed*]

\* (16:00)

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

### Point of Order

**Mr. Goertzen:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** On a point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I was hoping that the government members would get up and debate this bill. I know that they want to put some words on the record. They want to defend it in the public, but they don't want to defend in the House. So I ask that you rule that they need to speak and defend the bill that they've brought forward, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, well, my friend from Steinbach—I believe his intent is honourable, but I don't think that he has a point of order.

Certainly, we, on this side of the House, have been out every day defending our agenda of building the province, defending our agenda of refusing to cut deeply into the services that Manitobans count on and will continue to go out and defend our agenda of not cancelling the projects as the members opposite have asked us to do this week.

So I would ask respectfully, Mr. Speaker, that you rule that he doesn't have a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Steinbach, it is a long-standing practice of this House that honourable members are free to participate to any degree that they choose in any matter that comes before the House and that the Speaker is in no way, shape or capacity in any way required to compel any member of the Assembly to participate in any part or in any of the debate.

So, therefore, I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** And, with the greatest of respect, Mr. Speaker, I challenge the ruling.

### Voice Vote

**Mr. Speaker:** The ruling of the Chair having been challenged, all those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair will please signify by saying aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**Mr. Speaker:** All those opposed to the ruling of the Chair will please signify by saying nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Speaker:** Opinion of the Chair, the Ayes have it.

### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Goertzen:** Recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

\* (16:50)

Order, please. The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

### Division

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

### Yeas

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Blady, Braun, Briese, Caldwell, Chief, Crothers, Dewar, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gaudreau, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pallister, Pedersen, Pettersen, Robinson, Rondeau, Rowat, Saran, Schuler, Selby, Selinger, Smook, Stefanson, Swan, Wiebe, Wight, Wishart.

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Yeas 47, Nays 0.

**Mr. Speaker:** The ruling of the Chair has accordingly been sustained.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Now, to resume debate on Bill 20 and the amendment thereto.

**Ms. Howard:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that debate now be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

\* \* \*

**Ms. Howard:** Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill 18.

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll now call Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools), standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach, who has unlimited time.

#### Bill 18—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools)

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, a pleasure to rise and to continue debate on Bill 18. I've never been shy about debating this bill. It maybe hasn't been called as often as I thought it might be during the course of this session, but I think it's been

important to put a number of different words on the record regarding Bill 18 and the concerns that many Manitobans have that it won't actually do what all of us would hope, and that is to protect our kids from being bullying in school.

And, as a father, as somebody who has gone through the school system, I think I and every member of this House has the same goal, but we may have a disagreement about whether or not this bill will reach that particular goal. And I stand with many Manitobans who have concerns that the bill is not only a weak bill in terms of bullying compared to other bills across North America, but there are probably better ways that the bill could have been brought forward to achieve the same goal. And we do have the same goal, but we just simply disagree on how to reach that goal.

Now, I recognize there are 300 and, I believe, 15 people registered to speak on this particular bill, and we look forward to hearing from those speakers, all of those speakers, regardless on which side of the debate they fall. I look forward to hearing from those who are strong in favour of Bill 18 as much as I do those who have concerns.

I think it's important to listen to all Manitobans. I think it's important to have that debate and to have that respectful discussion. We may not always agree coming out on the other side of that debate or on the other side of the committee, but it is vitally important that it happens. It's been one of the reasons I've been disappointed that the government has indicated they're not willing to listen to all of the presenters, not willing to listen to different ideas at that committee.

And for the past nine months, I suppose now, since Bill 18 was introduced, we've been trying to get the government to listen, to say that they will listen to Manitobans who have concerns about Bill 18. But, instead of listening to those Manitobans, we've heard the negative comments. I heard the member for—the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) talk about how people in my community, when they came out to an information on Bill 18, how she disparaged them. In fact, she put it in a press release, an NDP press release, and mocked the fact that I was proud of my community and for people coming out to hear about government legislation.

