

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, August 8, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, first on House business.

In accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Repatriation Program for Manitoban International Medical Graduates (IMGs), brought forward by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Repatriation Program for Manitoban International Medical Graduates (IMGs), brought forward by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

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Mr. Goertzen: And now, Mr. Speaker, I'm seeking leave of the House to move directly to Bill 205, the elections finances amendment act, brought forward by the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister).

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to proceed directly into private members' business to Bill 205? *[Agreed]*

**DEBATE ON SECOND
READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), who has one minute remaining.

Bill 205—The Election Financing Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied. Are there other members wishing to debate?

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to rise and put a few words on the record regarding Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act, bought forward by our leader, the honourable member for Fort Whyte.

This has been something that many people have discussed, actually, out in the community. We certainly discuss it very frequently here in the House under the onus of the vote tax. And certainly, if you get a chance to discuss this actually out in the community on a fairly apolitical basis with people, people are actually quite shocked that any government or any party would consider doing this. It is—certainly seems like there—someone is dipping their hand in their pocket without any permission to do so, and certainly working backwards in time.

You had support in the 2011 election. Do you continue to have the support is the remaining question, but that doesn't seem to be part of the discussion here. They certainly seem to think that they have the right to go after the cash, and over the course of the remaining term they're going to use up a million dollars of cash.

And as I said in one of my questions the other day, where a government spends its money certainly expresses where its priorities are. So it would seem the priority in this case is actually spending the money on themselves rather than all of the issues that we touch on every day. And certainly, having worked with housing and community development, I see an awful lot of people who are in great deal of

poverty and distress financially, and it seems only fair that the money should be spent in those areas where we could actually make a bigger difference. The funding of a political party seems very low on the priority list.

And it is actually quite surprising that anyone would go into politics—which, historically, we certainly know that fundraising is part of the business of politics and something you would expect to do when you went into that business—and now suddenly expect the public taxpayer to do that for you so that you don't have to do that. Seems like a bit of a misunderstanding about what it is you're getting into in terms of an occupation. Certainly something I understood when I got into the business, that this is part of what you have to do. If you don't feel that you're comfortable doing that, perhaps you should rethink that whole occupation, and that's certainly a message that I would take forward to those that—on the other side of the House that feel that they're justified in this ask—action and this ask that the public would support their party. If they don't feel comfortable that—in doing their own fundraising, maybe they should think about another occupation in the future.

The NDP believe that they are entitled to taxpayers' funding for their political operations. They believe Manitobans should pay for their political opportunities. That's why every NDP enacted the vote tax. They saw their party receive \$7,000 per MLA to fund their party's political operations per year. This equates to about \$1 million from—to the NDP over the term of the office to pay for their expensive—their party's expenses.

And we have been very clear on this; we did not—we do not take this. We did not take this when it was offered in 2008. In fact, your own party, the NDP party, didn't take it in 2008. I'd like to—I kind of wonder what has changed in that time.

They—certainly, we have been doing well as a party in our fundraising; perhaps their numbers aren't quite as good, maybe they need to work a little harder in that area. But they seem to think that our support all comes from large political donations. Of course, we all know that there's a limit on it, but if you actually look at the donation numbers, our donation per person is less than theirs. It's less than yours. So what's the issue? We obviously have spread the base a little broader. Our support is much broader than theirs in terms of context, and the donation per is not any higher; in fact, it's lower.

Why—what is the issue here? Why is it a problem for you guys and not a problem for us? Actually, you need to really ask yourself those particular questions.

Political parties must earn their contributions from Manitoba. Taxpayers do not—should not bail out parties that are too lazy to go and ask Manitobans for a donation. And I know frequently we hear some of the NDP members talk about being out and doing some door to door. Maybe they should actually ask when they're at the door, well, if you do support me, why aren't you going to support us financially? And that's certainly something that I think that they just don't want to do. It's an ask they don't want to make, because it actually shows whether people are really committed to the party or whether it's just something that they're saying at the door, because it—putting a dollar on the table to support someone, it's certainly a good indication that you are serious about your support and that you intend to help not only build Manitoba but to build that particular party and their process of building Manitoba.

Now, the NDP, they believe they should receive this vote tax and they are entitled to it even though they—in the meantime, in the last two years, they have had their biggest tax increases in 26 years, yet they continue to run a significant deficit in the Province and they keep adding to the Province's debt on an ongoing basis. A little more focus on someone else's future besides your own probably would be a part of the greater good.

What you're spending now in terms of a deficit, someone will have to pay for, and it'll be your children and grandchildren. And even though there is certainly erosion of the value of the dollar with inflation, it is at a very low rate these days. So the dollar that you spend today will still be significantly close to a dollar when it has to be paid back in the future, and that's a burden for another generation. And you need to ask yourself, do you have the right? Do you have the right to put your kids and grandkids in debt that they will have to pay off, and is that your priority? Is that your priority, to—your—in terms of a short-term fix, to make you feel better and make your life a little easier and yet to put the burden on another generation? Do you have the right to do that? And, certainly, do you have the obligation to do a little better job in terms of meeting your short-term priorities now?

* (10:10)

This 'subsily' simply is not needed. Manitoba political parties receive enough support through

other measures. And I know they are very quick to point out that we take the subsidy, the matching dollars, during the election campaign. And so do you—so do you. And so, if you want—if you're really committed, then maybe you should just turn that down too. But that is a match that has been in place for many generations—for many elections. It goes back a long time in history. And it is a very appropriate support from the public in the process of the election campaign.

But in between the election campaigns, we all have to work to raise the money that we need to keep our organizations going through the constituency associations. And that's what—it actually builds a stronger constituency association. It has a goal, it has something to work for—towards. I suspect that you're going to find that once you start make—taking money from the vote tax, that your constituency association has little purpose and little strength and will actually fall apart on you. And that'll make your next election campaign even tougher, because there will be simply no one there to work with. So I think that'll be something that—a sort of a sideways price that they end up paying in this whole process.

I know the whole process of working with our constituency associations—and we work very closely with them these days. In fact, it's a new focus for us to build constituency associations in some constituencies where they have struggled in the past, and it is a very worthwhile process. And it's quite rewarding, in many cases, to make connections with the people in the community who feel strongly that they need to make a change, and certainly, work—are prepared to go out and make that extra effort, to help with fundraising, to help with door-to-door, to help with community events and awareness, and certainly builds a very strong association.

And I know that—actually this—currently working on a fundraising event in my own constituency this coming weekend, in association with our potato festival. And it has been very rewarding. And I expect to see, actually, quite a few people, between the two events, and get a chance to get in close touch with what's going on in the constituency. And I expect, actually, also to hear quite a bit about the PST. Certainly every event I've been to recently in the constituency has been—that has been a very common theme. Why did—you know, why do they need to raise the PST? Aren't they reaching into our pockets. It's really hurting, especially those that are on limited incomes, it really starts to hurt. And has been a big factor and a big issue. And it does really

show priority issue. I mean, we're—they're prepared to reach into your pocket and take a little more dollars out of your pocket just so that they don't have to work at their own fundraising effort. And I'm very disappointed to see that.

Now I know there are many other people that want to put comments on record. I'm sure that the members across the floor feel very strongly that they are justified in this and, certainly, they seem to have convinced themselves. Perhaps it's the 192 spin doctors that have helped convince themselves.

But you need to go out there and ask, in the community, door to door, is this a justifiable use of taxpayer dollars? Is this a priority use of taxpayers' dollars? Is there nothing else that is more important? Isn't there another place that you should spend this money? And I think you'll find that that answer is quite different from what you come forward with in the House. That other people have quite different priorities in terms of where they expect the taxpayer dollars to be spent.

So I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on record in support of our leader's bill in regards to the change in this act. And I do hope that the members across the floor seriously think about where their priorities are in the future before they take these dollars. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Always a pleasure to stand and talk about electoral fairness. And it is certainly interesting to have Progressive Conservatives wanting to have a debate about electoral fairness, because they've got an awful lot of skeletons in their closet, that I think it's important we talk about.

But, you know, I want to start actually with, well, with an item from my own community. It was probably the last time the Progressive Conservatives tried to do anything in my community. And, of course, they did it entirely with public money. And it was several years ago, I think before the 2011 election. They hosted a crime forum in Minto at the Ellice Theatre. I guess that's when my friend from Steinbach was then still the most energetic Justice critic in Canada as opposed to now being the weakest Education critic in Canada. And I suppose this was his work.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, to try and promote this crime forum, the PC caucus sent out mailings, not just to every household they could find in Minto but to every household they could find in Wolseley

and every household they could find in St. James and every household they could find in Kirkfield Park, as well as Assiniboia. That's about 10,000 households in each of those ridings. I accept that they don't really understand the inner city very well, so we'll conservatively round that down to about 8,000 households per constituency.

Well, they sent out addressed mail to probably 40,000 households in the west part of Winnipeg. Probably costing, conservatively, about \$25,000—\$25,000 in taxpayers' dollars.

And, you know, when we saw this, I had a supporter who said she wanted to go down to the forum just to see what it was all about. So she went down to the Ellice Theatre and, of course, when you took out all the Conservative staff that were there, she represented 50 per cent of all the people—out of the 40,000 households they'd mailed to—who actually decided to come down to the Ellice Theatre.

