

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, August 14, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, colleagues. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by V. Verrier, D. Dundos, D. Harel and many more fine Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) School learning services has its first ever waiting list which started with two children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be in excess of 20 children by September 2013. Therefore, these children will go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

(4) The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as any other Manitoban.

Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by E. Burelle, G. Carriere, C. Sawatzky and many other Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by I. Patterson, B. Wolfrem and D. McKee and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Road 433 Improvements

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 433, Cape Coppermine Road, in the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet has seen an increase in traffic volume in recent years.

(2) New subdivisions have generated considerable population growth, and the area has seen a significant increase in tourism due to the popularity of the Granite Hills Golf Course.

(3) This population growth has generated an increased tax base in the rural municipality.

(4) Cape Coppermine Road was not originally built to handle the high volume of traffic it now accommodates.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation recognize that Cape Coppermine Road can no longer adequately serve both area residents and tourists, and as such consider making improvements to the road to reflect its current use.

This petition is signed by B. Osis, R. Curtis, G. Arseny and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent needs-for-and-alternatives-to review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the capital viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by R. Loeppky, D. Crealock, E. Falk and many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including timely diagnosis

and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as ABA services.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by J. Sabourin, T. Dyck, G. Unger and many others.

* (13:40)

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by A. Barbosa, R. Ramirez, V. Neufeld and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is submitted on behalf of E. Hall, M. Pull, S. Bennett and many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by R. Quillez, S. Clair, T. Vita and many, many other Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by L. Haskett, H. Kyle, W. Gabrielle and many, many others.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

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

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

School learning services has its first ever waiting list which started with two children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be in excess of 20 children by September 2013. Therefore, these children will go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as any other Manitoban.

The provincial government has adopted a—that waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable and no child should be denied access to or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if the need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education consider making funding available to eliminate the

current waiting list for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

This petition is signed by G. Lozano, M. De Guzman, J. Capistrano and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) School learning services has its first ever waiting list which started with two children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be in excess of 20 children by September 2013. Therefore, these children will go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

(4) The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as any other Manitoban.

(5) Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their need still exists.

* (13:50)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

And this petition is signed by M. Tran, D. Nguyen, D. Malegus and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by M. Hudcovic, A. Singh Babro, N. Holnes and many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including

timely diagnosis and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as ABA services.

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

(3) School learning services has its first ever waiting list which started with two children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be in excess of 20 children by September 2013. Therefore, these children will go through the biggest transition of their lives without receiving ABA services and has helped—that has helped other children achieve huge gains.

(4) The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as any other Manitoban.

(5) Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

This is signed by W. LeBlanc, B. Djoranic, K. Girde and many, many other Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes

the importance of early intervention for children with autism.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by R. White, C. Osborne and C. Bolinski and many, many others.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Cross-Border Shopping

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

The differential in tax rates create a 'discentive' for Manitoban consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And this petition is signed by L. Abrams, C. Hamm, T. Klassen and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon Gene Amy and Andrew Amy, the mother and brother of our page Austin Amy. On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

* (14:00)

And also, in the loge to my right, we have with us this afternoon Mr. Jack Harris, the MP for St. John's East, Newfoundland, and also, in the Speaker's Gallery, we have his son John, who are the guests of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

And also in the public gallery this afternoon, we have with us today Gwendolyn Friesen and Kirstin Hoepfner, who are the guests of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen). Gwendolyn, of course, is the honourable member's daughter.

And also in the public gallery where we have with us today representatives from the Winnipeg Roller Derby League, who are the guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

On behalf of honourable members—I imagine we'll welcome them later.

So we'll now proceed with—

ORAL QUESTIONS

Financial Management Government Record

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this NDP Premier has a very poor record when it comes to financial management and listening to ordinary Manitobans.

He's run a deficit 11 times out of 12. He's doubled the debt of Manitoba because he can't control his spending addiction. He's hit Manitobans with the biggest tax grab in a quarter of a century. And now he's ignoring tens of thousands of Manitobans who vehemently oppose the PST hike.

So I'd like to ask this Premier: Why is he forcing hard-working Manitobans to pay for his financial mismanagement?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member for the question.

We balanced the budget 10 times in a row, the longest string [*inaudible*] We doubled the size of the economy, and as a result the debt has shrunk as a proportion of the economy. When members opposite were in office, it was 33 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio. The amount of every dollar spent was 13.2 cents. The amount we spend on servicing the debt today, 5.9 per cent—5.9 cents, Mr. Speaker. Taxes are lower. The cost of servicing the debt is lower. Services are better. The economy's growing.

The member opposite has the right to her opinion. She does not have a right to the facts.

Funeral Services Fee Increase

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, his spin is totally out of control. And I would remind this Premier, with his track record, this NDP government lied to Manitobans door to door in the last election and told all of them they wouldn't raise the PST.

Mr. Speaker: Got off to a good start.

I want to caution honourable members on their choice of words that are deemed to be unparliamentary. I've had a fair amount of latitude that I've allowed all members of this House with respect to their choice of words with the use of unparliamentary language when it doesn't reference a specific or individual member of this House.

The honourable member for Charleswood very pointedly used the word that was unparliamentary in reference to another member of the Assembly, and I'm cautioning the honourable member to pick and choose her words very carefully, please, as we proceed here through question period.

Mrs. Driedger: I do apologize for that.

Mr. Speaker, not only is this Premier taxing the living, he now wants to tax the dead. Last year this NDP government increased the fee on a death certificate by 25 per cent. Now they want to go further and they want to actually tax the dead.

So I'd like to ask this Premier to tell Manitobans: How can he possibly consider adding another tax onto already overtaxed Manitobans, even those Manitobans that are now dead?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member for the question. I thank the member for the apology. Unfortunately, she stooped to a new low right after that with her question.

The new legislation to protect families at a time of vulnerability—the legislation on funeral services in Manitoba had not been revised for 50 years, Mr. Speaker. It now requires an itemized bill. There used to be a time when you could just send a single number at the bottom of the bill, not itemize the services. Under this new legislation, you have to itemize the services you're providing. The consumer, their aggrieved family, has the right to choose what services they want. It will be regulated.

It's very unfortunate there are a few bad apples in the system. Many of the providers are very good. We now have consumer protection for families at a time when they need it. The member opposite should be supporting that. It will save families money. It will give them more information. It will give them more choice. It will provide more transparency at a time when they're in a very vulnerable position.

Request to Withdraw Fee

Mrs. Driedger: And, Mr. Speaker, they shouldn't be taxed when they're in that vulnerable position. Shame on this government.

This Premier has squeezed Manitobans for more taxes, those that are living, and now he wants to tax the dead. It makes everybody wonder, what will he tax next? Where is it going to stop? Even he said this morning on CJOB, oh, boy, another tax. He's right—oh, boy, another tax. Adding a death tax is stooping too low in this province.

So I would ask this Premier: Will he do the right thing today and will he axe that tax?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there is no tax as the member described it currently being levied. There will not be any tax in the future.

What there will be is consumer protection. There will be consumer protection. People that require funeral services will now know that the operators of those funeral homes will have to operate under a code of ethics. They now have to be transparent in what services they're charging for. Consumers will now have a choice of which services they receive.

There will be no additional cost to them. There will only be more transparency, a greater ability to look after their families and to make a choice which will actually keep costs down for Manitoba families.

Funeral Services Fee Increase

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) about the new death tax. There was clearly no denial a death tax would be implemented.

I'm seeking clarification today from either the Minister of Finance or the Minister responsible for Consumer Affairs. I'm not sure which one is responsible for the new tax.

But why is the NDP now taxing Manitobans from the grave?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say this very slowly so that members can hear me: There will be no death tax.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Manitobans have heard the rhetoric from the Premier before.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it appears Manitobans are getting taxed from birth to death. We already face the highest taxes west of Québec. We face some of the highest fees and surcharges in the country, and now it certainly appears the NDP wants to tax us from the grave.

Is he prepared to listen to Manitobans or not? When will the NDP tax nightmare stop?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I want to be very, very clear for the member opposite, and hopefully he'll start to listen.

There is no funeral tax. There's no funeral tax contemplated, and there will be no funeral tax implemented by this government.

And so, Mr. Speaker, let's be perfectly clear. The answer is no.

Mr. Cullen: We've heard this song and dance from the NDP not very long ago.

Instead of trying to find ways to improve government efficiencies, the NDP are busy finding ways to tax Manitobans. This is a tax-and-spend government or maybe a spend-and-then-tax government. Nevertheless, Manitobans are taking the hit in their wallets.

This new tax is simply a backdoor tax on funeral services. A fee is a tax.

Why is the NDP refusing to allow Manitobans to rest in peace?

Mr. Rondeau: Let's be perfectly clear. There is no fee, there is no tax currently and there's none contemplated in the future.

Now, I would also like to point out that we on this side of the House has continued to move forward on consumer protection. And what we want to make sure is a grieving family does not get taken advantage of, and so what we have had is we've followed—the following of the Funeral Board to make sure that people do have predictability, do have proper support and do understand their rights and obligations when there is a funeral, because, you know, we believe in looking after the consumer.

We believe in helping grieving families, and, as I said before, there is no fee that's being contemplated by this government.

Tax Increases Referendum Request

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Reaching into the coffin has developed a real new low for this new government to have.

* (14:10)

Municipalities in this province are being attacked on all sides thanks to the spendDP. Not only are they being forced to amalgamate, they're being taxed at record levels. This spendDP has decided to tax another level of government, passing on the burden. There's only one taxpayer in this province. The spendDP has yet to realize that.

When will this government stop punishing the taxpayers of this province, call a referendum, let the taxpayers decide on their reckless policies?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that punishing taxpayers would be to cut \$550 million out of health care and education. Punishing Manitobans is what happened when the Leader of the Opposition and Gary Filmon for five years in a row either froze or cut highways and bridge spending in this province. That's punishing Manitobans.

This government is investing in our future, we're investing in the economy and we're protecting Manitoba families from members opposite who would reach into their pockets, take money and then cut services.

Mr. Graydon: Punishing taxpayers by spending less money is not the right thing to say from that minister.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities like Franklin, Rhineland, 'pimestone' and arch-Pipestone and Archie are feeling the effects of this government's high-tax policy. The spendDP are taxing municipalities at record levels and they're tired of the government passing the buck. Municipalities are being forced to pay for this government's failed policies, and the provincial government has done nothing but disrespect municipalities, with the MLA for the Interlake going as far as calling them dysfunctional.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government start respecting municipalities and then let them decide on their government's high-tax policies with a referendum?