I stand always proud that there are people who are interested in the democratic process. I stand always proud of people within my community who want to learn more about what's happening and be

involved in that. And I will never be apologetic for saying that people who are interested in democracy, for people who want to be engaged in democracy, should be encouraged to be engaged in that democracy. And the Minister of Education might feel that in some ways she's being negative to me by saying that I was proud of the people who decided to come and learn about a bill. I am proud of them, and I'm proud of all the people who are going to come to committee.

Regardless of which side of the issue they're on, Mr. Speaker, I think it is an important thing that people engage themselves in the democratic process. And I'm going to go, and I'm going to look forward to hearing people who have a variety of different opinions, I'm sure. I look forward to asking questions of people who have a variety of difference of opinions. And my hope is that the government will truly listen so that at that committee when those ideas come forward and subsequent amendments come forward—and there will be amendments that will come forward on that—that they are willing to listen.

Now, for nine months I've done my best, as well as members of our caucus, to try to convince the government that they need to listen to those voices, that they don't have to believe that they are the—have the exact idea of how to solve things, Mr. Speaker, that they need to be willing to listen to others. For nine months I've tried to do that along with members of my caucus. To this date, the government has indicated they're not willing to listen. They aren't willing to have that discussion. But now we're going to allow it to go to the people. We're going to allow it to go to the 315 or however many people end up coming out to present.

\* (17:00)

We're going to allow it to go to them to hear from them because we do want to hear from them. We do want to hear what they have to say, Mr. Speaker, and, hopefully, those great Manitobans may have a little bit better success than we've had in terms of trying to convince the government to change their mind on this bill.

And I hope that the government will listen because I know that people are going to be coming with very, very impassioned pleas, with very, very impassioned ideas on this bill. I've heard them. I know the government has heard some. I've gotten the emails. I think I've received about 12 and a half thousand emails on Bill 18—and I make no apologies,

although I think the media was questioning me about it, but I had to buy two new printers because I burned through two in responding to this level of correspondence. I've never seen engagement from the public like I have on this issue.

And, regardless of what the government feels about the different views that Manitobans have, they are Manitobans, and they need to be listened to and they should be respected. And the government, I hope, will have an open mind at that committee and open to those suggestions and the ideas. We've done what we can to try to get the government to listen.

I understand that they have a majority, and at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, a majority government will get its will, but ultimately they don't do democracy a service by just simply imposing their will because of their majority, that it is important for them to listen to Manitobans, not just at election time when they're asking for that majority, but in between election time too. And we're going to give them that opportunity. We're going to give them that opportunity after nine months, I suppose, to hear from those Manitobans. And I hope that they're going to take the opportunity because it'd be a missed opportunity if they don't truly listen to them and aren't open to ideas and open to changes when this bill goes to committee.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill 18.

To begin, I want to say that I'm very supportive of efforts to prevent and, indeed, to eliminate bullying in Manitoba schools, and also that I'm very supportive of Bill 18. It's vitally important that we improve measures to remove bullying from schools so that we can put an end to bullying's adverse effects which can be as serious as suicide. This surely means making efforts to address all forms of bullying in order to reduce such consequences and to take specific actions to eliminate bullying targeted against groups who historically have been adversely affected and where there have been suicides, 'including' those in the LBGTTQ community and those in the Aboriginal community.

One of the very sad facets of bullying is that, in its worst form, it has led to suicides. Manitobans are aware of the sad story of Gary Hansen. Gary was a 16-year-old boy from Roblin who hanged himself in 2005 after being bullied, teased and picked upon by his classmates for years. Gary's mother, Pamela,

said: It's devastating. I mean, any parent who's lost a child can understand that, and any parent who's lost a child to suicide doubly understands it, because there are so many questions that are going to stay unanswered. It's just hard, really hard. That's the end of my quote.

Convinced that something had to be done, Pamela spoke up in an effort to stop bullying. Wanting to be sure no one else had to go through the suffering that she went through, she said, we've got to deal with it, because if we push it under the carpet, it's just going to get worse.