Indeed, the Progressive Conservative caucus had spent \$25,000 to get one person to come down to their forum. What do we take away from that? What do we take away from that?

It's not that there aren't concerns about public safety because there are, and people in my community want to talk about public safety. They want us to continue making investments not just in police officers, not just in Crown attorneys and probation officers, but real investments in activities for young people, in education for young people, training for young people to keep those young people on the positive side of things.

What it does show, of course, is that nobody takes the Progressive Conservatives seriously when they talk about crime. That's the case in the West End and that's the case all through St. James as well.

The point, of course, of this is that the Progressive Conservatives had no problems spending \$25,000 in public money to get one person down to a meeting. They could have sent the limo; they could have taken them to the most expensive restaurant in the city; they could have flown a Learjet with that \$25,000 and the people of Manitoba still would have been further ahead.

But, you know, I don't say that to say they shouldn't have the right to do that. They continue to mail; they mail out ridiculous pieces of information on the public dime, and frankly, they have that right. They're entitled to use public money, which they continue to do. And frankly, I hope they continue

doing it because it's always refreshing to have the Progressive Conservative caucus demonstrate how out of touch they are with the people of Manitoba and how little they understand the people that we represent in this Legislature.

Now I was really happy yesterday to hear a Progressive Conservative member actually use the word book in a question. I know that for many of us, our summer vacation is—or summertime—is a little busier than usual and maybe there's a bit less time for reading books. But you know, on weekends, in the evenings, when we're not out celebrating at Folklorama, I've got a couple of book choices that I think members of the Progressive Conservative caucus should read.

And one of them is a great book by an excellent Winnipeg writer by the name of Doug Smith. Doug Smith is a great writer with an infectious laugh and he wrote a really, really good book called *So Many Liars*. And that book is all about the way the Progressive Conservative caucus and their party did their best to use Aboriginal people as pawns to try and subvert the wishes of Manitobans in the 1995 election.

And, you know, that's not the only book they could read. Another summer reading choice that I recommend to the MLA for Agassiz and the others, great book called *Summer of My Amazing Luck*. *Summer of My Amazing Luck* is written by a writer, Miriam Toews, well-recognized Manitoba writer, award-winning writer, and, in fact, I was very pleased to see her receive the Order of Manitoba just a couple of weeks ago.

And the *Summer of My Amazing Luck* is a great story. It's about a young woman trying to get by on social assistance in the '90s. The book, of course, talks about the heartless family services minister, Bunnie Hutchison—but, of course, that's a work of fiction that Miriam Toews wrote. I highly recommend that book to my colleagues across the aisle as well.

But let's talk a little bit about the subject matter of Doug Smith's book, *So Many Liars*.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, following the 1995 election, allegations started to arise out in the Interlake that the Conservatives had encouraged candidates and actually funded candidates to run in three constituencies. And there was no reason for them to do that, other than to try to set up puppet candidates to try and take votes away from New

Democrats. That was the whole purpose. It was a desperate, cynical plot which was cooked up while, of course, the Leader of the Opposition was sitting around the Cabinet table. And I'm sure very, very interested in this great new idea that the Conservative brain trust had to subvert people's democratic wishes and, in a very cynical way, to reduce people's confidence in the electoral system.

* (10:20)

And an inquiry was eventually called, led by former Chief Justice Alfred Monnin. And Judge Monnin looked into those allegations and he found a number of very, very clear things: first of all, that senior Conservatives had hatched a plot to induce an Aboriginal candidate to run; that the party accountant, during the 1995 election, broke the law when he filed the false election return. And, of course, we know that those individuals only got away with minimal prosecution because the time limit for prosecuting those cases, at the time, was only six months and the judge said nothing could be done legally. The Treasury Board secretary, who helped cover up the scheme set up by the Progressive Conservatives, lost his position. One of their prominent party fundraisers and a member of the board of Manitoba Hydro was removed from both of his positions by then-Premier Gary Filmon for his role in that scheme.

And what did Judge Monnin say? Well, page 16 of his report, which could be a third piece of summer reading for the members opposite, he told us that in all his years on the bench, he'd never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as he did during this inquiry. He also had to say, and this is a direct quote, it is disheartening, indeed, to realize that an oath to tell the truth means so little to some people. Well, those people were Progressive Conservatives in the 1990s, and the funny part is, those Conservatives from the 1990s are sitting front and centre across the Legislature every day we come in here.

And what else did Justice Monnin say? Page 13 of his report: A vote-rigging plot constitutes an unconscionable debasement of the citizen's right to vote. To reduce the voting rights of individuals is a violation of our democratic system. He went on to say, at page 13, the basic premise of the vote-rigging plot was that Aboriginal people in these ridings had historically voted for the NDP—for a lot of very good reasons, may I add—but the Aboriginal vote would be split if there were Aboriginal candidates running. The attempt here at vote splitting was, in my

opinion—and we're keeping in mind, this is a retired superior court judge—the attempt here at vote splitting was, in my opinion, clearly unethical and morally reprehensible.

So he goes on to say at page 55: I cannot ignore the fact that throughout this episode, especially during the investigations and at the hearings, some of these witnesses demonstrate—exhibited a degree of arrogance or an I-know-better attitude. And it's amazing, Mr. Speaker, even after 14 years in opposition, we still see the same arrogance and the same I-know-better attitude from the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus pretty much any time they step up and say anything in this House or in the community.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I don't have time to go on to all the prosecutions of Progressive Conservatives in 1999. I don't have time to go on to all the other things that we have done in light of the Monnin inquiry, in light of the horrible things which were done by Progressive Conservatives to try and subvert democracy. I really don't have time to get through that. But I know I've got a lot of other members of my caucus who are quite prepared to talk about electoral fairness and electoral financing.

So I highly recommend, Mr. Speaker, in a spirit of co-operation, the members opposite do their summer reading. So many liars is a great read. Summer of My Amazing Luck is a tremendous read. I commend it to every member of this Legislature. And you know, even though we're in here an awful lot, there's still a lot of things the members opposite could certainly learn from reading some good books by Manitoba authors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): It's a pleasure to put some words on the record with regard to Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act, brought forward by our leader.

And I believe that this legislation is very serious legislation with regard to a couple of facts, with regard to a couple of very serious issues: (1) It shows that this government is failing to respect Manitobans who would expect their taxpayer dollars to go to services that would benefit them directly, to programs that would benefit them directly. And this vote tax, Mr. Speaker, does neither. It does not provide a direct service to Manitobans who are asking for a number of things from this government. And this government has said that, you know, they

are looking out for the best interests of Manitobans, and, you know, I—you know, you question whether this bill is really looking out for the best interests of Manitoba families.

We see and we've read petitions over and over in this House, and we've had members from the community—autism spectrum disorder community—who have come here to ask this government to fulfill its obligation, its promise in the last election to provide the support so that these children can actually get services and get supports that can make them continue to, you know, thrive in schools, in the community. And when they are not able to access these services—they are aged out at a certain age—then those services are no longer available, so there's a critical time period that these individuals—these children—need that care. And these dollars that the government is taking out of the pockets of these children, these families who are asking for help, is so disrespectful.

You know, we heard the member from—the deputy—or the Minister for Justice, the Attorney General (Mr. Swan), talk about, you know, the 1995 vote issue and the challenges that were put forward during the election process. And in 1995 that was wrong, and the public opinion of that was wrong. And they have not stepped away from that. They have apologized. They know that that was wrong, and we will continue to say that that is not acceptable, that that was not a way to handle elections, Mr. Speaker. And they've learned from that.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing today is a government that is doing those types of things on a regular basis. We're seeing ministers of the Crown break election laws and not being held accountable to that. We have two senior ministers standing in a birthing facility and knowing full well that that is against the election laws but go ahead and do it anyways, no apologies—none. And, you know, I think that that—you know, the member opposite can say what he wants, that's fair game. But it does show that when we are asking this government to be accountable to a vote tax, to money that should be going to families and to individuals who are struggling, we are seeing an arrogant government who's out of touch. They would rather line their pockets with taxpayers' dollars to run their campaigns than go out and ask for those dollars.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you see that the programs that this government is failing to provide

supports for, it's not much wonder that they are wanting to get the vote tax dollars, because they don't want to go to the door of a young family who has a child who has autism, who expected this government to fulfill their promise during the last election through the Thrive! document, and actually deny that they are going to be able to do that.

You know, and it is about trust—it is about trust. And they talk about that, and when you have a Premier (Mr. Selinger) who at a public forum has indicated that he would not increase the PST, and, you know, Mr. Speaker, that—I was at that forum and, you know, we looked at the Premier and we looked at the people in the audience and you could see that there was a frown, but, oh, well. If he says that he's not going to increase the PST, then he must have a better handle on the books than really anybody else.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we found was it was a Premier who was desperate for that vote, and he made a lie to the Manitoba people at—during this election, and he has failed to apologize for it. He did not—you know, did not come clean. He did not provide Manitobans with an apology for misleading them, for not sharing the true facts.

And now we see this government putting its hands in the pocket through a vote tax. We see a government who has failed to live up to its obligations to Manitobans in so many different areas. We see the situation in TSN—or TCN, where these families are looking for this government to take some responsibility to ensure that dollars through the ratepayers of Manitoba—through the Hydro ratepayers of Manitoba—are actually providing the services this community needs.