Mr. Struthers: The member opposite can talk about disrespecting municipalities all he likes, Mr. Speaker, but we had an 8 and a half per cent increase to funding to municipalities in the budget that he voted against.

Clearly, we need to organize ourselves in rural Manitoba in an efficient way that can promote economic development. We clearly have to do that. We have the guts to do it. You don't.

Mr. Speaker: We were doing pretty good. Members sound like they're in good spirits, which is good to see.

But I want to encourage the honourable Minister of Finance, when he is making his comments, please direct them through the Chair. As I've often said, we don't want to personalize the debate here. Debate—

strong debate is good, but personalization of it is not appropriate, and I want the minister to direct his comments through the Chair, please.

Now, we're ready to proceed with the honourable member for Emerson.

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Respect, Mr. Speaker, is not closing 18 rural ERs while raising the PST.

The Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) called municipalities insolent children. He refuses to listen to them. The Minister of Finance won't listen to Manitobans regarding the high-tax policies. The spendP is taxing municipalities and Manitoba at the highest levels ever. This government voted themselves a \$5,000 increase to fund their political party.

Why won't they obey the law, let the taxpayers vote in a referendum on the 14 per cent illegal PST hike?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, and through you to the members opposite, I want to say that respect from the members opposite in the 1990s under Gary Filmon and the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) was to raise the gas tax and then cut the amount of money that was going into roads and bridges in this province. That's not respect.

I'll tell you what is respect. It's this government putting record amounts of money into infrastructure, into roads and build—and bridges. It's this government putting record amount of money into building hospitals and schools. That's respect.

What we see from the members opposite is anything but respect.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III NFAT Review Request

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I wish to quote from an email to The Huffington Post from the women's governance council, and it says, I quote: Many people are frustrated with the handling of the negotiations with Bipole III: secrecy, brainwashing to our elders and how the process at the presentation meetings are not being conducted in a fair manner.

My question is to the NDP member for Kildonan: Will he now send the Bipole III to the

NFAT so that it can be properly studied with all the other projects at the NFAT?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I hardly call 88 meetings in First Nations communities a noncommunication. I hardly call two election campaigns where Bipole III was discussed both in Tory pamphlets—that were misleading, I might indicate—and in our pamphlets, and the voters kind of spoke pretty resoundingly about how to—they wanted to protect the east side, I hardly call that not communicating. Public hearings that commenced and discussions that commenced with regard to the sustainability act and land use that started in 1998 is hardly not communicating.

What the member's saying, Mr. Speaker, is what the member has said from the very beginning. They oppose hydro any way they can. They want to stop the development of our hydroelectric system, and that's not fair to Manitobans.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table some documents for the Legislature, and this is a further addition to the NDP member from Kildonan, his photo album of shame. And it shows a blockade at the TCN which states: Manitoba Hydro acts like a dictatorship. They hold meetings, but they don't listen.

I want to further quote from that article from The Huffington Post. It says: I attended one of these meetings uninvited. I witnessed confused elders who did not understand how much of the land was going to be affected by Bipole III alone. He told the people who were asking questions to be quiet and ask questions at 1 o'clock. The question period never happened.

I will ask again of the NDP member from Kildonan: Will he now make the Bipole III line part of the NFAT? Why doesn't he do the right thing? He had meetings. He didn't listen. He was disrespectful. Will he now put it to the NFAT?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the members often talk about respect.

I want to contrast First Nation relations under the Filmon government. They set up a political party that purportedly represented First Nations. They were caught, and it was the greatest political scandal in the history of Manitoba. That was the Filmon government's relations with First Nations.

Our relations: equity interest in hydro dams, First Peoples Economic Growth Fund, dialysis on First Nations communities, expanded hospitals, paying for personal-care homes.

That's quite a contrast, illegal campaigns, illegal funding versus progress by working with First Nations, providing them equity and a future in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for St. Paul, with a final supplementary.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we tabled documents that showed feces and urine backing up into bathtubs after \$4 million of Hydro money. That is a disgrace. That's a scandal, and they should own up to it.

From a July 13th, 2012, document from the TCN negotiations list, it says, point A, and it says, null and void, the Bipole III agreement. It is invalid and signed after quorum removed the power and authority of Councillor Norman Flett, and Councillor Victor Flett has no authority since November 2011.

Considering these are the kinds of negotiations that are taking place, why doesn't the NDP, why doesn't the minister responsible, the NDP member for Kildonan, put Bipole III into the NFAT so all of these issues can be discussed?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have a very clear choice. There's a vision of building hydro that will see clean, green energy and can bring in \$29 billion a year in revenues and pay for those developments. There's the Tory vision of stopping hydro and doing what's happening in Saskatchewan, spend \$15 billion for coal, for oil. Or do what's happening in Ontario, natural gas and nuclear.

We're a hydro province. We have a chance to build hydro, clean, green energy. They want to stop it. We're going to build it. Manitobans know the difference.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I want to make sure we're ready to proceed.

The honourable member for Midland has the floor.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Surveys on Private Property

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Manitoba Hydro is now surveying private properties across southern

Manitoba for the proposed circular route for the Bipole III transmission line.

Now, Manitoba Hydro has not been granted a licence to date. Also, Manitoba Hydro does not have easement agreements signed to enter private property for the purpose of surveying.

Why does this government continue to ignore property rights, continue to flaunt the law and allow Manitoba Hydro to also ignore private property rights?

* (14:20)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that members opposite don't realize is that you can't, when you're facing power shortages and you have to have power, you can't just turn on a switch and build a hydro dam. It takes seven to 10 years to establish that. Manitoba Hydro started some time ago in terms of surveying routes.

I might add we have seen an increase of 80 megawatts a year in electrical demand in Manitoba. That means our clean, green energy resources will run out if we don't do something. What are our options? Oil, natural gas or coal like the members opposite want? No. We've got hydro to develop. Manitobans want to develop hydro and, besides, it's the cheapest electricity in the entire country.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, the option is respecting the law and respecting personal property rights.

Well, Manitoba Hydro survey crews have been caught and kicked off of private property while surveying for Bipole III without the permit, being on that land without the permission of private landowners. No permission was asked or received from the affected landowners to enter their property. No licence, no permission, no accountability from this government.

Is this government so arrogant, so above the law that personal property rights are now at stake in this province? Why is this government so disrespectful of Manitoban's personal property rights?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro has had hundreds of meetings with community-individuals and communities regarding transmission. The Clean Environment Commission has reviewed and had public hearings on the bipole and looked at different routes and has had—has spent tens of

millions of dollars in surveying the route. I hardly think that's dealing with nonpermission.

As regards Manitoba Hydro, members opposite will do anything. They've made up stories. They've stopped construction. They will do anything to stop Hydro because they know that by building hydro we will keep the economy growing, and economy growing is something that members opposite cannot stand because it'll prove that we can develop and build Manitobans for all Manitoba, not just for a select few that elect their leader at the Manitoba Club.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Midland, with a final supplementary.

Mr. Pedersen: Well, Mr. Speaker, during those so-called consultations there was never any permission asked for or given to enter personal property on Manitoba landowners.

And the bottom line is Manitoba Hydro does not have a licence to date to build Manitoba Bipole III. Manitoba does—Hydro does not have easement agreements to enter property—personal property. They do not have those easements, but yet Manitoba Hydro has entered private property without permission.

Will the man—will the minister direct Manitoba Hydro to respect personal property rights? Will the minister respect Manitoba law and direct Manitoba Hydro to do the same?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I did a little bit of law in my life and I practised as a lawyer. And when you get an easement agreement, you generally have to go to the home of the person that's asking for an easement to actually get that permission. So I don't—not only do I think the member's information is inaccurate, but Hydro tries its best to provide and to follow its obligations, provides fees for easements. If it's a 500-kilovolt line, they give 150 per cent of the value of property and they provide for all kinds of exigencies, and in most cases, 99.9 per cent, there's an agreement. If they can't get an agreement they work a way around it.

What I'd like to state is that if we do not have bipole we won't have reliability. If we don't have reliability, we have a storm, some other mishap, we might lose our power. The security of our supply is based on having Bipole III built.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Manitoba Hydro Employees Crop Cross-Contamination

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister wants to go back and take a refresher course and find out the word integrity and what that means to all Manitobans.

Farmers take biosecurity very seriously, and it's the law. Farmers pull out all the stops to protect their crops from disease. One such disease is found in potatoes, called light blight, and can cost hundreds of millions of dollars if it spreads.

I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Is he aware of the Manitoba Hydro employees trespassing on farmers' land, going from farm to farm, and if not, what steps is he going to do to protect those crops from disease, from spreading from farm to farm?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready to proceed now?

The honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines has the floor.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I'm not surprised that that question is in direct contradiction to the first question that was asked. The first question is: Why aren't you communicating? This question is: How come you're going from farm to farm talking to farmers? They can't have it both ways. But like Tories, they try to have it both ways.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about thousands and millions of dollars of property loss if this government mismanages this file. They've got to pay attention.

Mr. Speaker, when someone walks or drives on one piece of land to another, and biosecurity in mind with canola crops alone, blackleg, clubfoot can be spread from field to field.

So I ask the Minister of Agriculture again: With Manitoba Hydro employees 'transposing' on—trespassing on farmers' fields, biosecurity is most important. They're breaking the law. What are they going to do to protect the farmers today?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite will do anything to attack Manitoba Hydro, which is so highly valued. I suspect that the professionals at Manitoba Hydro are above such

petty issues, but I'm sure they take precautions to deal with that.

The No. 1 threat that we have to Manitoba Hydro—the No. 1 threat is called the Conservative Party of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, because the most important thing is that we get Bipole III built, because in '97 when there was a storm and the bipole was knocked down there was no alternative, and we've been waiting for an alternative. We're going to build the alternative for security purposes.

And members opposite might want coal, they might want nuclear, they might want oil, but Manitobans know that it's our heritage, it's our liquid gold to have Manitoba Hydro provide clean, green energy.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Lakeside, with a final supplementary.

Mr. Eichler: That is the most insulting comment from the member from Kildonan I have ever heard, calling this a heady matter. Shame on this minister. Maybe he should turn around, talk to the Minister of Agriculture and find out what we're talking about.

This minister is out of control. No one—no one—has a right to transfer—go trans—go on to trespass on anyone's property without their permission.