Across Canada, people are very aware of the suicides of Amanda Todd in BC and Rehtaeh Parsons in Nova Scotia, both of whom—who were bullied. These are very sad stories, and they emphasize the need to address cyberbullying as well as other forms of bullying. We need to prevent such sad stories in the future.

For many years, I've been a strong proponent of measures to tackle bullying in our society. In March 2006, I introduced legislation to address bullying in the workplace to help in this effort. While, under the NDP, there's been some modest progress in this respect, current legislation to address bullying in the workplace could, in my view, still be improved.

One fact we did find when working on efforts to reduce bullying in the workplace was that schools have been sites where teachers have often themselves been the target of bullying, whether by other staff, parents or even students. For example, a study conducted by James Matsui Research and Lang Research in 2005 found that 55 per cent of Ontario's teachers had been bullied, with 30 per cent being bullied by a parent or guardian, 24 per cent bullied by someone in a senior position, and 15 per cent bullied by a colleague. In fact, 38 per cent of all teachers in Ontario have been bullied by a student. The number of support staff being bullied is even higher.

Efforts and actions to eliminate bullying in schools need to start with leadership from within the system. When administrators and teachers make a commitment to lead by example, then students will be able to learn in school environments that are truly safe and free from bullying. But a good example will—I will talk more of, shortly, is David Thomas, director of education for the Upper Canada District School Board.

In my view, Bill 18 could be significantly strengthened in its impact if bullying were to be fully incorporated as a prohibited action under Manitoba's Human Rights Code. Right now, bullying can only be considered a concern under Manitobans' Human Rights Code if it is specifically linked to protected characteristics such as race, sex, gender identification and religion, which are among the categories identified within the code. So, if a person doesn't say, I am bullying you because of your race or ethnic background, then it is not a concern under Manitoba's current Human Rights Code. There have been instances where Manitoba's Human Rights Commission has not been able to pursue incidents of bullying because there was not enough evidence to link it directly to one of the protected characteristics.

Very often bullying occurs where there's a power imbalance between people. Thus, people who are disadvantaged are often targets of bullying. I want to emphasize that I'm in strong support of ensuring that those who are marginalized in our society are supported and protected from discrimination and from unfair, wrongful treatment by others. Documented cases of bullying in Manitoba schools have occurred with respect to gender and sexual orientation, race, socio-economic status, cultural heritage, disabilities, and a myriad of other individual characteristics. In all cases, we need effective and proven approaches to eliminate these kinds of differential treatment.

For example, positive, student-led supportive alliances, such as gay-straight alliances, have been helpful and need to be enabled and encouraged. Indeed, there has been some useful research on the impact of gay-straight alliances on bullying. There is some evidence that LGBTTTQ students attending a school with a gay-straight alliance are less likely to experience in-school victimization, symptoms of depression, suicidality and substance abuse. In the most recent research by Chiaki Konishi, Elizabeth Saewyc, Yuko Homma and Colleen Poon, published in the journal *Preventive Medicine*, there were decreases seen in binge drinking and alcohol use in LGB adolescents where the gay-straight alliances had been in place for at least three years, though these were significant only for girls. A notable finding was a highly significant decrease in binge drinking and alcohol use among heterosexual adolescents in these same schools. The results show that gay-straight alliances can be effective in reducing bullying and improving the school environment for all students;

however, gay-straight alliances should be seen as making a helpful contribution and not as a panacea.

In my view, when it comes to bullying, it is important to talk about the need for everyone to have and to experience dignity. Dignity is important because, as one young school girl said, dignity means, I no longer have to be ashamed of who I am. It means enabling every child to be proud of who he or she is, which means every part of his or her identity, whether it be their race, their socio-economic status, their gender identity and so on. Our goal is to enable children to be proud of every part of who they are, and in this way, to immunize them from the bullying and other taunts that try to belittle them. We should not only be against bullying; we should be for supporting the dignity of each child and each person.