* (10:30)

Water and sewer are a necessity for a healthy community. These families were promised that they would receive those types of services and they are not getting them. A lot of these communities in the north are looking for ways to improve their quality of life and when they are told that they will receive these supports, and the money goes missing, this government has to be accountable to those dollars. These families deserve better. They are Manitobans and they don't deserve to be put into a Ping-Pong game between the feds and the Province.

And, again, the member for Swan—member for—Minto, he actually has a very interesting concept when it comes to his responsibilities for Manitobans. I raised a question last week with regard

to a young family and he was indicating that, you know, it was a federal responsibility, that, you know, that it's a difficult situation but he blamed the feds and, you know, and then he also blamed the reporter saying that the facts were not—what did he say, as reported in the newspaper there were some inaccuracies.

Mr. Speaker, there were no inaccuracies. This individual—and then if there were, it would have been of his—his obligation to share what those inaccuracies were. But they just put on the record, oh inaccuracies and, you know, it was interesting because when I spoke to the reporter he indicated that, that's rather interesting because it was straight from the transcript. Straight from the transcript. And also, it was—he was commended by the legal team on both sides for the accuracy and the well written article and what we see is a member for Minto, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), indicating that it's a federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, he had an obligation. His department had an obligation to, you know, ensure that Manitobans are protected. This vote tax would provide the important dollars, the important needs of this system to ensure that his department is communicating with family services. We know that family services should have been notified that this young man, or this young family were going to be in a situation where this pedophile was going to be going back into the community because he—his department has an obligation to ensure that family services and the community are aware that this pedophile is coming back into the community.

And the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) laughs about this. He thinks this is funny. This family were violated and this, this, this—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I want to remind the House that we are currently debating Bill 205, The Election Financing Amendment Act, and I would ask the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) to please give me the impression, at least, that she's attempting to have her comments surround and be relevant to the topic under debate here this morning. So I'm asking for the honourable member's co-operation.

Mrs. Rowat: I was coming back to that Mr. Speaker but the member for St. Norbert was laughing and he was taking me off my agenda of ensuring that this government is held to account with regard to the vote tax and the significance of it.

The member for St. Norbert does not understand. He's very new to this House but he doesn't act like he understands the process very well because—and he probably more than anybody would like the vote tax because I believe when he goes to the doors, he's going to have a lot of rejection.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, this bill stops the process, reasserts regular grassroots Manitobans as the most important part of the political process not like this government who thinks they are.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to this opposition piece of legislation here. And basic premise here is the—is democracy, Mr. Speaker, it's a—the question of whether we want the political system to function efficiently and independently or whether we want to be controlled by special interest groups such as large corporations, which I think is the preferred course of action for members opposite, and this legislation just firms that up in my mind.

Like—and I look back to 1999. When we were first elected—when I was elected, one of the first acts—in fact, I believe it was the very first act that passed through this Chamber was an amendment to the election finances act. Our premier, the Honourable Gary Doer, did not want to be beholden to any special interest groups, and he identified them—it was the unions and corporations. Those were the two groups that attempt to try and influence political parties, and our message when we became government was that we would not be beholden to anybody, and that was why we put in place a ban on union and corporate donations to political parties. And in return for that, you know, we asked that the public fund political parties, fund elections to a certain degree so that taxpayers, in general, are the ones that are controlling the purse strings, that control the reins of power. Not big companies, which is where members opposite want to back to.

I believe that should they ever form government, this will be one of their first acts through the Legislature—will be an amendment again to the election finance's act to facilitate large corporations stepping in and funding their party to the tune of—who knows? Three thousand dollars, \$5,000, \$10,000, a million dollars—I'm sure they'll put no limits whatsoever on the amount of money that big business can donate to their political parties, and once again the richest of the rich will be controlling the political agenda. It's so ironic to listen to members opposite talk about the poor and so on and

so forth when what they want to do is basically give the reins of power back to big business who have no interest whatsoever in supporting programs for the poor. That, I think, is obvious to one and all, but that is where they're going to take us.

So, you know, for the price of a cup of coffee, basically, is what we are talking—each individual Manitoban will donate \$1 or even less than \$1, I believe it is. It might be in the neighbourhood of 75 cents. For the price of half a cup of coffee, we're going to have a democratic system that's controlled by taxpayers, by individual Manitobans, not by big business. And the financing is predicated on how many votes each party gets. If a party gets 50 or 60 per cent of the total vote, that's how much they get from the subsidy that's put in place. So I think that for the price of a cup of coffee I would go down that road as opposed to having the largest corporations in the country—I'm assuming not just in Manitoba—controlling the purse strings.

Now, some mention has been made of how much respect members opposite have for the democratic process, and history speaks for itself, of course. We know going back to a little bit before my time, 1995, the greatest debasement of democracy in the history of Manitoba, probably in the history of our country, a vote-rigging scandal above and beyond belief was perpetrated by members opposite. And, you know, the previous—the Minister of Justice put quotes on the record words of Justice Monnin, and I won't repeat them, but, you know, obviously the intent was exposed to one and all by a judge how members opposite conduct themselves in regard to functioning of democracy.

* (10:40)

And then, of course, in 1999 when I first ran, as a neophyte, I was, you know, stepping into the political arena, I was all excited about that, and again they debased democracy by drafting up a phony police report, if you can imagine that, Mr. Speaker, and what did they do with it? They sent it to all of the band offices—there are—there were eight reserves in the Interlake at that time, now there are nine—but that's where they targeted. As they did in 1995, they targeted Aboriginal people. They were trying to orchestrate a scheme to draw their support away from the NDP where it traditionally lies.

And that was a despicable act and it was a racist act, Mr. Speaker, to be frank. I hate to use language like that, but the truth needs to be put on the record. When you orchestrate a scheme to—and target one

individual group of people, whether it's immigrants or Aboriginals or what have you, that is truly, truly deplorable.

And that was their scheme in 1995 and that was the scheme again 1999, to try and hoodwink Aboriginal people, because I guess they're—in their minds, not as politically astute and are subject to subterfuge and influence. Well, that was truly a deplorable act. And so that was my introduction to politics, and, of course, ever since then I've been keeping my eyes wide open, and I don't see much change across the way, frankly.

Now, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) was talking about the PST increase, and that's something that's very relevant here as well because it's to do with the finances of the province.

And, you know, I don't have much time left, but I just want to put on the record, you know, that we'd experienced the greatest flood in our history and the Interlake constituency in particular was profoundly impacted by that. And, you know, our government is taking the right approach, that, you know, over the decades the city has been flood proofed, and I think, you know, the last flood is—typifies that. So why not pass on that same protection to rural Manitobans, the people in the Interlake? And that is what we're going to do.

It was a difficult decision to make, but—this is going to be a very expensive process. We've already spent over a billion dollars to address the damage that was caused to rural people, to Aboriginal people, to farmers. But we're going to take it a step further now, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to give the same level of flood proofing to rural people that urban people currently have. And that's a worthy undertaking, but it's going to be an expensive undertaking and we have to have the tax dollars in order to facilitate that.

Members opposite would do the opposite. Not only would they do away with that 1 per cent—1 per cent—increase to the PST, but they would cut even further from the budget, half a billion dollars out of the budget. And we know how that would reflect upon all the various different departments of government, the Department of Health a classic example. The Leader of the Opposition said he would go to two-tiered health care, so we know the road that they will take us down if they should ever regain the reins of power in this province. So, you know, I think that Manitobans are aware of their

agenda. Manitobans know what to expect; that's why they continue to keep them on the opposition bench.

We are a fourth-term government verging on a fifth term here because we are a building government. We believe in investing in infrastructure. We are going to work with the federal government over the next decade on the next infrastructure program. We are going to work with municipal governments in this regard. And we will take Manitoba to a higher level, not back into the gutter where it was when members opposite were in office.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do want to put a few things on the record in regards to Bill 205. Certainly that—important debate we're having in the House today. I just wish they would have had the courtesy to debate that with the public before the last election.

Of course, what we saw very clearly, the previous leader, Gary Doer, was smart enough to say he would not take the vote tax. He sided with us whenever we said we weren't going to take the vote tax—another penalty on hard-working Manitobans. He saw the light; refused to take it. What we saw—*[interjection]* then he went to work—yes, he did. He went to Washington and doing the work of the people. And by the way, I think he's doing a great job. I just had an email from him the other day in regards to our resolution on COOL stating the fact that he's fully supported what we're doing here in Manitoba.

And, sure to the goodness, maybe members opposite should pick up the phone, call him and then say, what do you think about this vote tax that we're taking, this million dollars of hard-earned money from Manitobans? Because, quite frankly, we don't want to have to get out and work. Gary Doer did a fantastic job at raising money. Where did all that expertise go? Was he the only one on that side of the House, had the ability to be able to raise money? I think not—I think not.