We are talking a very serious issue here. Perhaps the Minister of Agriculture wants to stand up today and tell this minister to reel his department in, find out what's going on once and for all. This is serious issue.

Mr. Chomiak: The first question that is asked of me this afternoon was: How come Manitoba Hydro wasn't talking to people about the transmission line? Those last three questions is: How come they're going from farm to farm talking about a transmission line?

Mr. Speaker, like the Conservative Party platform, it doesn't make sense. Like the Conservative Party platform, it's a contradiction. Like the Conservative platform, they don't want to build anything. Like the Conservative platform, they're just not honest.

Public Trustee Office Public Sector Collaboration

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said that looking after a client's best interests is inherent in the role of the

Public Trustee. Yet at the Brian Sinclair inquiry yesterday, the deputy public trustee said the trustee often learned after the fact that Sinclair had been admitted to hospital or received care.

It is very troubling that the Public Trustee, who was responsible for Brian Sinclair, is not even notified when a person like Brian Sinclair is in difficulty and receiving care until after the fact.

I ask the Premier: What is his expectation for co-ordination and communication between public sector organizations and departments in the best interests of Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the answer is very clear. My expectation is that they work together to protect the public interest of the particular individual whose care they're charged with looking after. And that exactly the role of the Public Trustee.

* (14:30)

The Public Trustee, the mental-health system, the health-care system all have an obligation to work together in the best interests of our citizens of Manitoba, and when a particular incident comes up we encourage them to co-operate and collaborate with each other to ensure that interests—those interests are looked after. It's very clear that we want to make sure that that continues to happen.

Case Concern

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, last week at the committee hearings of The Public Guardian and Trustee Act we learned that Olga Cumberbatch, under the responsibility of the Public Trustee, has been missing her dentures and eyeglasses for many months. In spite of friends bringing this to the attention of health officials, neither the dentures nor the glasses have been replaced. Mrs. Cumberbatch has been forced to eat pureed food for months because of this disregard by this NDP government and the Public Trustee for Mrs. Cumberbatch's best interest.

I ask the Premier how such neglect—abuse—is in Mrs. Cumberbatch's inherent best interest, and how does his government determine accountability for it?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the role of the Public Trustee is to look after the best interests of the individual with whom they are given a charge to be responsible for. The Public Trustee believes that individual needs glasses, they can act on that. They can take the necessary steps to do that both with the

resources of government through our social assistance system, through the health-care system or any resources the individual may have available to them. So the Public Trustee has an inherent responsibility to protect the interests of the individual with whom they are charged with the responsibility to look after them. That's what they're going to do. That's what they will continue to do.

If they fall under The Vulnerable Persons Living With a Mental Disability Act, the criteria include consideration of the best interests of the individual. That's explicit. If they fall under The Mental Health Act, the criteria include a consideration of the best interests of the individual. That is the nature of these pieces of legislation to look after the best interests of the individual.

And if the member has a specific individual for whom something needs to be attended to, we would be happy to take that under consideration.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, with a final supplementary.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Olga Cumberbatch was a dedicated worker for this government in the department of child and family services, working at a group home helping young people in this province. Now that she is retired, this government has forgotten her.

It appears the government has great disregard for the dignity and respect and best interests of people like Olga Cumberbatch. The answer to Sir Paul's question, will you still love me when I'm 64, from this government's perspective, appears to be no.

I ask the Premier: Will he ensure that the Public Trustee's office acts today to make sure Olga Cumberbatch's glasses and dentures are replaced?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for raising the circumstances of a specific individual. If he was really concerned about that individual, he could have brought that to us at any time. He didn't have to wait 'til question period.

And the reality is this. The Public Trustee can act on those concerns at any time that they are drawn to their attention, and the member knows very well that the Public Trustee will act on their behalf, as will any member of government.

If a member is a former member—a working member of this government, a retired person, there are resources available to help those individuals, both within the departments—for which we have

resources, we have programs specific to the points that the member has raised—there are programs in the community. There are—this member has probably been a long-time member of the MGEU.

Together we can solve this kind of a problem. I ask the member to bring the specific circumstances to our attention and we'll see what can be attended to.

St. Vital Memorial Park Soccer Field Improvements

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): In the next few years the eyes of the world will be on Winnipeg and Manitoba when the Women's World Cup of soccer comes to our great province in 2015.

One of the reasons that the World Cup—Women's World Cup of soccer is coming to Manitoba and to Winnipeg is because of the significant investment our government has made in recreational soccer facilities, not only in Winnipeg but across the province.

Can the Minister of Local Government please update the House on these investments that will not only support the Women's World Cup of soccer but soccer players of all ages in Winnipeg and across Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Thank you to the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview for the question.

I was pleased this morning to—and honoured to join the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the MLA for St. Vital, the MLA for Riel and the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview at the St. Vital Memorial Park soccer field to announce the investment of almost a million dollars to convert the soccer field from natural grass to synthetic grass in anticipation of the 2015 FIFA World Cup.

Budget 2013 committed \$7.5 million for Winnipeg recreation and wellness projects. Members opposite voted against that. They continue to vote against projects that are great for Winnipeg, great for Winnipeg families, and that's their stance all along. They're not progressive whatsoever. Regressive is a better word for that party.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Treatment Access to Services

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Just prior to the 2011 election, the NDP promised to address the growing list for children waiting to receive ABA

services. A promise made, a promise broken, Mr. Speaker.

Maria Giesbrecht, a mother of an autistic child, her son turns 5 in March of next year and St. Amant has said that it doesn't look like it's going to be looking good for him to get the services. The mother says, I just cry every time I think of this. As you can imagine, stress is high.

Mr. Speaker, why does this minister and her government remain disinterested bystanders when wait-list numbers are growing and multiple children are aging out of eligibility for autism services?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I think we all know as parents that when our children need something we will advocate very strongly that they get that, and it's always worrying when our kids have any kind of challenges. And I'm sure that for parents who have children with disabilities, with additional needs, there's much anxiety that goes with that.

We have been working with St. Amant to increase the availability of ABA services, and the parents involved. We've been able to do that. We continue to look for ways to do that and to continue to look for ways to provide information to parents when they get a diagnosis so that they can make the best choices possible for their children. We'll continue to make those investments.

Mrs. Rowat: Well, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) stated in debate the other day that the hundreds of petitions being presented in this Legislature on autism were not valued by his government, so would appear that this is lip service, Mr. Speaker. He said, and I quote, petition after petition, they talk about, you know, the applied behavioural analysis. They bring petitions forward for that, but I think that they're just using those folks.

Mr. Speaker, I would rather believe Maria, the mother of the 5-year-old son, who has said, our son is non-verbal and cannot communicate at all. The ABA would unlock him and give him a chance at life. We all take for granted the chances he deserves. I thank you for speaking for us, for standing up for us, for these beautiful children. Thank you for fighting for us and—

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

Before I recognize the honourable minister—while I'm on my feet, before I recognize the

honourable minister, I want to caution the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) and the honourable member for St. Norbert, please. Please make sure that we can function here during question period and during the debate. I'd like you to confine your comments, please.

Ms. Howard: We have made a commitment and investment of over \$30 million a year to services for families of children with autism. Those services are available through the education system and the health-care system, through the family services at places like St. Amant. We've recently invested in outreach services for rural parents and families who have kids with a diagnosis of autism.

There's absolutely more to do. I think probably what the member for St. Norbert was trying to make clear to the members opposite was that the problem doesn't get better when you commit to half a billion dollars' worth of cuts in those services.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the comments from the St. Norbert and the member for the Interlake, who has also indicated that the petitions on autism have been a waste of time, speaks volumes. That side of the House are more interested in ribbon cuttings, making promises that they will not keep.

My colleagues on this side of the House believe Maria has said, and I quote, it is so hard to believe that with our taxes and the increase in PST that they can't come up with some money for our children. Priorities, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about some priorities.

Does this minister agree with Maria and the hundreds of Manitobans who—

*(14:40)

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

Ms. Howard: I was addressing the issue of priorities. We have made a priority to invest in services for families who are struggling with a diagnosis of autism. We made this a priority in the last budget when we funded two additional autism outreach workers who are working now with families who have children who have autism who can't come into Winnipeg to get the kind of services that other families can get.

There's no doubt that there's more to do, Mr. Speaker. But very early on in this session we heard clearly from the opposition what their plan for the

future of Manitoba was, and that is a plan to cut half a billion dollars out of all of the services that Manitobans count on. In ABA, that would mean four less children would be able to get that service this fall.

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

It's time for—

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Richardson Pioneer

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It gives me a great pleasure to stand in the House today and acknowledge a milestone for a Manitoba business.

On July 26th, 2013, Richardson Pioneer celebrated 100 years of business in western Canada. Richardson Pioneer is a subsidiary of Richardson International. The roots of the company stem back to James Richardson & Sons, established in 1857. Richardson International is a family-owned Canadian company headquartered right here in Winnipeg.

Richardson Pioneer, founded in 1913, established many elevators in the prairie region to handle western-grown grain. From 1913 to 1930, the company increased their elevators from 36 to 172. Pioneer has one of Canada's largest networks of grain handling and crop production facilities, and an extensive network of industry professionals to provide agronomic and marketing advice to their customers across western Canada.

Richardson Pioneer specializes in agronomy, seed and crop protection products, fertilizer and grain marketing. Value-added services such as canola and oat processing are just two extra features offered by this growing company. Customer service is as important today as it was 100 years ago. Richardson Pioneer has continued to expand by building new facilities and purchasing existing facilities all across the prairies.

Hartley T. Richardson, chairman and—of Richardson International and president and chief executive officer of James Richardson & Sons, Limited, is very proud of Pioneer's long history of investing in and supporting the communities in which customers and employees live and work. Richardson Pioneer donates over \$1 million each year to support local initiatives and organizations. As part of their 100th anniversary, a special donations program has been created to commemorate this

milestone. The company will contribute a total of \$300,000 in 2013 to support one major community project in each of the three prairie provinces.

Mr. Speaker, Richardson Pioneer is an important part of rural Manitoba and western Canada. Their professionalism, service and commitment to agriculture are outstanding. I would like to ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating and celebrating Richardson Pioneer on their 100th anniversary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Winnipeg Roller Derby Summer Series

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, roller derby isn't for the faint of heart. It's a fast-paced, jammer-packed game of excitement and skill.