\* (17:10)

As David Thomas, director of education for one Ontario school board, who had three students commit suicide in a span of just three months, has said: Can we raise the bar on empathy, kindness, warmth, generosity and to really put the kids first?

He acted by developing a peer-mentoring program and implementing it across his board's 22 high schools. He and other experts have said that getting teens to work with each other, as in peer-mentoring programs, is one of the strongest planks of any successful antibullying mental health strategy in schools.

David Thomas put in place a program that friended every incoming student, protected them from bullies, supported them through family issues, and allowed problems that would otherwise go unnoticed to be aired.

This appears to have worked very well to prevent bullying and to prevent suicides, and we can certainly learn from this, as well as the importance of providing adequate mental health support to students.

David Thomas and many others have argued strongly for directly incorporating into teaching curriculums an element to facilitate regular dialogue in schools, as well providing a venue for members of the school community to check in, allows for open and safe spaces to address difficult issues and, ultimately, for progress toward improved education.

It is important to give children hope. It is important to allow children to dream. It is important to help children to see that they have and will have positive opportunities for their future.

I have told a story recently of Samantha Jensson, a young lady who committed suicide when she was 15 because in part this hope was taken away, this ability to dream, this ability to see something positive in her future. And I have, with Trudy Lavallee, put forward Samantha's principle, a concept that children—all children—should be given the ability to dream and to hope and to have positive options in their future. And I believe that this applies particularly to children who have been in our Child and Family Services system in care, who too often in the past have felt that they have not had the opportunities that they hoped to have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also believe that, as an MLA it's important to listen respectfully to all Manitobans, regardless of their background or their point of view. As MLAs, we've made the commitment to represent and serve the people of this province, and thus it's our duty to listen to every person who comes to present during the committee stage, no matter how dissenting their opinions may be. And it's our duty to be ready to see if it's possible to address the concerns which they raise.

Much like those in leadership roles in our schools, we as legislators must too lead by example and demonstrate that we can treat each other in the House and in committees with dignity and respect.

I'm looking forward to the presentations by Manitobans on this legislation at the committee stage, and, as I've indicated, I'm very supportive of the legislation and it's going on to committee stage and being passed later this year. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there any further debate on Bill 18?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question then?

Question before the House is second reading of Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools).

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

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

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader):** Recorded vote.

**Mr. Speaker:** Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

\* (17:30)

Order, please.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 18.

#### Division

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

#### Yeas

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

#### Nays

*Briese, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Pallister, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.*

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Yeas 32, Nays 14.

**Mr. Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

#### House Business

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, on House business, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Human Resources will meet to consider Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools), on the following dates: Tuesday, September 3rd, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Wednesday, September 4th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Thursday, September 5th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Friday, September 6th, 2013, at

6 p.m.; Saturday, September 7th, 2013, at 10 a.m.; Monday, September 9th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Tuesday, September 10th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Wednesday, September 11th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Thursday, September 12th, 2013, at 6 p.m., if necessary; Friday, September 13th, 2013, at 6 p.m., if necessary; Saturday, September 14th, 2013, at 10 a.m., if necessary.

I would like to note that, as previously agreed on June 20th, the committee hearings for Bill 18 will follow the same format as what was set out for Bill 20.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Human Resources will meet to consider Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools), on the following dates: Tuesday, September the 3rd, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Wednesday, September 4th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Thursday, September 5th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Friday, September 6th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Saturday, September 7th, 2013, at 10 a.m.; Monday, September 9th, at 6 p.m.—2013, at 6 p.m.; Tuesday, September 10th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Wednesday, September the 11th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; and Thursday, September the 12th, 2013, at 6 p.m., if necessary; Friday, September the 13th, 2013, at 6 p.m., if necessary; and Saturday, September the 14th, 2013, at 10 a.m., if necessary.