Everyone on that side should be able to go out and say, Mr. Supporter, what do you think? Can you help me? Can you help me raise some money? No—no, they just don't seem to want to be able to do that. It's much easier saying, you know what we'll do? We'll bring in a law—we'll bring in a law that'll give us some money so we don't have to go out and ask. It's that simple—real simple. Too hard to go out and

knock on the door, say hello. Because you know what they're going to do when they go knock on that door? They're going to slam it in their face. They're going to say, what did you lie to us for? Why did you lie to us about the vote tax? Why did you lie to us about the PST? Why did you do those things to mislead us, and now you have the audacity to ask for money? I can't believe you'd actually do that. Sure to the goodness they'd be able to humble themselves enough to be able to say, I made a mistake. I did not lie to you intentionally. We had to do it. We had to do it because Gary Doer left. He's the only one that could raise money for us and now we have to say, we got to do it on the backs of every hard-working Manitoban. He just saw the light—he saw the light. He was proud of the fact that he was able to move on to another chapter in his life, that certainly—that I think he's doing, as I said earlier, a great job.

Now, whenever we look at the opportunity to be able to go out and raise money—and I know the members opposite like to say, well, geez, you got your 50-cent dollars in the last election. Well, so did they—so did they. I spent a total of \$11,200. Yes, I got a rebate. Not for the full amount because we all know there's some that's not—that's not as—not part of that rebate. So I got a rebate, about 4,500 bucks. You're more than welcome to go on—it's public record. I'm not ashamed of the amount of money I spent. I'm very pleased to represent the people of Lakeside. And you know what? I would spend whatever I need to spend. I raised a little bit more money than that. But, you know what? I'm proud of the fact that the people decided to support me; give me the money that I needed to run my campaign.

And you know what? I would like to be able to hear from members opposite about how much money they spent in their campaign. You know, maybe the members want to be able to talk about that. We don't need extra dollars—we don't need extra dollars from Manitobans. What you do is you focus on winning your election, raising money where you need to, and that's your opportunity. That's your main opportunity to be able to reach out to those and say, how can you help us? What can you do to help us form government?

And, obviously, what they've been doing worked. I mean, they got 37 seats—good for them. But you know what? Obviously, they're running scared. They're running scared, they feel they don't have the ability to be able to raise money. So why would that be? Is it because of what they're doing in government? Have they misled the people of

Manitobans? What have they done to be able to say, we need your support? Obviously there's something gone astray and they're recognizing that. So what do they do? They bring in a tax that's going to give them more money without having to do anything, just simply pass the legislation. It's just the way. The way—the wave of the future, I guess. I certainly don't think that's the way we need to be going.

Obviously, when we bring in Bill 205, here's an opportunity for the government to say, hey, I did make a mistake. One more chance—one more chance to the door to be able to go to them and say, we made a huge mistake. We will not take the vote tax. This million dollars we could put to more flood protection—we could do it; to build more roads—what a grand opportunity; to help those with disabilities; to help those less fortunate; to help those that need—are in need, whether it be helping those others—

* (10:50)

An Honourable Member: Peter says it's only a half million. Who cares?

Mr. Eichler: Yes, I know. Yes, what is that? You know, where we come from, that's a lot of money—that's a lot of money. We need to focus on our priorities.

Just last week—maybe the member from Gimli's right—I brought a question up in regards to cutting grass in a park—downtown Winnipeg Beach. What do they do? After I asked that question, they cut the grass. They must have found some money. Maybe the member from Gimli will donate that \$7,000 he's getting to Winnipeg Beach, maybe to Gimli, maybe to Hecla. I was up there just a couple of weeks ago. The trails hadn't been cut—the trails hadn't been cut. Maybe they could use the money for that if that's their priority they have. What is going on with the priorities of the government whenever they're looking to spend their money? Does it have to be the way that's going to line their pockets? I think not.

There's lots of opportunity to have priorities and we've talked about that. We've talked about that many, many times. In fact, just even on highways, I know the government always loves to say that, geez, the member from Lakeside or the member from Carman or the member from so-and-so just asked for a road.

Well, what about a safety approach? What about a safety approach—an access that would be able to get people off the side of the road, whether it be at a grain terminal, whether it be at a stoplight, whether it

be at a major intersection—lots of opportunities for that money to be spent in a manner that's going to benefit all Manitobans, not just the 37 members opposite.

Now, there has been some studies—there has been some studies in regards to what happens with the vote tax. What happens? Here's some things that Dr. Michael Pinto, a senior research fellow at Brunel University and a recognized worldwide authority on political finance said: If you go further down the road the state of funding political parties, we risk a long-term trend of converting parties from popular democratic institutions to top-down bureaucracies. What does that mean? Yes, the member from St. Norbert says, yes, what does that mean? Yes, I can tell you what that means.

That means, very clearly, what this government is going to do is rely slowly on—right now, hey, they did pretty good vote-wise in the last election. So guess what? After the next election, if their vote drops to 300,000 less, they're getting a lot less money—not hard work to figure out. Then, they'll say, oh we've got to change it again. We've got to change it again. We got to come back to union donations. We ought to be able to have our membership. They'll just say, that's the way it's going to be.

So, also, William Cross, who holds the Chair of Canadian Parliamentary Democracy, Carleton University, stated the federal vote tax the Liberals brought in, he said—suggested, essentially the new federal public allowance system makes political parties wards of the state—wards of the state. My goodness. Is that the way we want to go? Is that what we want to be known as? Diminishes incentive to communicate with partisans between elections and involve them in party affairs. My goodness—involve them in communication. My gosh.

You'd want to be able to go out and actually say to somebody at the door: What do you think about our policies? What do you want to do? What do you want to see in our democratic—our New Democratic Party changes. What would you want to do?

I wonder how many on that side of the House actually went out, knocked on the door and said, what do you think about making it mandatory so that every taxpayer in Manitoba for every vote we got, we got a dollar or we got two dollars, or heaven forbid if they'd even thought about bringing in the PST. Who would've thought whether or not that would've been a door conversation?

No, they made another comment. No, no, we will not raise the PST. That's nonsense—that's nonsense. We'll never, never do that. But what did they do? They turned around and did it anyway.

So now we have this slush fund that's going to be able to go out and do some ribbon cutting—be able to go out and say to hard-working Manitobans, we know better. You should listen to us. You give us your money and we'll let you know what we want to do with it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): It's a pleasure to be up getting the opportunity to speak to such an important issue.

When the member from Portage mentioned that they were surprised that the people, when he spoke to them about this, were surprised that this was happening, I have to wonder if he mentioned that the Conservative Party is taking that \$1.3 million in public financing right now. And if he had really explained to them that the cost, as the member from the Interlake mentioned, of democracy in our country is less than a cup of coffee, if he perhaps mentioned to them what the situation is like in the United States of America, our dear friends to the south, where the billionaires, as our member from Elmwood mentioned, control the government and the legislation, where people do nothing with their time in government except search for money. He mentioned that the priorities of a government shows where they are at, and I couldn't agree with him more, Mr. Speaker. And what they show here is that we care about health care, that we care about education, and in the case of this subsidy, that we care about democracy.

And I can certainly understand why the members opposite are not interested in transparency, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely clear to me why that would be, because we see from the vote-rigging scandal that that is very clear. I hear from the member from Portage—and I actually believe that the member from Portage cares about poverty—I do. I've heard him speak on it many times. I'm just mystified why he's sitting on that side of the House, because he clearly has not done any investigation into what his party stands for. And it is not helping 'pov'—people in poverty or people with families or people with children. So if you were going to do a half a billion dollars in cuts, do you really think you're going to

help the people in poverty? You are not. If you're going to have a system like the United States of America—we can see that the people who are not being helped there are the people in poverty, because the billionaires control the government. Do they want to bring in legislation? They don't even have health care for all of their people.

I was recently at a conference there, it—with regard to educators. And you know what they told me? They told me if they didn't have a senator or a congressman in their pocket, they didn't get any education funding in their school. That's what they said. They—that is exactly what they told me. Their teachers are poorly paid and they last about five years, Mr. Speaker, in the system—about five years, because they can't afford to stay in there working on education. So, if you truly want to see that kind of a system and you want your country controlled by those who are the richest and the biggest businesses, then you need to stand against this policy. We also want little parties to exist in our country, unlike those in the United States. You don't see very many little people. And here we get to have the Liberals in the House with us. We get to have the Green Party, Mr. Speaker, fighting for votes because of this kind of funding.

So I am absolutely mystified that you would be standing against what we're doing here, because I just can't understand it. When it comes to poverty, we need legislators who are not controlled by big business. That's what we need. We need people who aren't afraid to stand up for the poor and who can actually make policies. What kind of consumer legislation do you think you get when it's run by big business? Well, the member from Elmwood the other day actually spoke about some legislation around airline legislation, where people would die if that legislation didn't go through. They couldn't do it through their legislation because they're all controlled by big business, even the good guys.

There's many good legislators down in the United States, and what they have to do is sell their soul for money in order to go out and try and fight the good fight. Do we want that in Canada? No, I'm quite happy to give up half a cup of coffee a year in order to have democracy in my country, and so should you. And telling people on your doorstep things that are not at all true about this 'subsidy,' I find it just reprehensible. I don't even know what to say about it. I—

* (11:00)

Mr. Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight)—order, please.