The Winnipeg Roller Derby League has had a stellar 2013 summer season. In flat-track roller derby, players skate and block their way around an indoor track at high speeds, while one player on each team tries to score points by lapping members of the opposing team.

Roller derby is gaining popularity across the world, and Canada has roughly 40 roller derby leagues, and there are four active leagues in Manitoba. The Winnipeg Roller Derby League, or WRDL, was founded in 2008 by Michelle Finley, Susan French, Jen Nagy, Lara McCabe, Kristen Andrews, Chrysta Wood, Victoria Coombs and Jessica Turner.

Since then, the league has grown into one of the largest in Canada, with roughly 85 members playing on three teams: the BackSeat Betties, The Corporation and Valkyries' Wrath. WRDL also features two away teams, the WRDL All Stars and the Bombshell Brawlers, who play out-of-town games. And there are another 35 young members who are a part of the league's junior division.

This summer, the league's three home teams played several fast and furious bouts at the Fort Garry Curling Club. They'll get a chance to show off their athleticism again next week at the championship game, when the BackSeat Betties and Valkyries' Wrath will face off for the 2013 title.

Roller derby isn't just a tough sport for skilled athletes; the roller derby movement is incredibly inclusive and participatory. The league welcomes members of various ages and shapes, as well as sexual and gender identities. A number of male

members participate as well, volunteering as refs and promoting the league. About 12 per cent of the Winnipeg Roller Derby League identifies as First Nations, Metis or Inuit.

The league is completely run by the skaters themselves who do their own training, fundraising, marketing and event planning. WRDL also gives back to the community and has raised \$11,000 for local charities to date. This year's charities are—of choice are Craig Street Cats and Manitoba Mutts.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the skaters, refs, volunteers and fans of roller derby in Manitoba for helping to grow this exciting, challenging, participatory sport that gives anyone a chance to be involved and be accepted.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sheldon W. Lanchbery

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to honour and congratulate a constituent from Deloraine, Manitoba. On June 7th, 2013, the Honourable Sheldon W. Lanchbery was appointed a judge of her Majesty's Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba.

Mr. Justice Lanchbery received his bachelor of arts in 1976 and his law degree in 1979 from the University of Manitoba. He was admitted to the Manitoba Bar in 1980. Sheldon and his wife, Irene, moved to Deloraine in 1979 and soon established their firm, Sheldon W. Lanchbery Law. While raising their two children, the Lanchberys have been very active in community life, serving on various boards and volunteering their time. Sheldon has been chair and legal member of the—for the Office of the Commissioner for Review Tribunals for the Canadian pension plan and Old Age Security since 2006.

Sheldon's dedication to youth began as a hockey coach, and his leadership expanded to director and executive positions with Hockey Manitoba. He went on to contribute nationally as chair of the Canadian Hockey Association. In 1999, Sheldon travelled to Norway to introduce a program from the Canadian Hockey Association called, quote, Speak Out! the prevention of abuse and harassment, end quote, to the International Ice Hockey Federation. The federation recommended the Canadian program to be introduced to its 57 members' countries. We are very proud, we're all proud, that Sheldon Lanchbery was the chair of the development committee for this program. In 2010, Sheldon received the Hockey

Canada Order of Merit—West for his commitment and dedication to minor hockey.

Sheldon and Irene were involved in every stage of their children's lives and their community. They will be missed in Deloraine as they move forward to the next stage of their lives. So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Arthur-Virden citizens and from myself, personally, I offer sincere congratulations to the Honourable Sheldon Lanchbery on his appointment and wish him all the best in his future at the Court of Queen's Bench in Manitoba.

St. Vital Agricultural Society Annual Fair and Display

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Today I rise to recognize a tradition that dates back over 100 years, the St. Vital Agricultural Society's Annual Fair and Display, which is being held today and tomorrow at the St. Vital Centennial Arena.

The St. Vital Agricultural Society was founded in 1909 when St. Vital was a rural agricultural and market garden area. Over a century later, St. Vital is now a vibrant, urban neighbourhood and the society has evolved to serve our community. The society's mission is to encourage excellence in horticulture, baking, handy crafts and graphic arts, to provide opportunities for the development of these skills, to instill a love of gardening in the community and to maintain awareness of St. Vital's agricultural traditions. The society also has a junior garden program to encourage young people to develop long-lasting gardening and environmental skills.

Throughout changing times, the tradition of the society's annual fair and displays continue. The fair and display offers a chance for members to showcase their produce and their handiwork among family, friends and community with a chance to win ribbons and prize money. For the next two days the St. Vital Centennial Arena will exhibit talents in a variety of areas, including vegetables, flowers and flower arranging, painting, photography, baking, preserves and wood carving. The diversity of displays and a chance to spend time at a country fair right in south Winnipeg is well worth a visit, and I encourage all members to attend.

The theme of this year's fair is Welcome Winter's Wonderland in recognition of the role winter plays as a part of the agricultural cycle allowing for regrouping and planning for the next growing season. The ag fair is an opportunity to remember our community's agricultural roots and

celebrate the many talents that continue 'agin'—to exist in St. Vital.

I'd like to thank the St. Vital Agricultural Society members, volunteers and board for their hard work in maintaining this annual tradition.

* (14:50)

Public Trustee Office

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the situation today with the Public Trustee coming under scrutiny at the Brian Sinclair inquiry and with Bill 36 before the Legislature demands that we, as members of the Legislature, carefully consider the service provided by the Public Trustee to the most disadvantaged people in Manitoba and look at ways at which—in which such service can be improved.

Manitobans have learned in the last two weeks that Brian Sinclair and the management of his affairs had been brought under the responsibility of the Public Trustee starting in April 2007 following the circumstance where he'd lost his legs from being found outside and close to death that winter. We know that when the deputy public trustee was asked whether the responsibility of the trustee was to be 24 hours a day, seven days a week to ensure the well-being of Brian Sinclair, she said yes.

There was also an apparent disconnect between what was happening to Brian Sinclair, at least in terms of his health care, and what the Public Trustee was made aware of. The deputy public trustee has said that the office of the Public Trustee often learned after the fact that Sinclair had been admitted to hospital or received treatment. Why was such communication delayed?

Manitobans placed under the committee-ship of the Public Trustee are vulnerable, requiring advocacy on their behalf. In other circumstances, the parent or guardian would've been informed immediately if a child turned up to receive care unattended.

Some who've dealt with the Public Trustee have been told that the trustee deals only with financial and legal matters and is not responsible for care. If not the Public Trustee, who is?

It is good that Premier Selinger has clarified this situation by saying that the Public Trustee must have the best interests of the person who is their responsibility as the No. 1 priority.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

I'm pretty sure the honourable member for River Heights knows that we're to reference the honourable members by their constituency names or ministers by their portfolio or the First Minister as the First Minister. So I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable member for River Heights, please, when he's addressing his statements here to make sure he follows those practices.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'll correct the record.

It's good that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has clarified this situation by saying the Public Trustee must have the best interests of the person who's their responsibility as the No. 1 priority and that this includes advocating in relation to good health care.

Mr. Speaker, it's good that the Office of the Public Trustee's being reviewed and it's hoped—to be hoped that out of this review will come a clearer mandate, a clearer role, a better working relationship with partners in the care of those who are disadvantaged, and perhaps even with some changes and improvements in public funding to ensure that those who are not mentally competent are looked after well. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. Seeing no grievances, we'll move on with—

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you resume debate on report stage of Bill 20.

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Now resume report stage on Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

THAT Bill 20 be amended by adding the following after Clause 4(4):

4(4.1) The following is added after subsection 11(3):

Referendum cost disclosed

11(3.1) The government shall estimate the cost of conducting a referendum and disclose this information to Manitobans during the annual provincial budget consultation process.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Spruce Woods, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo,

THAT Bill 20 be amended by adding the following after Clause 4—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it's certainly is such a good amendment, I almost was willing to let you read the entire amendment back to us.

Certainly, it gives me pleasure to speak on Bill 20 again today, Mr. Speaker. We are proposing a number of amendments which we think will help make this terrible piece of legislation at least a little better, a little more palatable to Manitobans.

Clearly, the NDP are taking away Manitobans' democratic right to vote in this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and this really—amendment really speaks to that, when—in terms of what the NDP are doing with Bill 20.

Clearly, if we reflect back on the existing legislation, in terms of the taxpayer protection act, Mr. Speaker, it's a—clearly defines in there the parameters in terms of which a referendum is to be held. And, clearly, it spells out in that particular legislation, that if the retail sales tax is increased in the province of Manitoba, it's clearly defined in existing legislation that a referendum is required for those tax changes. And it spells out fairly clearly the issues around that. In fact, it says—and I think I should read this into the record because I think this is something that the government has clearly lost sight of, Mr. Speaker: "The government shall not present to the Legislative Assembly a bill to increase the rate of any tax imposed by an Act or part of an Act listed below, unless the government first puts the question of the advisability of proceeding with such a bill to the voters of Manitoba in a referendum, and a majority of the persons who vote in the referendum authorize the government to proceed with the changes."

And that's exactly what the existing legislation says, Mr. Speaker. Now, clearly it spells out the—in fact, the process as well in terms of what has to

happen prior to legislation being brought to the Chamber. And what the government has done, they have completely ignored the legislation as it exists now, because the legislation spells out a referendum has to be held before legislation is brought to the floor of the Chamber.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if members opposite will read Bill 20, Bill 20 clearly says the provincial sales tax will increase by 1 per cent, by—pardon me, one point or 14 per cent. That is the intent of Bill 20. In my humble opinion, the NDP have broke the current law as it stands by even introducing legislation to increase the provincial sales tax as it's clearly stated in the existing legislation.

And, Mr. Speaker, Bill 20 also takes away the public's ability to have a referendum on those major tax increases. Clearly, I believe this is both illegal, as the documents show, and I believe also immoral from the perspective of the NDP and—before the last campaign were out saying that there would be no increase in provincial sales tax. Now, even that, given some of the answers we heard to some of the new taxes that appear to be being proposed today in question period, they are going back and saying, you know, that's not going to happen. Now, I think Manitobans can see through those types of promises because we've heard those promises before, and the NDP have clearly broken those promises.

Now, what this amendment does, Mr. Speaker, it clearly speaks to the referendum. And it clearly speaks to the referendum that is being taken out—the democratic referendum that's been taken out by Bill 20. And all we're asking the government to do by this referendum is tell us how much a referendum would cost Manitobans.