And it was noted that, as previously agreed on June 20th, the committee hearings will—for Bill 18 will follow the same format as was set out for Bill 20.

**Ms. Howard:** I'm going to take one quick liberty and just extend my thanks to the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). Many things have happened in this Chamber, and will, for the next few days, but I want to say it's been an extreme pleasure to work with both of them on the business of the House. And I want to thank them for the honour that they've conducted themselves throughout this time.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'll reciprocate the comments to the honourable Government House Leader and the member for River Heights. Negotiations are often difficult and they're often challenging, but that's what negotiations, I suppose, should be. And I'm only heartened by the fact that we have many more times to have tough negotiations ahead.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Yes, I just say briefly, I thank that—the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) and member for Steinbach for working hard and

diligently to get the agreement which we finally arrived at, and thank you for working on behalf of all Manitobans in this effort.

**Ms. Howard:** I think, Mr. Speaker, you'll find it the will of the House to call it 6 o'clock.

**Mr. Speaker:** Well, we'll test that.

Is it the will of the House to call it 6 o'clock?  
*[Agreed]*

Okay, prior to adjournment, I have a couple of items.

#### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** In the public gallery, we have with us today Kim and Malachi Goertzen, who are the family members of the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** And, in keeping with the tradition we've kind of started here, we have—celebrating our youth, we have Meghan MacDougall, is completing her final day as a page here in the Assembly. Meghan will be attending the University of Manitoba this fall, majoring in 'foons'—food sciences, to become a dietitian. Meghan worked this summer as a youth counsellor at a drop-in centre in Stonewall, and in high school Meghan was active in the human rights group and took part in the Champions program that involved mentoring grade 5 students about drugs and alcohol as well as how to manage peer pressure.

So, on behalf of honourable members, welcome. Meghan, I'd like to congratulate you and to thank you for your service to members of the Assembly and wish you well in your future endeavours in your education. Thank you for your service.

So, the hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. on Tuesday.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, August 29, 2013

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Petitions</b>		Expectant Mothers Gerrard; Selinger	4663
Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum		Nutritional Deficiencies Gerrard; Selinger	4664
Wishart	4653	Ste. Anne Hospital Blady; Oswald	4665
Eichler	4654	Manitoba Hydro Pedersen; Selinger	4665
Smook	4654		
Helwer	4655		
Rowat	4656		
Provincial Road 520 Renewal		<b>Members' Statements</b>	
Ewasko	4653	Mahatma Gandhi Way Jha	4666
Reopen Beausejour's Employment Manitoba Office		Pinawa's Pen Pal Program Ewasko	4667
Pedersen	4653	Sher-E-Punjab Sports Club 5th Annual Sports Tournament Wiebe	4667
Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal		Christie Lavallée Wishart	4668
Stefanson	4654	Great Manitoba Duck Race Crothers	4668
Schuler	4656		
Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Cross-Border Shopping		<b>Matter of Urgent Public Importance</b>	
Graydon	4655	Ewasko	4669
Applied Behaviour Analysis Services Friesen	4655	Howard	4671
<b>Tabling of Reports</b>		<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b> <i>(Continued)</i>	
Lotteries Corporation, First Quarter Report, three months ended June 30, 2013		<b>GOVERNMENT BUSINESS</b>	
Ashton	4656	<b>Debate on Concurrence and Third Reading</b>	
Office of the Auditor General, Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet, August 2013		Bill 20—The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended)	
Reid	4656	Pedersen	4672
		Stefanson	4675
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Helwer	4680
Provincial Economy		<b>Debate on Second Readings</b>	
Pallister; Selinger	4657	Bill 18—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools)	
Graydon; Ashton	4659	Goertzen	4684
Tax Increases		Gerrard	4685
Pallister; Selinger	4658		
PST Increase			
Pallister; Selinger	4659		
STARS Helicopter Service			
Friesen; Oswald	4660		
Deputy Premier			
Ewasko; Howard	4661		
Helwer; Howard	4662		



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