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

The hour being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution we have under consideration this morning is sponsored by the honourable member for La Verendrye, and the title of the resolution is Provincial Government Fails Manitoba Youth.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 31—Provincial Government Fails Manitoba Youth

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): I move, seconded by the member from Lac du Bonnet,

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest child poverty rate in the country at 11.1 per cent, considerably above the national average of 8.2 per cent; and

WHEREAS across Canada child poverty rates are decreasing, however, in Manitoba 5,000 more children live in poverty than in 2005; and

WHEREAS Manitoba has posted the highest inflation rate in the country in June at a time when Manitoba youth are facing an increasingly tough time finding opportunities in this province; and

WHEREAS from 2000 to 2012, Manitoba witnessed a net loss of approximately 56,000 persons through interprovincial migration, in 2011-2012 alone Manitoba experienced a net loss of 4,675 people; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's labour force is facing pressure from other provinces that are experiencing strong economic growth with young people feeling the attraction of strong economies in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan; and

WHEREAS between 2007 and 2012 Manitoba's high school dropout rate was the second highest amongst all Canadian provinces.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge that the provincial government has not made children and youth a priority and as a result some of Manitoba's best and brightest are leaving Manitoba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba acknowledge that the policies of the provincial government with respect to children and youth are harming the very people they are meant to help; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to adopt policies aimed at keeping youth in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for La Verendrye, seconded by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet,

WHEREAS Manitoba has—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Smook: I bring this resolution forward because of my concern for the youth and children of this fine province of Manitoba. The youth and children are Manitoba's future, and we cannot afford to lose a generation of them.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government does not have a good track record when it comes to Manitoba's children and youth. This NDP government has failed our youth in many areas: education, employment, health care and especially the family services system. The stats are there to prove it.

Some of the issues that affect our youth are hunger, poverty, involvement in crime and disadvantages like FASD and other learning disabilities. These are not being addressed in a meaningful way by this government.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has the highest child poverty rate in the country; 11.1 per cent compared the national average of 8.2 per cent. Canada's poverty rates are decreasing. However, in Manitoba 5,000 more children live in poverty than did in 2005.

Mr. Speaker, in 2010 Manitoba was named the child poverty capital of Canada for the second year in a row. Between 2003 and 2009, nearly 40 per cent of Manitoba children lived in poverty for at least one year. This dramatic increase in poverty is forcing Manitobans to rely on food banks, including children. According to a 2012 Food Banks Canada report, 47.6 per cent of people who use food banks in Manitoba are children.

One of the most important things we can do for our youth is education. But since 2007, Manitoba has

led the nation with the second highest high school dropout rate in the country. These problems are even more extreme in the north where the high school dropout rate is significantly higher than the rest of this province.

Assessment programs—oh sorry. In the 2010 Pan-Canadian Assessment Program—which measures the performance of grade eight students in math, science and reading—Manitoba ranked last amongst all Canadian provinces in science and second last in math. We need to ensure our children are getting their foundation in math, science and reading if they are going to succeed in post-secondary education or in the job market. This government needs to figure out why they are not achieving this national average or better.

Mr. Speaker, youth crime. We see skyrocketing rates of youth involved in crime—up 92 per cent over the last five years. These are all statistics that tell us how our youth in this province compare to the rest of Canada. And these statistics show how poorly this government is doing with our youth and children. This is a record of failure and it's time we demand better of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the minister of child and youth opportunities is going to stand up and list off all the projects, the announcements, the ribbon cuttings that this government has done. Well, that's—that will probably be the majority of his speech. Yes, there have been a lot of money spent through child and youth opportunities. But the facts speak for themselves.

The NDP continues to deny that what they're doing is right. But the government's answer to a problem is to take money and throw more money at it. There all kinds of youth programs that are funded by this government. But a lot of them are just short-term programs that act as Band-Aids and offer no real solutions. Mr. Speaker, I think it's time that this government starting—started looking a little deeper. But the NDP are not willing to do that.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite will brag about Manitoba's low employment rate and how well this province is doing. But when you look at the end results—highest child poverty rate in Canada, one of the highest use of food banks by children, one of the worst graduation rates in the country, skyrocketing youth crime—one can only conclude that we have a have province with a have-not government. One of the biggest challenges this province is facing is poverty—family poverty. Experts agree that a high

rate of poverty results in higher crime rates and many more of this province's problems.

* (11:10)

Mr. Speaker, the number of people collecting social assistance has been steadily increasing here in Manitoba, but next door in Saskatchewan the number of people collecting social assistance has steadily been shrinking. What is wrong with this picture? We need to help families so that the children in these families won't suffer.

When families are short of money the first thing that needs to get paid is the rent, but when you have not enough money to pay the rent everything else gets cut back—programs for children—there's no money left. We have asked for the government to—for the EI to pay for 75 per cent of what the normal going rate for rent is. This government refuses to do that. If they would look after that, it would put more money into the pockets of children of families that would be able to get betterly educated. They wouldn't be out there looking for things to do because they have no money. Crime would drop.

Increasing the personal exemption on the provincial income tax—we have some of the lowest exemptions in the country. Next door to us, in Saskatchewan, they're thousands of dollars higher on the personal exemption. That puts money back into the pockets of the low-income earner. It doesn't do anything for the people that are making a lot of money, but it does help the low-income earner and that's something that our provinces to the west are doing a good job at.

People are happy—they'd like to be all working. They don't want to be on EI, but they need to have that ability to get EI—get off EI. What is happening? This government is spending money. They have such a spending habit that they have to tax the people—increases in taxes. In the last two budgets alone, over half a billion dollars in new fees, new taxes that mostly affect the low-income person. You know, insurance on home—taxes on—PST on tax—or on home insurance. A lot of the people can't afford that. A lot of people don't have home insurance because they can't afford it.

The next thing we really need to look at is the job rates amongst our youth. The youth need some meaningful employment in this province to stay here. But a lot of the youth are leaving. They're going for—to places like Alberta, Saskatchewan, B.C. Our smarter students are leaving to pursue careers in

other areas, in other provinces. Low taxes and attractive jobs are available in Calgary, Montréal, other places in Canada. And people are leaving this province because of this government. There's families in Roblin that have moved across the border to Saskatchewan because they're saving themselves \$500 a month. They're working in Manitoba but living in Saskatchewan because of our high income tax rate, because of our extremely—the PST, Manitoba's 8 per cent; Saskatchewan is 5 per cent.

And with this, I'll close and I'll let somebody else speak to this. Thank you.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I had to look at the—today's paper to make sure we were in 2013 and not 1993, because if we were to have a little twilight zone moment, I think this should have been debated in 1993 when members opposite ignored our youth in this province. And I know that first hand because I was a teacher in the public school system where I saw the impacts of cuts to education funding year after year after year.

And they weren't just cuts that were supporting the programs that were important to our youth—*[interjection]* Well, you know, I listened intently to what the member opposite had to say, but I've already hit a nerve with members opposite, they're already yapping away here. But, you know, when I was a teacher they didn't listen to me then and I'm not surprised they're not listening to me now, because they would cut education funding time and time again. And when you cut education funding, what are the consequences? Well, you're going to lose about 700 teachers over their tenure. That's how many teachers left the system when they were in office. And when you lose 700 teachers, who's going to suffer the most? The vulnerable children, Mr. Speaker, because when your class sizes are growing, then you're going to have to—you'll have less time that you can spend with those children who are the most vulnerable and need you the most, because your class sizes are growing because you're losing colleagues to their education cuts. So, you know, that was one thing.

Another thing, they were cutting other programs that were supporting vulnerable youth. I distinctly remember going to this program called the P.A.R.T.Y. program, and it was an acronym for preventing alcohol and risk-related trauma in youth. It was an excellent program that showed children the risks of risky behaviour and the impacts of risky

behaviour if they should suffer brain injuries and things of that nature, Mr. Speaker, severe trauma. And it was a great program and they cut it; they cut it entirely.

You know, our most vulnerable children, lots of programs that supported them, but when you come in and you say, we're going to balance the budget by cutting things and they cut things, there are impacts, Mr. Speaker.

So here we are, 20 years later, talking about Manitoba youth. Well, let's talk about Manitoba youth for a while. Oh, sorry, I forgot; let's go back 20 years again, just for a little while, because they're talking about the youth who are disadvantaged coming from poor households. Well, what did they do? Well, when their leader was sitting at the Cabinet table, what were the decisions that were made around child poverty? Well, clearly, it's going to help people by slashing \$150 a month of benefits for the poorest families in the province. Cutting income assistance rates not once, not twice, but three times, Mr. Speaker. How does that help impoverished families? Oh, and it doesn't stop there. Clawing back the national child care benefit for parents. And they want to talk about support for the poor?

And, oh, and now the members opposite have stood up and said that they're supporting raising the rental rates to 75 per cent. And he says, how will that support the children? Well, how come their leader on three occasions has kind of backpedalled from that already. He's backpedalled and said that he supports that for persons with disabilities. So he's already backpedalling on that, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, well, I know the difference between us and them. It's quite clearly defined, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Portage says, you went where with that? Well, I'll tell you where we went. We started by not—or by reinstating the Universal Child Care Benefit. That's where we went. We—that means \$533 per month into the hands of a single parent with two small children—\$533 a month, Mr. Speaker.

And now, of course, members opposite are looking at cutting \$550 million indiscriminately right across the board. And they're going to try and assure us that that's not going to impact poor people, Mr. Speaker? I think not. We know that we can't trust members opposite with the future of our children here in Manitoba.