And what would a referendum cost, Mr. Speaker? I don't know. Maybe it would be—would it be much more than the \$200,000 a year that the NDP have proposed to take from the vote tax? I don't know. But, surely, that \$200,000 that the NDP are taking for a vote tax could certainly go a long way to putting on a referendum so that Manitobans could voice their opinion in terms of a PST increase. Hey, and maybe we could even ask Manitobans what they think about a vote tax that the NDP are taking. You know, we don't have to just have one question on that referendum. We could have a whole bunch of questions on that referendum. We'd get a really good gauge of what Manitobans are thinking.

You know, we could even ask Manitobans on that referendum what they think about the new death

tax that are being proposed by the NDP. And, Mr. Speaker, we heard some rhetoric in terms of the answers today on the new death tax. We're certainly looking forward to that. Obviously, the media is reporting. The industry has heard all kinds of stories about how much this new death tax will be. We know the Premier (Mr. Selinger), he loves any kind of taxes and any time he can get his hands on the money. We know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is a half a billion dollars short on his budget this year, so, clearly, the Minister of Finance is looking for any kind of new revenue he can generate.

And, clearly, you know, we're—we've been increased in terms of our birth certificate rates, our death certificate rates, they've been increased 25 per cent just over the course of the last year, Mr. Speaker. So, clearly, here's another new tax the NDP have come up with.

* (15:00)

I will give them marks for being creative. They're certainly creative when it comes to new fees and surcharges and some of the new taxes they've implemented. Certainly very creative in that regard. But to tax Manitobans from the grave, I think, is something—that's the new heights, I think, in terms of taxation. It really is quite astounding.

To me, this resolution really speaks about transparency, and really that, I think, is a hallmark of good government is transparency, and I believe if the government would adopt this particular amendment it would at least show Manitobans that they are thinking about taxpayers.

I know I go back a couple years ago now, Mr. Speaker, and we had quite a debate in the House about the Canadian Wheat Board, and I know the members opposite, the NDP, were quite adamant that Manitoba farmers should have a vote on the Canadian Wheat Board. They actually, I think, put money up front to try to host a referendum on the Canadian Wheat Board. So it was pretty clear the NDP thought Manitoba farmers should have a vote on the Canadian Wheat Board. Ironically, here we are a few years later, and the NDP decide, you know, we're going to change the legislation altogether because we don't believe that Manitobans should have a say in terms of one of the biggest tax implications to all Manitobans. That is what they've done by this legislation. So there's quite a bit of irony in that, in terms of when the NDP want to have

referendums and when they don't want to have referendums. It's quite interesting.

And we talk about transparency too. I know we had a little debate today in question period on Manitoba Hydro, and, clearly, we had the Clean Environment Commission do a review on certain aspects of the new Bipole III line or proposed Bipole III line. Unfortunately, the government didn't allow the Clean Environment Commission the—full and independent review of the options for Bipole III and that, really, again, in my view, speaks to transparency.

So, you know, the NDP talk about one thing, but in reality they seem to be bent on doing other things, Mr. Speaker. So if you tighten down those types of parameters, we're not getting a real full view of the options before us. And I think when we talk about a referendum, that really provides Manitobans with real—that real look at transparency in terms of how they view this new increase in the provincial sales tax.

Another issue relative to this, too, is the issue around the flooding we've had over the last couple years and some of the parameters the NDP have restricted themselves in terms of the reviews going forward. I know they talk about being an appeal process there and they have people available for the appeal process, but if you restrict those individuals that are looking at those appeals, if you restrict their ability to really do their job in a broad scale and be open and transparent with Manitobans, it really bypasses the process and it's really a flawed process. So those are the kinds of issues that we think should lead to transparency and this, clearly, this idea of having a referendum really speaks to transparency.

And we know we have a tax-and-spend government here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and clearly Manitobans, although they get a say about every four years in terms of who they're going to vote for, they don't have the opportunity now with the change in Bill 20 to have a real important say in terms of how major tax increases are going to play out in Manitoba and how they're going to impact each and every family in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the comments not just from this side, but certainly from the government side of the House, as well, on our amendment on this particular amendment.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I also want to indicate for the record, in 'clase'—in case I neglected to before I recognized the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen), that the amendment is in order.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to add my comments to that for the member of Spruce Woods who brought forward this amendment, and certainly this is an amendment that I would hope the government would find some commitment to move forward on and have a look at it.

But, if we also go back and look at why referendums are important, we will see that Manitobans seem to value very much the fact that they have an opportunity to have a say when a major tax like the PST is increased. And certainly from the feedback that we're getting from people out there, whether it is, you know, people that are signing petitions—and there are thousands and thousands of those—whether it's a 700 people or more that have attended at the Legislature to be at a rally to speak against a PST hike, whether it was the over 200 people that came to committee, registered for committee and came and spoke before us, the one thing that was certainly obvious amongst all of them—and I think if we add that up, there's probably tens of thousands now of people that have actually put their comments forward and feel very, very strongly that they oppose this PST hike.

But there's two parts to it. Certainly, people are opposing the hike itself, but people are also very, very angry about the fact that they don't have a say in it. And they seem to have great value and place great value on the fact that past legislation gave them a say, gave them a right, through the balanced budget and taxpayer protection act. The public seems to have really revolted to the fact that this government brought in this legislation without giving them a say. And I have to admit that I was somewhat surprised to see the level of anger on that particular issue. I could understand people not wanting to see the PST go up, but it was so interesting to also learn, by listening to all these people, how against the taking away of a referendum was to them.

One particular man that came to committee was actually a veteran, and he certainly spoke about democracy and what democracy meant. And, you know, it sort of reminded me, too, as to why we have Remembrance Day and what a good reminder that is about how people feel about fighting for democracy. And I think many, many people feel very slighted by

the government that the government chose to take away this form of democracy where they had a voice. And I think it surprises people because in Canada I don't think we expect that we won't have a voice or a say in something as significant as a major tax hike.

And, certainly, when the government moved ahead and brought in Bill 20 while still leaving the previous legislation on the books, it has created quite a conundrum here in the province. And, you know, legal minds have waded in, indicating that what the government is doing with Bill 20 by bringing in a PST hike while ignoring the past legislation could very well be an illegal move by this government. So this will never be—even once the legislation passes, this is not going to be the end to this, because now there are going to be legal challenges about whether or not the government legally had the right to do what they did.

And everybody is really surprised that the government chose to go this route. People know that if a government wants to, they can raise taxes; that is the right of government. It was how the—this NDP government did it, I think, that caught everybody off guard. Certainly, it wasn't anything that was requested in budget consultations. We found that out through the Estimates process.

But what the government did was bring in legislation that is certainly questionable as to its legality. They could have very simply first decided to take away or override, rescind the old legislation. That's all they had to do, and then they could have moved forward by increasing the PST. That would have avoided a lot of the anxiety, fear by people who having to—who are having to charge the PST that it may not be a legal thing that they're doing. It has created so much angst in the community that the government could have avoided all of it. So it was very sloppy in terms of how they brought forward such a significant piece of legislation.

* (15:10)

And then to take away the referendum, I guess, really shouldn't surprise all of us, because the NDP government has been gutting the balanced budget and taxpayer protection law for years and years, even though in every election they promised to keep it. And, in fact, in every election—and Gary Doer started it—they promised to keep the balanced budget legislation. They were elected on that, and they then, after the election, did something different, and they basically, over the years, now gutted the balanced

budget legislation and taken away any taxpayer protection, and I think taxpayers are feeling that they need more protection from this government.

That has become something that is very, very obvious with what the government is doing and how the government is doing it, especially when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province goes out and makes the kind of statements that he did prior to the election and, you know, indicating that it was a ridiculous idea that we're going to raise the sales tax; that's total nonsense, everybody knows that; and then he turned around and did the opposite and brought in the biggest tax grab in a quarter of a century. He wasn't elected on that, and that is also playing into the anger of the public.

It's not only the fact that the referendum has been taken away, it's how angry I think people are feeling that they were not shown the respect that they felt they deserved by a government. The government did not have that mandate from the people. If this NDP party was in tune with the public or still in touch with the public and here for the public, they would not be doing what they're doing. But we've seen, with this NDP government, they really have lost their way. They've been in power for far too long, and they forgot who put them here. They're forgetting to listen, and they're doing something that the public opposes. But this government doesn't seem to care very much about that.

I would hope that this government would look at this amendment seriously and look at what it might cost to have a referendum and disclose that information to Manitobans during the budget consultation process. That would be quite novel. But also, as my colleague from Spruce Woods did indicate, it might just be a matter of the—all the NDP MLAs giving up their vote-tax money and putting it into something that I think the public would find more value in, and that's having a referendum on this issue and not, you know, taking money from taxpayers to fund their own political endeavours.

So I certainly would urge the government to pay heed to this. You know, people out there are thinking this government has stopped listening, and that's very obvious. It's one thing, though, not to listen to us in here—that hasn't happened for a very long time—but at least to have the respect for the public that's out there and listen to the thousands and thousands and thousands of people that are asking this government to revisit this issue and call a referendum. Have the decency to do that and the respect to do that because

they don't have the moral authority to do what they're doing right now.

So I would urge them to pay a little bit more attention to this issue of referendum and to accept this amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to put a few words on record in support of the amendment put forward by the honourable member from Spruce Woods, and, in particular, it's important that this issue relates to referendums and the requirement that it was in place and that it will be removed under Bill 20.

I think it's particularly important in light of all of the petitions that we have been reading on a regular basis, and I know I've been quite active in gathering a number of those petitions, and there is certainly a huge support for that particular point that people want to be heard on this issue, and they feel that they are not being heard by this government and that that's a requirement that should've been honoured absolutely, beside the fact that they actually ran a election campaign around not increasing the PST and not increasing—and they certainly never mentioned the increase, massive increases, in fees and the broadening of the PST as part of their election campaign. They never for once mentioned that they would be removing the rights of the referendum, and where will that stop, Mr. Speaker?

Their option, in terms of continuing to do this in the future, remains wide open. There's simply no restrictions on them anymore. They could do—we could be looking at another increase at next budget. And certainly the way they continue to tax and spend and think that they have the right and the knowledge to handle dollars better than the average Manitoban certainly would suggest that they have little reason to rethink their position. They have—they've continued in this vein for a number of years and we certainly haven't seen any significant—a significant sign that they'll change their approach to this.

So I'm very disappointed to see this bill continue forward. I would certainly encourage the members opposite to take a very careful look at what they're doing here. This is the kind of thing that will come back at election time when they're knocking on doors and people were saying, well, why didn't you respect my right to have a—to the referendum? Why didn't you respect my right to have a voice on increasing taxes in a major way? And that—what are they going to say? How are they going to answer that comment at the door? Are they going to say, well, we thought

we knew better; we certainly knew better than you in terms of what the dollars should be spent on. And certainly it's very important that everyone be heard and taking away the right to be heard is certainly a blow to democracy.

Now, reference has been to the wheat board vote—and I was actually very involved in that whole process and there was as many opportunities to speak on the issue of the wheat board. There were not many opportunities to speak on the increase to the PST nor were there very many opportunities to talk about the loss of the referendum. The average person had very little opportunity to do that.

Certainly, we see here where they had no opportunity other than a few people in the House to actually be heard. There's been no public hearings. They talk about budget consultations—though I wasn't able to attend any because there was certainly none in my immediate area. I have been able to track down one or two people that actually attend one, and they certainly did not suggest for a moment there was any discussion about an increase to the PST as part of the budget consultation process. So it's certainly that—and that was their interpretation. They were there in the audience. You may have a different interpretation, but they certainly are entitled to theirs. And being there, I think they would have very good view of what occurred at those budget consultations from their point of view.

So I would certainly encourage the members opposite to rethink what they're doing on this, in particular when it comes to removing the referendum. I suspect in the future that there'll be other attempts to increase fees in one form or the other because there's, as I said earlier, really no sign that they have come anywhere near to balancing the budget in the future. And, in fact, we'll—we have yet to see how the last year turned out because we've only seen three quarters of the last year turnout in terms of finance. When—and that indicates that they were actually well over to—their budget numbers at that point in time. So even though we have budget numbers, it would suggest very much that their—that they likely won't meet them in this coming year either.

Now, there's been a few other comments made in this whole process, in particular when it comes to the—where the money would go related to the flood. And I have had quite a number of individuals come forward in the past two years to talk about the whole issue of flood and flood claims. And certainly there

needs to be something put in place to deal with the flood issues and it needs to be done in a timely manner.

The proposal that we've seen come forward with really no significant construction 'til at least 2018 leaves a lot of people wanting, wondering why we need to do this now—increase the PST—but no construction. And, in fact, we actually haven't seen any studies initiated to help determine which of the many options—and there are many options—which of the many options actually might work. We've seen no studies initiated regards to that at all. I know the minister likes to think that they're moving as quickly as possible on this, and perhaps in his mind that is as quickly as possible as he can move. But it is certainly—it certainly isn't in a very timely manner and certainly we hear from many Manitobans that they're very disappointed.

And in the area of claims, well, I was there at a number of the press releases because they were 'often' done in Portage la Prairie, and promises were made both there and at Langruth that have clearly never been even close to lived up to. And a lot of people are very disappointed and I suspect that there's simply nothing that this government's prepared to do to deal with that.

*(15:20)

And the appeals process—and perhaps the minister would like to speak to this particular amendment because there's still 500 appeals outstanding. And I understand from having checked on behalf of one of my constituents that they're really not doing any appeals this summer because it's very difficult to get the members of the appeals committee to come to a meeting because they don't feel they're empowered to do anything. Frankly, they're very disappointed in the whole process and feel very powerless. Even though they often hear very good claims and very heartfelt claims that should be dealt with, they have no authority to deal with them. So that certainly leaves them very frustrated, and I can't really blame them for not coming to meetings. If you're frustrated and you have no authority and you're just become a puppet of the minister, it's got to be very disappointing.

In particular—and the minister, of course, was very quick to go after those people that chose to protest. They chose to protest on a site that he didn't like, and I guess that clearly stepped on his ego, and, I'm sure, had he had any legal—any legal—basis to stand on, Mr. Speaker, he would have pursued that.

But we all know that, once it got to court, really nothing came of it, and in fact the whole thing was videotaped. And we have tons of evidence to refute any allegations that he's put forward.

So—[interjection] Is he speaking or am I, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps the minister would like to speak to this particular issue. They actually did go to court and did agree to an undertaking, which is, by the way, well past, and they are still not compensated. In fact, still haven't had a meeting that was promised as part of that undertaking with the minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'd better move on because clearly someone else is really dying to speak to this particular issue. I'd be very happy if he got up and spoke to that particular issue, and at the same time, maybe he can talk to Bill 20 and this particular amendment that brought forward by the member from Spruce Woods, which, I think, actually represents the loss in democracy that we're seeing taking on in this place that this minister exemplifies because he doesn't want to hear an opposing opinion. He does everything within his power to quash that opposing opinion even to taking people to court as they follow their legitimate opportunity to protest.

And, as part of that, I actually researched this minister's history when it comes to protests, and it is quite colourful. And, in fact, I think you're more than aware of some of the protests that he took part in back in his early days in the House, and, in fact, one that ended in violence where he claimed, not my problem, not my fault. I'd left already. It was somebody else that did it. But he was certainly part of the process and many suggest that he was inciting in the whole process. So that's a good thing to do.

I'm sure that this minister will love to defend that particular point in history. I'm sure he's very proud of that point in history. People were injured and ended up going to hospital because of a protest that he probably had at least the major hand in, which is pretty serious stuff in my mind, and far greater than having individuals protest the lack of attention to their claim and, in fact, be out of there well before any particular risk came to play.

So I'd like to thank the Speaker for the opportunity to speak to this.

Oh, I would certainly encourage the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who had a lot to say while I was speaking, to actually get up now and actually have something to say and perhaps put something on record regarding this particular amendment.

Mr. Speaker: Just for the information of the House, while time to time there is comments that are happening in the background during the House, I just want to make members aware that I am intently paying attention to the debate that's ongoing, and I am listening to the comments that the honourable member's making on the record here. And I do have a speaker here that allows me to hear that as well if the volume goes up a little bit in the Chamber, and I just want members to be aware of that.

The honourable member for Lakeside has the floor.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): It is a pleasure to rise today to talk to this amendment brought forward by the member from Turtle Mountain. Of course, this is breaking down the cost of a referendum and something we feel very passionate about, Mr. Speaker.

The idea of a referendum, we've been bringing that forward. We've read petitions in the House. It's a right. It's a right of all Manitobans that needs to be fulfilled. We feel very strongly about the fact that the government needs to do that and listen to Manitobans. We've had committees and we heard from a number of those presenters. It was well over 200 that had signed up for a committee to express their views, and we all know that we have read a number of petitions in the House in this regard calling for the government to do a referendum.

In fact, the government was said, when they brought in the budget on April 16th, there wasn't enough time. There wasn't enough time. Here we are, you know, into August, and I think we probably still have lots of time, lots of time to be able to call on the folks that put governments into office or kick them out. That would give them an opportunity. In fact, you know, they could save some of the cost by calling the Morris by-election at the same time. They would be able to offset some of those costs, some of those costs and, you know, you just never know that—you know, whenever we'd look at the cost, I mean, maybe the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) with, you know, his seven or eight deputy ministers that he—the department keeps growing as we see the weeks and months grow. I don't know if he needs all those deputy ministers or not, but, you know, somebody's not giving him enough advice to get down and drill down about the costs. So maybe one of those staff members would be able to go back to the minister and say, yes, I have the cost for the minister to be able to fulfill those needs and say, yes,

the cost is going to be X number of dollars, and we'll decide whether or not we want to take that back to the Manitobans.

So, you know, I know the minister's excited to get up and talk about this particular issue. He hasn't had a chance yet. I know that he's eager to do so. I know the member from Thompson was talking briefly from his seat. He wants to talk as well. I know that there's a lot of people in this House that want to be able express their views and that's what democracy's all about. That's part of the business that we do in this House is debate legislation, debate amendments and this is one that we feel very strongly about that we need to move forward on, and I'm encouraging the government to look forward to this.

We heard very clearly that Manitobans want a say—Manitobans want a say—and whenever we heard from those hardworking Manitobans that went out and went from door to door in the last campaign: the government said they would not raise taxes. They said it was nonsense. So now's a true indication of what the government's going to be able to do, is listen to those Manitobans. In fact, I don't think it's just the people from Lakeside. I don't think it's from all the other members that have read petitions in the House. I'm sure the government's getting those same comments. So why would you not—why would you not want to give those hard-working Manitobans, the only one taxpayer in Manitoba, the opportunity to say, what's your feeling on this? What is your feeling about raising the PST?

Now, we've heard it's about infrastructure, but it's not, Mr. Speaker. It's not about infrastructure at all. It's a slush fund set up for this government to be able to go out and make announcement after announcement and they're just trying to put the fluff and puff on it each and every day. That doesn't make any sense. I mean, they come out with a different guise about this one day. Then they have a different guise the next day. Really, we have no idea other than what it is, and that's a slush fund.

And I think the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is starting to get a little bit of that. So whenever he goes out on the referendum and says to those hard-working Manitobans, how do you feel about the government having a slush fund of \$300 million so we can make an announcement, so we can go out and whenever the member from Lakeside stands up in the House and he says we need this done and that done, well, he'll say, well, we can afford it.

We don't do any forward planning. We'll just take that out of our slush fund and then we'll be able to make that request from the member of Lakeside a reality. What a novel idea.

But that's not how it works; we all know that. We do planning; we look forward to the next year, the following year and how we're going to be able to adapt to our budget to live within our means. And, in fact, today the deputy leader, the member from Charleswood, stood up today and talked about the deficits put on by this government, and the First Minister had the audacity to stand up and said they balanced their budget. They balanced their budget for 10 years straight. This is phenomenal, phenomenal, phenomenal financial security. We have our pulse on it. The deficits don't matter—the deficits don't matter because you know what? None of it's true. It's just like what they said about the PST. They went out and they said they were not going to raise it, but yet they did. Yet they did, and now they don't want to call a referendum. They don't want to drill down and find out what the cost is of a referendum. Why is that? Because they don't want to hear from Manitobans. That's what it boils down to. They want to deal with the government and the taxpayers of Manitoba. We know better. We know better than every Manitoban, and the ones I talk to are quite fed up. They're quite upset. I don't know what's going to happen in two years or three years, whether the public will forget. And they'll say, oh, we forgive them. We forgive them because we've got a swimming pool. We've got a splash pad. We've got artificial turf. We've got this, we've got that. I really have no idea what's going to happen.