Now, again, I could fall back to education. Over the last three elections—or four elections—we're the only government, the only party that has talked about the importance of training and apprenticeship. Haven't heard a word from members opposite, Mr. Speaker. Not a word from members opposite about the importance of training. I guess they think you can just add water and jobs—

An Honourable Member: And stir.

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, add water and stir, yes, that must be their formula, but we know that meaningful training is important to grow the economy.

And hear the member from La Verendrye say, oh, they're going to talk about their second lowest unemployment rate in the country. Yes, I think that's a good thing. I think that's a good thing because that means more people are working in Manitoba—more people are working in Manitoba. And not only is it the second lowest unemployment rate in the country, Mr. Speaker, but we also have the third lowest unemployment rate among the youth in the province of Manitoba. So members opposite should really get their facts straight.

There's so many things we could talk about, Mr. Speaker. Another one that really is important to me is what we're seeing with the school year less than a month away—the school year about to start, and members opposite are not standing up to protect children in our schools. They are not standing up to protect children. John Baird is standing up for equal rights. The Pope recently made an announcement about his position on homosexual lifestyles.

Members opposite are not prepared to move Bill 18 forward to committee so that we can ensure that every single child—every single child is safe when they go into the schools. So it's shameful—it's absolutely shameful, that they continue to talk out Bill 18; they continue to filibuster Bill 18. And they want to talk about abandoning youth? We don't abandon any youth in this province, Mr. Speaker—we do not abandon any youth in this province. They're being selective on how they support our youth, and I think that's reprehensible in this day and age—absolutely reprehensible.

* (11:20)

Now, let's talk about a number of different initiatives and provide that clear contrast, like I say, the twilight zone that we're in right now. I mentioned already that the Conservatives cut or froze education funding five years in a row when they were in office

in the 1990s. We've increased our funding for education every single year since we've been in office, Mr. Speaker. And we've even done so in very challenging economic times because we know that education is the equalizer. And we know that that would not happen if members opposite were in office because they have already said, oh, we'll cut \$550 million from the budget; that's the responsible thing to do. Well, we've seen that song and dance. We saw that in the '90s. It's taken a long time to recover from a lot of those mean-spirited cuts that the members opposite put on the table, and we're not going to go there again—14 straight years that we've increased funding to education, and we've done that at or above the rate of economic growth, and our funding increases \$27.2 million this year alone, 2.3 per cent. And I think that \$27.2 million in one year represents almost the entire increase, if I'm not mistaken, in the 1990s that members opposite invested in education.

And what are we talking about in terms of quality of education? They still don't understand a lot of the issues around quality of education. And I've already mentioned bullying, but I'll mention it again. Mr. Speaker, I remember one of the members opposite standing up and saying, well, there was no bullying in schools when we were in office. One of them actually said that. That's in Hansard.

And you know, and it's funny, because in 1993, 20 years ago, I remember it well, when I was with the Teachers' Society and the local association executive—yes, I'm one of the union buddies, back in the 1993—we had a report from teachers that their biggest concern about our school system was their own personal safety and the level of violence that had been escalating in the schools at that time. And what did they do? Nothing. They did nothing. We're the government that brought in the Safe Schools Charter. We're the government who's amended the Safe Schools Charter. We're the government who's brought in antibullying legislation. And we're the government who's going to continue to work to protect our children. You want to talk about failing children? They failed our children miserably.

We have also recognized—oh, I see that the clock is actually shut off on this side. Okay, there we go.

An Honourable Member: Unlimited time.

Mr. Bjornson: Unlimited time, all right. I could do that. I could do that because there is so much that we can talk about here, Mr. Speaker.

Let's look at the status of children report, Mr. Speaker. We know that the investments that we made are yielding results. We were the first province to create a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, and I've had the privilege of serving on that committee as well as Education Minister. And we were the first province to table a report on the health and well-being of Manitoba's children in the Legislature. We provide Prenatal Benefit to pregnant mothers that has resulted in healthier babies. And we do that whether they live on First Nations or live in small-town Manitoba or big-city Manitoba. Getting healthy food to kids in the north is also one of the priorities that we've been undertaking through the northern healthy foods program. We're the only jurisdiction in Canada that screens for alcohol consumption in mothers during pregnancy. The list goes on and on and on.

Our approach to youth in Manitoba is a very broad, holistic approach and we're going to continue to do that because we are the party that truly believes that our children are the future of this province. And we're going to work with all the stakeholders and all the—

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

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I would like to commend the member from La Verendrye for bringing this resolution forward this morning, the Provincial Government Fails Manitoba Youth resolution. A couple things that I'd like to just put on the record for this morning and start off is basically talking about the here and now.

Mr. Speaker, I know that in the last speaker's time of 10 minutes, he basically—the member from—the NDP member from Gimli basically spent roughly eight minutes, a shade over eight minutes, speaking about the '90s as opposed to actually taking the opportunity, when he gets a chance to stand up, put some words on the record about what is actually happening for the man—for the youth in Manitoba. I know that the Minister for child and youth opportunities, no doubt, is going to get up, so I'm looking forward to listening to what he has to say.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, the facts don't lie. And the facts are is that there are many, many aspects within our children and youth. Whether it's education, whether it's housing, whether it's poverty, we absolutely have to be doing a better job, because, again, the facts don't lie, the numbers are there. We are not doing so well as a province.

And the NDP member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), he stood up and he also mentioned how—he said that one of our members said that there were—there was no bullying when we were in government in the '90s. I can't believe that the member from Gimli would put such false truths on the record in regards to something like that. The fact to—the idea to think that there was no bullying in the '90s, there was no bullying in the '80s, the '70s, the '60s and so on—and a matter of fact it's amazing, Mr. Speaker, that it doesn't seem that this member from Gimli is even listening.

The fact is, is that bullying has been going on for years and years and years. And whether it's the Bill 18 that is going to be, hopefully, called again—I know that the member from Riel is saying that it's been called every day. And if their side of the House checks Hansard they would see that that's actually false; another false statement that that member is putting on this—on the record, Mr. Speaker. But with that, I'm not here to necessarily quibble with the members' statements from the past. We want to move forward and we want to actually talk about what is going on nowadays in regards to our children and youth.

And as I have said, when I decided to run for this—the seat of MLA for Lac du Bonnet constituency, I had said that one of our most precious resources in the province is actually our kids, Mr. Speaker. And so we want to make sure that they have the opportunity so that they can move forward in regards to their housing, education, and also hopefully have and raise a family here in this great province of ours.

I'd know that member from Burrows has stated on more than occasion today, in regards to poverty—and how she's pointing the finger at our way. And again, she's a bit stuck in the '90s as well. What is going on today, Mr. Speaker? What is going on today? So, children and youth are struggling under this government and their policies. And we know that. Their—they've been in power for now, roughly, you know, 13, 14 years, and we have not seen much of an improvement.

We see rates of youth suicide and poverty that are tragically high among Aboriginal communities; we see long wait times for pediatric health-care services where children can wait up to eight weeks to have an MRI scan, Mr. Speaker; where skyrocketing rates of youth involved in crime, up to 92 per cent

over the last five years; and, once again, Manitoba has one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, our high school graduation rate is perpetually one of the worst in the country. And when we take a look at exactly how the government picks and chooses their stats on how they're going to report their graduation rates is astounding.

I know that the NDP member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) often stands up and talks about his past days as being an educator, which I do commend, Mr. Speaker, because, as you know, I was an educator for 17 years. And I continue to educate people even in this job. It's quite enlightening.

Mr. Speaker, when I look back at the stats that the government has been taking from various school divisions and asking for, and then when it comes time to actually have a discussion about certain things in the House, a lot of the answers that we get are either spun rhetoric or they're I-don't-know answers. The member for Minto (Mr. Swan), the Minister for Justice, is busy talking about various things and, again, not really any answers.

*(11:30)

When we talk about the various stats, I know that in Estimates I was in with our member from Steinbach asking questions in regards to very important issues in regards to Education, and the minister often shrugged her shoulders and, with a giggle and a laugh, said that they don't keep those certain stats. And those certain things—graduation rates as far as Aboriginal students.

I asked, also, questions in regards to—because she would go on the record and start talking about post-secondary education, so I would ask certain questions and she would, of course, say, well, you have to go talk to the post-secondary minister. Well, so then I'd go over to the Minister for Advanced Education and Literacy and I would ask questions, and the Minister for Advanced Education and Literacy would say, well, no, you've got to go talk to the Minister for Education. So I'm almost thinking, Mr. Speaker, that those two departments maybe should get together and save some money and take some of that money that you would possibly be saving and put it into child and youth opportunities and actually use it—you know, use it actually for the youth, whether it's to decrease some of our poverty rates, get some new anticrime measures, as opposed to the spin and the rhetoric that they continue to put

on the record, whether it's in Estimates or it's here in the House.

I know that the member from Burrows and the member from Gimli and the member from Minto was busy talking in the last hour before we brought up this resolution. And, basically, Mr. Speaker, when we talk also about certain amounts of dollars that are going in to line their pockets, \$5,000 per member in the vote tax, so take some of that money, do some good with it, as opposed to lining your own pockets and funding your own elections for the upcoming election.