* (15:30)

But I can tell you this. The ones that are upset, the ones that are upset, will not forget. They will not forget. It's engraved in their stone, in their everyday livelihoods. And we've talked about the poor. We've talked about the disadvantaged, the ones that are raising the next generation of voters. Those families that are having a hard time meeting, each and every day, their budget.

In fact, I'll talk about my daughter, my daughter and her family, three kids. They've got kids in hockey; they've got kids in soccer. They're trying to decide where their priorities are going to be, whether or not it's going to be able to put their son into hockey, their daughter into soccer or their other daughter into soccer—tough decisions to make, tough decisions to make. They were there before, but now,

they're stretched. They're stretched to the limit, and what this government needs to do is be able to say to people like my daughter, and others in this very room, I'm sure they're not the only ones, about the ability to be able to say, yes or no; not the ability to be able to say, government knows best.

Government doesn't always know best. And that's why you've got to go to the people, Mr. Minister. You need to go to them and say, I will give you the choice, and this is what it's going to cost for a referendum; our department, through our seven deputy ministers, has now determined this is what it's going to cost; this is what it's going to do for each and every Manitoban, and not a slush fund that's going to be there for the government to decide best from time to time, or in a riding where they feel they might be close in the next election. We know that's not going to work. Manitobans are smarter than that. They understand the fact that whenever they go to the poll, they'll be able to say, you know, that was just not right what this government did, and what we're going to do is we're going to hold them to account. So whenever we looked at whatever we want to spin this money on, they're prepared to go to the wall. They're prepared to challenge this government.

We're challenging this government, and that's what this debate is about. In fact, the government just don't seem to get it. They want to be able to feel they can ram these amendments through by not speaking on them. Obviously, they don't have anything to say about it; otherwise, they'd be getting up. In fact, I'm just anxious to hear what the Minister for Finance has to say. I know that he's eager to speak on this particular amendment. I challenge him to get up and speak and tell Manitobans what the cost really is and why he don't want to support this resolution, because truly, it's important, whenever the minister—I know yesterday he didn't want to talk on what he said, that one's not important, I'm not going to talk about that one, that one, no, that one don't make any sense. Well, you know what, they all make sense. That's the reason we brought them forward, and we're challenging the minister, we're going to challenge other members on that side to get up in the House and talk about the legislation. Either they're for it or against it, but if they're silent, obviously, they're just not engaged.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): First of all, I want to say, it's always a pleasure to follow the

member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) after he's made a speech. Why was it there was only one Conservative on the other side who applauded that on behalf of the member for Lakeside, Mr. Speaker?

The member for Lakeside got up and put his thoughts on the record. I think in—a couple of times he did make some sense, but I did notice there were several moments in his speech when he said 'souch'—such outlandish things, and he couldn't keep a straight face while he was speaking. Mr. Speaker, I don't doubt for one minute that the member for Lakeside's heart is in the right place. I think when he talks about the impact—

An Honourable Member: You told me yesterday I didn't have a heart.

Mr. Struthers: Oh, that wouldn't have been me.

When yet—when he talked about the impact on people, especially the impact on his daughter and his daughter's family, I understand that the member for Lakeside wants, deep down, wants to do the best thing for not only his own family, but for the ones, families, he represents in Lakeside and, of course, those around the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, since 2011, a couple of very major things have happened in this province. One is we received a report from an independent group, a report on flood protection that said that as a result of the flood that happened in 2011 and forecasts for more flood threats in Manitoba, that we needed to invest a billion dollars—in excess of a billion dollars in flood mitigation projects to protect Manitoba families, and we take that very seriously.

Even more recent than that, in this past spring the federal government in its budget—and to its credit, the Conservative government in Ottawa signed on to a Building Canada Fund and made that announcement through its budget back in March. This is something that we and others have encouraged the federal government to do. They were a little reluctant at the beginning, but to the credit of the Conservative government in Ottawa, they introduced this in their budget.

Now, I don't know if members opposite are advocating for us to disregard the billion-dollar price tag associated with the flood report that came in. I don't know if members opposite are counselling us on this side of the government to not participate in the Building Canada Fund. They can work that out themselves across the way, but this side of the government has been very, very clear. We will invest

in flood mitigation projects to protect Manitoba families and businesses and farms, and we will participate in the Building Canada Fund because those—that infrastructure, the roads and the schools, the bridges, the hospitals are important infrastructure, and it is important to keep our Manitoba economy moving forward. That, we understand, will provide a lot of jobs. It'll—over the course of the 10 years of that program.

We also understand that we need to pay for these. So, Mr. Speaker, we did decide to move forward with a one-cent-on-the-dollar increase to the PST. We told Manitobans that we would be absolutely transparent and accountable. We've guaranteed that through Bill 20.

In terms of the referendum, as I've stated, we are very serious about moving very quickly in terms of getting support to Manitoba families and investing in the flood infrastructure projects and also investing in the schools and hospitals and roads and bridges that we—that Manitobans tell us are so necessary.

I did—I'm glad the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) mentioned the speakers that came forward on Bill 20. They came forward in committee; 132 speakers approached our committee. Some were upset about the 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase. Some weren't as upset and some actually counselled us not to do a referendum and some said do a referendum. So members opposite can badmouth the committee members who've come and disagreed with them. That's quite a statement from members opposite in terms of their view on democracy, but I sat there and I listened to almost every one of those 132, and I listened to almost every one. I did a break a couple times when Mother Nature, a higher authority, did call. I'm sure members opposite will let me off with that. *[interjection]* Yes, there's no more details on that one.

One of the things I did agree with the member for Lakeside when he said that this isn't just about Lakeside, that is exactly the way I see it too. Because there are people in Lakeside, there are people in Dauphin, there are people in the north, there are people in the city of Winnipeg, the city of Brandon, Mr. Speaker, who say move quickly and solve the infrastructure gap that this province has, and he's right. It's not just about Lakeside. People from every region of this province want us to move quickly in terms of flood mitigation and they want us to move quickly in terms of that critical infrastructure that is so necessary to invest in to keep our Manitoba

economy moving forward, to keep our employment rates high and our unemployment rates low and to keep that kind of economic activity chugging our economy along.

We are surrounded with economic uncertainty. You know it's an—you know the economy is uncertain when the province of Alberta has a higher deficit than we do, when the province of Alberta has a higher deficit than most provinces. You know it's a difficult and economic uncertain time when a potash crisis can do what it does to the Saskatchewan economy, an economy that was considered one of the strongest in the country.

* (15:40)

So we need to keep investing in our economy to keep people working, to keep the Manitoba economy moving forward, because we're surrounded by uncertainty.

And we can't just cut and hack and slash, as members opposite have put forward, as members opposite put forward in the 1990s. Those policies hurt our economy back then. They hurt Manitoba families back then and they'll hurt Manitoba families and our economy today, Mr. Speaker.

We need to keep investing in our economy. Mr. Speaker, that doesn't mean you set up a slush fund, as was suggested by the member for Lakeside. It suggests to me that what you do is that you put forward a bill, like Bill 20, that says absolutely openly, accountably, transparently, and guarantees that that transparency will be reported to the people of Manitoba. It guarantees that every cent that we raise on this 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase goes right back into building schools and hospitals, to building roads and bridges. We do that and we assure Manitobans that that's what's going to happen, just like we did with The Gas Tax Accountability Act.

The Gas Tax Accountability Act, we said that the fuel taxes that we gain through that tax goes directly into roads and bridges, and that's exactly what has happened with that measure, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans can count on that, and they can count on this government to make sure that the dollars go towards infrastructure, unlike when the members opposite were in government, unlike when Gary Filmon and the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) ran this province, where they increased gas taxes and decreased the amount of money going towards roads and bridges in Manitoba.

We will have \$1.8 billion available—that authority available—to be spent in Manitoba over the next—the course of this year.

I would ask—just as I conclude my comments, I would ask that the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) and others on his side, when we have committees, when we have people come to present at committees, would you please pay attention.

Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, we met recently. We talked about a referendum, and we talked about the cost of a referendum. And one Ms. Shipra Verma, she would happen to be the Chief Electoral Officer, she told us exactly what it would cost. She said it would cost between 9 and 10 million dollars to hold a referendum.

Why would it be that members opposite would wonder and they would pressure the government to disclosing that number, when it's already in the public record, when it's already been discussed at the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs? It suggests to me, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite are more attuned to playing politics than they are to actually dealing with the infrastructure problems we have in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, we won't be supporting this amendment.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): It is, indeed, a great pleasure to get up and speak on this amendment. I'd like to thank the member from Spruce Woods for bringing it forward.

The amendment is very timely, and I appreciate it, especially, being able to follow my esteemed colleague from Dauphin, who actually said that members should listen when they sit in committee.

And I would suggest to him that he should listen when he puts things on the record, because, Mr. Speaker, what we have here is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), who used to be the former minister of Agriculture, who used to be the referendum king of Canada. This is a minister who took taxpayers' money from the Province of Manitoba, the Department of Agriculture, and funded a referendum.

In fact, he's on the record in Hansard. And I would like to refer members—because we want to stick by the facts here—I'd like to refer to them to the record, June 13th, 2011, Hansard. And this is the member from Dauphin, the then-minister of

Agriculture, who now occupies the office of Minister of Finance. And he says, and I quote directly: "For crying out loud, Madam Acting Speaker, the Prime Minister of this country offered Canadians an opportunity to vote on the name of his cat. They voted on the name of his cat. Why can't that same Prime Minister let farmers vote on their economic future? What's the difference?"

This is the referendum king of 2011, and today gets up and speaks about an amendment that actually references referendums and never once spoke the word referendum, not once did the word cross his lips. Maybe he forgot how to pronounce it. Maybe the enunciation's giving him difficulty. But before, in 2011, he was the referendum king, and today he gets up as Minister of Finance, and can't even whisper the word across his lips.

In fact, he went so far—there was this big protest out on Main Street and there were placards and maybe 20, 30 people that were calling for a referendum, and I know the minister would've been there with his chequebook in hand saying, I'll fund the referendum, I'll fund the referendum, and today he gets up and speaks, and nary a word about referendum.