We take a look at the PST increase, Mr. Speaker. We're talking a one-point increase, which is basically 14 per cent increase—14 per cent increase. Nobody, whether it's children and youth or it's parents who are on welfare, are getting a 14 per cent—excuse me—increase. The problem is the member from Burrows, I almost have to draw it on a map to explain to her and other members of the other side of the House what that 14 per cent increase means. When you go—and she's laughing again—when you go from 7 to 8 per cent as far as the provincial sales tax, that's a one-point increase. You get the calculator, that's a 14 per cent increase. I don't quite understand, and maybe the member from Gimli, who I know was a teacher at one time—no, he was not a math teacher, but I'm sure even he could possibly teach the member from Burrows that basic math.

Now, I'd like to also, Mr. Speaker, as I know that my time is winding down, I would also like to mention that on the radio just last week, one of the days that I was driving in to work, they had mentioned how the various poverty, housing issues, education issues, crime and drugs in the last 20 years really hasn't changed. So that's where I want to leave it on today, is the fact that it's the here and now, things really haven't changed under this government. We need a change in Manitoba. We have a have province; we have a have-not government. We're up for the task. Thank you.

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): I'm in a bit of a—I got to say, the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) stood up and he said, you know, I know the Minister for Children and Youth's going to stand up and talk about all the ribbon cutting and kind of made it sound like he wasn't looking forward to that. And then the member from Lac du Bonnet stood up—so I can't talk about current things. The member for Lac du Bonnet stood up and started to sort of be cynical

with the member for Gimli talking about history. So I can't talk about the history, I can't talk about the current; I could be in a little bit of trouble here with what I have to say, Mr. Speaker.

But, look, this is what I do want to say, that I have, since being elected as a—the MLA for Point Douglas, I have travelled the province extensively. I have gone—actually, most members opposite have seen me in their ridings, and if they haven't seen me they know that I was in their riding. I have talked to families. I've worked with law enforcement. I've talked to teachers. I've talked to health professionals. I've talked to everyday moms. I have spent the majority of my time listening to Manitobans.

And, look, what they told me and what I currently know as well is that history does matter, that when I travel—and seeing the phenomenal programs in friendship centres, a variety of programs whether it be prenatal supports or after-school programs or cultural programs, they said, look, here's what we're currently doing, here's what we'd like to do and here's some thoughts of where we want to go, but what we know for sure is, don't cut, don't end this, don't use this economic instability by cutting us like it happened in the '90s. That's a fact. That's what they told us. That's what they told me, that history does matter.

Now, member opposite from La Verendrye is a new member like myself, but why this is so relevant is because the current Leader of the Opposition was in Cabinet when these cuts were made. So, you know, it's a responsibility for us to go listen to what Manitobans have to say and then come back and implement that in government, and one of the things that we do better than any government in the nation is we don't deliver service by ourselves. We deliver service in partnership with communities, in partnership with families. When we deliver service, we do it in partnership with foundations like the United Way who provide hope and opportunity for young people all throughout this province, with the Winnipeg Foundation, with friendship centres, with family resource centres, with non-profit organizations. That's how we deliver service.

So when members opposite sit here and say that we're failing children, we're failing youth, Mr. Speaker, they are saying that these organizations and who we deliver service with, they're failing as well, and that's why we adamantly, totally, one hundred per cent disagree. There is absolutely no question. If

you go out and you listen to what Manitobans have to say and you actually take the time to listen to families, you listen to Aboriginal people—that has come up many times—there's an incredible amount of pride in the services that Aboriginal people are providing in their neighbourhoods, in their communities. And that matters, and that's why it's so very, very important that we come here, we talk about what currently going on and we highlight the fact, yes, we're investing and we're—we gladly cut ribbons alongside of the people who are delivering service with us for the betterment of Manitobans. These are the things that I've heard first-hand from parents, from grandparents, from elders, from non-profits, from members who do an incredible amount of work in philanthropy.

So when—you know, as I'm out now talking about the early years, when we talk about the importance of understanding to maximize the potential of young people starts at the prenatal stage, that's why we provide the Prenatal Benefit. That's why we have the National Child Benefit. Once again, we're investing in it, but those were the kinds of investments that were cut. And they said, well, we'll cut it, we'll take it back but then we will provide the programs for you. We'll do the programs for you. Well, the facts are there is no new programs that they did. I knew what it felt like. My friendship centre in the North End as a young guy growing up was closed. So I thought, okay, well, I'll go to the local YMCA. I was a former basketball player. I can shoot some hoops at the Y—closed, closed. The member from Brandon West talks so highly about his local YMCA. Well, those were funds that were cut back in the '90s, and we reinstated those funds. So the very things in which they brag about every day in their own communities, and we gladly—and we're happy that they're doing that, are things that actually were cut in the '90s. I remember that, and that is important to understand.

And so when we provide the supports at the early years—literacy, language, numeracy, health outcomes for families—we not only want to get the investments there but we want to work alongside of families. Now, we know something like the Prenatal Benefit, as an example, we know when families receive that that moms carry their baby to full term. Their babies are born at a healthy baby weight and it increases breastfeeding, which has health outcomes. And we also know when we make these investments in early childhood, the impacts of that—of those

investments are absolutely incredible—we know that—and so those are the kinds of investments.

But where we lead the nation, Mr. Speaker, and this is without question where we lead the nation, is we collect data, we do research, we evaluate and we invest in best practice. We invest in evidence-based programs. We lead the nation. Now, what I want to say about that is that we lead the nation but the most important thing about the science that we get on evidence-based programs that make a difference is we make it public. We let everybody know. We give it to all of our partners. We gladly give it to every member of the Legislature. That's what we want to do. That's what the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet has always been about. And then we come here and then members opposite can ask questions and that's a good thing because now they have a way to ask educated questions. To be able to come up and stand up and say, here's a challenge, here's a gap, and once again, we will work alongside of anyone for the betterment and health and prosperity of children, youth and families in the province of Manitoba and we lead the nation when it comes to research and I proudly say that.

* (11:40)

Now, I recently got to go and travel the province and I'm currently doing it. I was doing, Starting Early, Starting Strong investments, listening to first-hand what people have to say and we launched this at the United Way and we had the United Way there, we had health professionals, educators, academics. We had an incredible amount of people but we also had a mom. Her name was Kristen. She came and she talked about getting the Prenatal Benefit and one of the things that she said, she had been on social assistance her entire life and getting the Prenatal Benefit was difficult, taking it, there's stigma attached to being poor, you know, that's a hard thing.

So, what our government understands is that to deal with the complexity of poverty, you can't just have a simple way of doing—dealing with it. You have to find multiple ways to challenge it. The best way to deal with it is you actually provide more choice. You provide more ways in which to have resources available to different families. And one of the things that Kristen said was that she needed to take the Prenatal Benefit, but the amazing thing about that was that it attached her to a Healthy Baby program and got her a network of supports. And she

said within three short years, what happened now, she's at Red River College and her daughter Emily was actually at the United Way and we got to see Emily and, you know, Emily was part of the event. And so the investments we made into Emily inspired her mom to go back to school, to get an adult education, to now volunteer at her child-care centre.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why do I say that? Why is that so important? Because when we make these investments, when you don't cut them and you provide choice it removes the stigma that is often attached to poverty, when you can provide networks and different opportunities.

So what were the members opposite strategy to deal with poverty when the Leader of the Opposition was in Cabinet? They invested in a snitch line. So we work incredibly hard with our partners, with everyday moms like Kristen to tell her story because we try to remove the shame and the challenge that comes with being poor. I know that personally. I know what that feels like and I'm telling you when you invest in a snitch line all you are saying is that poor people should be ashamed of themselves. And I'll tell you all that happened with that investment they made is people didn't call and try to get people—all that was, was a harassment line. That's all that happened, people harassed other people. There was no foresight, there was nothing innovative about that.

We invest in the Abecedarian Approach, first of its kind in the country, first of the kind in the country, just featured in Saturday's paper. Other provinces are looking at us. We're being innovative. We're looking at the Abecedarian Approach. It not only increases literacy, language and numeracy skills for young people so when they go to school they get a sense of belonging, but it ripples into the parents and parents are now spending more time with their children. Some of these parents have incredible histories, incredible challenges. You know, we lead the nation in terms of early childhood development when it comes to innovative programs.

You know, I only had 10 minutes to speak and that's just on early childhood development. I hadn't get a chance to talk about the endorsements from Dave Angus on this, the work we're doing with people like Mark Chipman and his leadership, the work that we currently do with the Boys and Girls Clubs, all those YMCAs that were shut down—we currently work with them, all those friendship centres that were shut—we currently still provide service with them, all throughout this province.

So, you know, I don't know what province members opposite—thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): And it's my pleasure to be able to speak to this resolution this morning that the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) has brought in and I thank him for bringing in this resolution and I thank him for the opportunity for members of this Chamber to be able to speak to this very important topic.

You know, Mr. Speaker, just a few short days ago we were reading the Winnipeg Free Press and there were headlines there that indicated that there was all kinds of crimes in this province that were on the decline, and that should be a good news story. It indicated neighbourhood by neighbourhood, and, actually, the police chief for the city of Winnipeg was interviewed, talking about types of crimes that were on the decline in the city. And he was trying to send the message that in many respects some neighbourhoods, because of some very hard work by the Winnipeg Police Service, has become safer.