In fact, he has turned on referendums like never before, Mr. Speaker. I've got another quote out of Hansard. He said, June 13th, 2011, and I quote directly from the minister for Dauphin: "How could you be against having farmers vote on an issue? How can you even stand in this Legislature and talk about what you call is a vote tax and not stand up for farmers' right to vote on their economic future? How can you do that?" And today he gets up and speaks about an amendment to a bill that would advocate for a referendum and not once in 10 minutes does he actually reference the referendum. It is unbelievable, inconceivable that the same member from Dauphin in 2011 could actually be the same member from Dauphin in 2013. How could those two be the same individual?

In fact, he went even further, and I would like to quote for this House directly out of the Hansard, June 13, 2011, and he says, I quote directly: "It is almost beyond words how hypocritical, how phony, how ridiculous the position of members opposite is. Why don't you grow a backbone and stand up for Manitobans? Do that. Do that"—when it comes to a referendum. And now the same member stands up, and I ask him—I ask him in all sincerity, he's the one who got up. The referendum king got up, advocated

for a referendum and said how hypocritical to be against the referendum.

I ask the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers): How could you be so hypocritical and be against a referendum? His own words, Mr. Speaker, not mine. Not those of members on this side. In fact, those are his own words coming back and asking him directly. His own words are speaking to him. His own words go on to say how phony could you be when you're against a referendum. His own words coming back at him asking him, how could you be so phony when in 2011 you funded a referendum and by 2013 you trashed the people's right, a legal right, a legislative right, a right that you ran on.

The member for Dauphin went door to door in multiple elections and ran on the commitment to keep the taxpayer protection act, and then his words come back now and his words say how phony could you be to be against a referendum when you ran on it. You funded it. You used to stand up for it and today you get up and for 10 minutes on an amendment to a bill that talks about referendums you don't even reference the word once.

Following word—he goes on to say how ridiculous, and I'd like to point out to the member for Dauphin, the now-Minister of Finance, how ridiculous does he think he looks when one day—not even that long ago, 2011—when he actually took money, taxpayers' money out of his departmental budget and meddled in affairs at a national level and said that he would fund a referendum for individuals in Manitoba. He would stand up for the right of a referendum in Manitoba, and his own words condemn him. His own words speak back to him and say how ridiculous could you be to one day stand up for a referendum and want to fund it and then the next day stand up in the House and say nothing about it, turn your back on a referendum, turn your back on democracy, strip the right away from Manitobans, a right that Manitobans thought that they had that there was a bipartisan agreement on. It was something the Conservatives brought in. The Liberals and New Democrats all supported it. The member for Dauphin ran on it in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011, and it's the minister's own words that are coming back to haunt him.

* (15:50)

And, Mr. Speaker, he should have known better. He should have known better to say a referendum works in that case but the referendum doesn't work in

this case. And his own words come back to haunt him.

His own words say and I quote: "How can you be so hypocritical?" Mr. Speaker, that is harsh in political terms to actually say that to another individual. And maybe around this Chamber we throw words too loosely, and that's perhaps one of those things.

And, you know, I think when the member for Dauphin actually said that I believe he believed it. I believe in his heart he supported a referendum. And I think he meant what he said when he told individuals that would oppose a referendum that they're being hypocritical.

But on the same issue today—not even two years later—Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden the same words come back and haunt him. Those same words echo throughout this Chamber and speak to the minister, the member for Dauphin; it was that same member, that same minister who stood here and said you're hypocritical if you are against a referendum, and is the same minister that's stripping it away from Manitobans. The same minister who stood up and funded a referendum now turns his back and won't even speak the words across his lips.

You know, when we were at committee and I was listening—unlike the NDP member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who sat most of the time and worked his BlackBerry playing BrickBreaker, I actually paid attention, and there was a presentation that came and the individual said the NDP used to be a party of social justice and they're not that anymore. Because a referendum on a PST, which all parties ran on election after election after election, never once saying that they would get rid of it, never once, they ran on that. And I would say to the minister, he should have listened to those people because the NDP once used to be a party of social justice and not there anymore. He should have listened to what people were saying. It was very troubling.

And I would like to say to this House one more quote, June 13th, 2011, the member for Dauphin, he goes on to say: "Take some political advice from me, at the very least." I would suggest to the member for Dauphin, the minister, maybe he should take some political advice from himself. At the very least go back to June 13th, 2011, and look at the kind of words he once put on the record as the minister of Agriculture when he maybe still stood for social justice. Maybe he should stand up and listen to his own words.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is the amendment on Bill 20. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed with the next amendment.

Mr. Cullen: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen),

THAT Bill 20 be amended by replacing Clause 5(3) with the following:

*Coming into force—sections 3 and 4
5(3) Sections 3 and 4 come into force on a day to be fixed by proclamation.*

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Spruce Woods, seconded by the honourable member for Midland,

That Bill 20 be amended by replacing Clause 5(3) with the following—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense. The amendment is in order.

Mr. Cullen: It's indeed a pleasure to get up and speak on Bill 20 today. And certainly I know our side of the House will be here debating Bill 20 for a long time to come, Mr. Speaker. And we stand with many, with thousands of Manitobans in opposed to what the premise of Bill 20 is. And I hope the government will take notice of what Manitobans are saying.

And really the purpose of this amendment, Mr. Speaker, is to give the NDP more time. It appears they need even more time to consider what they're doing with Bill 20. And, hopefully, they will look at this amendment favourably.

I know we've proposed some amendments here—we've proposed four amendments we think Manitobans would like to see accepted, and they've declined all four of those amendments. So, hopefully, they will take this one to heart. Clearly, all we're saying in this amendment is that just a minor adjustment in terms of the Bill 20—Bill 20 says that this section of the legislation will pass with royal assent, and we're saying, well, let's not rush into it. We know what Manitobans are saying. We know Manitobans don't want the government to rush in passing this legislation. Clearly, there's going to be some repercussions to all Manitobans when this legislation is passed and, I guess, ironically, the impacts of their decision to increase the provincial sales tax are already impacting Manitobans. In fact, the NDP have implemented the tax effective July 1st.

And I'll remind the NDP and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) that they are collecting out of Manitoba pockets—Manitoba taxpayer pockets, \$5 million a week. So \$5 million a week, I think, we're—we must be awful close to about \$30 million now that the NDP have collected out of Manitoba taxpayers' pockets. And I think what taxpayers find ironic is that the legislation to enable the PST increase to pass, to come into place, hasn't even passed yet. That's the irony of this whole thing.

Now we knew back in April, when the Minister of Finance brought in his budget, they were proposing this 14 per cent increase in the provincial sales tax, and we know that second to all the broadening of the PST last year, in terms of the broadening of the goods and services that the PST was applicable to, so this is really another tax grab on behalf of the NDP party and the Minister of Finance and, clearly, Manitobans are upset with how the NDP have gone about imposing this particular tax.

Clearly, we thought the idea of putting a referendum back on the table was a novel approach. We think a lot of Manitobans would like to have a chance to vote on an increase in a very substantial tax, such as the provincial sales tax. And, obviously, the NDP decided that wasn't the thing to do at this point in time, because clearly they didn't want to hear what Manitobans had to say.

Now we even asked in our last amendment just something minor is, you know, how much would it actually cost to have a referendum on this particular issue, and, in fact, as I mentioned, we could have had other issues discussed and debated. And during that referendum we could have posed a lot of different questions in terms of a referendum, but, anyway, the NDP decided they weren't going to provide us with that kind of information and, as a result, they've turned it down that last amendment.

So, really, what we're doing here is just giving the NDP a little more time, kind of a sober second thought if you will, in terms of where they're headed in terms of the PST increase.

Now we've had a few months and we've had quite a bit of feedback from Manitobans. You know, we had a couple of hundred up here before committee and I would suggest that, you know, I didn't do the numbers on it, but probably 80 per cent of the people that appeared before committee were opposed, maybe even higher, it might have been even 90 per cent or higher were opposed to the tax hike that the NDP are proposing.

And we know we've been reading petitions here in the Legislature for the last several months. Obviously hundreds, if not thousands now, of Manitobans are opposed to the provincial sales tax increase. I know the Taxpayers Federation, too, they dropped off—I forget how many thousands of signatures were on those petitions they dropped off, and I believe they did eventually get to the Premier's office for his perusal. Clearly, a lot of Manitobans are upset at the tax and they've made their opinions quite well known. They've even come down to the Legislature in protest of the tax, and I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) decided not to go out and have a conversation with those taxpayers that were opposed to the provincial sales tax. I don't know why the Minister of Finance didn't want to go down and talk to those—but I do know the Minister of Finance had a pretty good view of that rally from his window. I know his window was right down at the front of the steps of the Legislature, so I'm sure he

could sense a bit of the anxiety of Manitoba taxpayers out there that day at the front steps of the Legislature. But, nevertheless, the minister and his colleagues across the way have chosen to ignore the wishes of good Manitobans.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, it's clearly unfortunate—the—actually we've got ourselves in this particular situation. We know where the provincial budget is. We know the Minister of Finance is still a half a billion dollars short on his budget this year. Even given the broadening of the provincial sales tax last year and even given the extra 14 per cent he's charging on the provincial sales tax this year, he still is going to be a half a billion dollars short in his \$12-billion budget. You know, something clearly has gone wrong along the way.

And we know, if you look back at history, too, when the NDP came into power, we had a \$13-billion debt. Now at the end of this year, we're proposing—they're proposing a \$30-billion debt. That's a substantial amount of debt that we have incurred under the NDP's watch, and it's substantial. And, as I mention, from time to time, we as taxpayers have to pay the interest on that debt, and that's a substantial amount of interest that we have to pay each and every other year that isn't available for other goods and services and infrastructure and the like, so it certainly is unfortunate.

So we're going to give the Minister of Finance and his colleagues a little extra time to consider this particular piece of legislation. We think there's still time for them to do the right thing, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, they can do the right thing.

You know, as we go forward, they're always coming up with new and inventive ways to increase taxes. We're coming up with a new death tax they've proposed. They're very inventive in terms of coming up with new taxes. I wish they'd put as much effort into how they can run government more efficiently to save taxpayers money. If they could find a way to run government efficiently, I think we wouldn't have to spend as much time being so creative raising taxes and fees and surcharges on the backs of Manitobans.

So let's give the—if the members would accept this amendment, it will give them more time to figure out how they can run their government more efficiently instead of coming up with new ideas to tax Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is the amendment to Bill 20.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: Opinion of the Chair, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Goertzen: We request a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

Order, please. The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 20.

Division

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

Yeas

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

* (17:00)

Nays

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pettersen, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wight.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 17, Nays 31.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, August 14, 2013

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