But, of course, there was no real joy in Mudville that day. There was no real cause for celebration, because, of course, the message coming out of that same report that was published and read by thousands of Manitobans that day was that youth crime was sharply up in this province. Actually, the words that they used in the article were skyrocketing, skyrocketing rates of youth crime in the province of Manitoba. Now, I thought to myself—but when I first thought that, man, I mean, what could those rates actually be up by, 25 per cent or 50 per cent? Because that would be skyrocketing. But, no, the article went on to explain that the incidents of youth crime were up 92 per cent over the last five years.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we discuss this important issue today, it would seem to me that the members of the government really dance around the facts if they choose to ignore such credible evidence that there is a problem here. And when I see the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) get up and step so carefully around that kind of statistic—the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief) got up just minutes ago and he said, what does their government do? They collect evidence. Well, if they do it, I certainly hope that they are paying careful attention to a statistic that shows that youth crime is up 92 per cent.

Because I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that any Manitoban would indicate that their full attention should be paid to that kind of statistic. There is no greater indication that there is much, much more to

be done by this government than some kind of statistical analysis that would show 92 per cent increase in youth crime. And before that government gets up to pat themselves so heartily on the back, they should consider the evidence that has been introduced and discussed in this House this morning. And it's—to try to step around that kind of evidence, I believe, is really—it's like trying to hide an elephant in a room behind a curtain or with a lamp shade on its head. And, you know, you just—you cannot effectively step around an obstacle that is that big. You really cannot miss it.

And so I would ask this Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), as we go forward in the days and the weeks and the months ahead that we look forward to in this Chamber, we ask him to come back and to be able to discuss what that statistic means to him and what his plan is. Because it is truly an issue that focuses attention on how great the need is to get ahead of this issue of youth poverty and youth crime, because we know it's all connected.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues have explained, in 2010 Manitoba was named the child poverty of—capital of Canada for the second year in a row. We know that the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg is indicating that Manitoba is again bottom of the barrel when it comes to Canadian provinces, highest rates of child poverty, 18 times in the two decades spanning 1990 to 2010. That is incontrovertible evidence that we have huge strides that are left to be made in this province, and we are calling on the government to put their energies into making those strides, not just cutting ribbons and patting themselves on the back, but get to the serious work of driving down those numbers.

We know that in Canada, child poverty rates are actually falling except in this province where the member for La Verendrye clearly showed they're actually climbing. They're going against the trend. We are, in this case, heading in the wrong direction.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I know there are others who want to speak on this bill so I won't go on too long. But I did want to just quickly, again, call the attention of my colleagues to the fact that—what are the things that the government could effectively be doing to actually address this, to create the conditions in which youth and children can be assured a better future. They are things like making sure there is an affordable environment for families who are of a marginal income to exist and get ahead. And yet this government raises the PST, 14 per cent,

in two years in two budgets. They agree amongst themselves to collect almost a half a billion dollars more in tax. Over the course of one mandate, it would amount to \$2 billion, which is almost 20 per cent of an entire year's budget in the province of Manitoba. That's the kind of support they give to families, hiking up the taxes. The kind of support they give them is expanding the RST, raising MPI rates and vehicle registration rates, raising the price for haircuts, raising the 'crise' for—price for home insurance. So, Mr. Speaker, there's far more that can be done. Instead of being part of the solution, they have, in many respects, been part of the problem.

* (11:50)

There are solutions out there: in Brandon, where Neelin offsite high school makes opportunities with not a dollar of government money; in Morden and Winkler where private funding puts up things like skate parks. There are so many ideas where community groups are leading the way. They're not doing it with the support, in so many times, of this government, but they're doing it despite it. And they're getting the job done.

We ask the government to look at those examples to go forward. I thank the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) for bringing in this important resolution.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing this bill forward as well—or resolution forward—sorry—resolution forward as well. Apparently, today I'm really feeling a need to have an opportunity to put some reality onto the record. So, I'm very grateful, apologize that I might be doing that a little loudly, but 'appare'—I guess I've waited a long time to get some of these real facts actually out there. So I'm very grateful for the opportunity to do that.

The member opposite is upset that we speak about the '90s, and I understand that. If I had their record from the '90s, I would be upset as well. But it is true, as different members have mentioned, that history is important. If we don't learn from history, it will repeat itself, and we see that repetition here in our opposition leader. He didn't come back in with new ideas. He came back in with a plan to cut half a billion dollars out of the budget—

An Honourable Member: Same old, same old.

Ms. Wight: Same old, same old. Exactly. Thank you for your help.

So nothing new has happened there. Well, okay, two-tier health care. I'm not sure if they actually mentioned that before in the '90s. Maybe they did. I can't recall. But now, we also have two-tier health care on the table. So, Mr. Speaker, I understand the desire to not go back there, but I think it is very reflective.

We saw in the '90s the cuts. I worked with youth in the '90s; I worked with youth in the 2000s, and I can tell you, there is a vast difference in what is happening now as opposed to what was happening in the '90s and the kinds of cuts that we saw. The member from Point Douglas mentioned the loss of the Ys, the loss of friendship centres. There were no programs like, you know, Neighbourhoods Alive! and LIFT and all the many programs that we see now working with youth.

Someone on the opposition mentioned graduation rates. Well, the Manitoba graduation rate has increased by 18.3 per cent—18.3 per cent, Mr. Speaker—since 2002, so—when it was at 71.1 per cent. So I don't think we can argue that. Do we want to do more in every area? Yes. We are a government that wants to do more in every area. We are a government with creative solutions and ideas. Have we solved every problem in the world yet? No, of course not. But are we on it? Yes, we are. We're working towards that in every area. And we're not just saying, let's do what we did in the '90s. And I think it's really important that people understand what happened in the '90s, okay, and what kind of cuts occurred.

And I've been out in my area, as well, 'wor'—talking to the kids. I wanted to know this year what are our kids doing out there because many times you hear that, you know, the kids are involved in things that are negative.

Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? The vast majority of our kids are doing wonderful things with their lives. They're volunteering. They're working. They're learning new skills in every possible area from powwow clubs to mural painting on the walls to just being out there, learning co-op skills in youth co-ops and earning money and how to do that, all of those things. And they're doing it in all kinds of different programming that is building them up, building up their self-esteem, helping them to see that they can be successful in life. And I can't stress enough how important I think that is. And I'm proud that we're doing those things.

And I just wonder at the idea of going back to the policies of the '90s. If they were coming forward with a lot of new, creative, exciting ideas, we are there to look at them. But that isn't what's happening, Mr. Speaker, we are hearing the same things about the '90s and what they would want to do.

I did want to mention just a little bit of the construction that's underway because we often hear a bit of a conflict between members opposite wanting us to cut and then members opposite wanting us to build. And I'm not sure how we do those things.

I know the member from St. Norbert spoke a little bit on that yesterday. How do you do that? How do you cut these billions of dollars out of things and still be building the projects that they want. In fact, *The Big Chill* made quite a bit better movie, I think, than it did government policy.

But construction is currently underway on just a few things. A new learning—an early learning to grade 8 school in Amber Trails. Two new high schools in Steinbach and Winkler. Now, I wonder if the members from those areas didn't want those high schools built? I'm not sure. A new automotive—member, sorry—shop in Morris. *[interjection]* There's two sides to you so. A new automotive shop in Morris. A heavy-duty mechanic shop in Swan River. Design is progressing on an eight-classroom addition and 74-seat child-care centre at Bonnycastle School. There's just endless examples of what we're doing to help our youth.

I wanted to speak a little about advanced education. We have advanced education in Manitoba in so many different—there's so many different ways in which you can get an advanced education in Manitoba. And we have some of the best tuition rates in the country. We have tuition rebates that are, I believe, something like 60 per cent—am I correct—of your tuition comes back to you if you remain in Manitoba. We have apprenticeship programs. We have mentorship programs. We have all kinds of absolutely exciting new programming helping—coming through Red River and our community colleges. Our youth have just great opportunity here in that area. There's many, many ways to help

yourself get funding to be able to go to school here. Again, you know, great youth opportunities.

As I was mentioning, I was out at some of our programs, and one I'm going to on Friday is the Wayfinders program. I've mentioned it before. It's about 270 youth from, you know, a lower income area, that are working with that program. And they're really working on getting our youth interested in giving back. Because they understand the power of generosity. The power that has to change and transform your life. That desire to give back to the community. And that is one of the things that we are working on in programming to help instill in our youth. And so, in the Wayfinders program, there are many, many volunteer opportunities. There's also very many opportunities to learn skills for jobs.

The member—one of the members mentioned in my earlier speech that perhaps I was against profit. Well, I'm not in any way against profit. And I think you can see our government isn't any way against profit, as you see our economy being one of the best in the country. However, I don't think that profit means that you have to then become self-indulgent, that you then have to not care about the poor. I just don't think that needs to be a piece of profit. I think that people can build profit and then use that profit to pull up the other folks in your community, so that everybody is actually doing well. And if you want to talk about what works economically, Mr. Speaker, that's what works; everyone in your community doing well. And so that is always one of goals that we are working towards; we want everyone to have an opportunity. And we are working at that all of the time with our youth.

And as the member from Point Douglas mentioned, we are starting, you know, with early childhood education—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) will have one minute remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, August 8, 2013

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