

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, August 28, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

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.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by D. Rouble, L. Vectel, K. Hanton and many other 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?

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 that will harm Manitoba families.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by S. Martin, T. Chesnut and J. Leslie 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 the petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 433, Lee River Road and 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) Lee River Road and Cape Coppermine Road were not originally built to handle the high volume of traffic they now accommodate.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation recognize that Lee River Road and 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 D. Hrynchuk, L. Stastook and L. McCanney and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the legislative of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by B. Barla, D. Fisher, W. Nernberg and many more Manitobans.

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 financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by L. Friesen, M.J. Friesen, K. Beam and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Good afternoon. 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 B. Balfour, R. Craigie, J. Griffin and many other fine Manitobans.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

* (13:40)

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

(2) 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.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): 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 on 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, Mr. Speaker, is signed by R. Matthews, H. Gillishammer, K. Delauriers and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent, and 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 and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba 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 Manitoba's provincial borders.

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

This is signed by E. Miron, B. Hill, E. Penner and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): 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 school 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.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the minister—this petition is signed by M. Barrion, A. Bautista-Miquel, R. Barrion and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near 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, Gretna, Emerson, 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 and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax creates a great 'decentive' for Manitoba 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 border.

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

* (13:50)

And this petition is signed by A. Giesbrecht, D. Friesen, D. Geirnaent and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) 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.

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 period for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

And this petition is signed by S. Marguski, R. Bisson and S. Martin and many, many others.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by D. Jackson, B. Coombs, D. Shuttleward and many other fine Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today from London, England, Christine and Geoff Dixon.

And also, in the public gallery, we have with us today Ray St. Germain, who is the guest of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

PST Increase Request to Reverse

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Last week, we learned that Manitobans are getting a 3 per cent cut in their spending power thanks to the high-inflation and high-tax policies of this provincial government. High spendDP taxes are creating a high-tax problem for Manitobans, but while Manitobans get a big cut, the spendDP get a big raise.

According to their own budget documents, over the next two years and including this fiscal year, the spendDP will get a raise of 23 per cent in their revenues, up—an increase of \$1.7 billion. Now, without the PST hike, it would still be 13 per cent, and that is above the national average of 11 per cent.

So our question, I guess, is: Isn't 13 per cent enough? Why not call off the PST hike, leave the money in the hands of struggling Manitoba families who have worked for it?

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

As the member knows, we have a major commitment to investing in infrastructure for flood protection for communities in Manitoba, a recommendation in a report that came in at over a billion dollars—at least a billion dollars on top of the \$1.25 billion we've already invested in that entire 2011 episode of flooding all throughout southern Manitoba there, Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin. So we've made a commitment to that.

We made a very significant commitment to building schools because we have 125,000 more people in Manitoba now, many young families, and we think that schools are essential to the future well-being of the province. The member also knows that we made a \$200-million commitment to personal-care homes in Manitoba, and we're proceeding on—to implement that commitment, and very significant investments in road infrastructure, a record budget this year of \$622 million, Mr. Speaker, all of which will make a stronger economy, look after our seniors, educate our young people and protect our communities.

Mr. Pallister: Well, at double the increase in revenue of the national average, there's lots of room for investment, I grant the Premier that, but not much room for investments by Manitobans, just by their government, Mr. Speaker, and that's the problem.

Ever since the NDPST hike was announced, the Premier's integrity's been under daily attack, not by us but by his own communications team. Daily ribbon cuttings and daily spending announcements—we're up to 130 of them now—have sent a clear message to Manitobans: The NDP government broke its word to you and now we're going to buy your vote off with your own money.

Now, Manitobans naturally question why they should be forced to pay even higher taxes to a Premier who just recently claimed he wasn't going to raise taxes, especially when he is getting, without the PST, a massive raise of 13 per cent over the next two years.

So will the Premier call off the unnecessary PST hike and stop his inexcusable old-fashioned attempt to buy Manitobans with ribbon cuttings?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I recall vividly the first day of the session when every member of the opposition got up with their favourite infrastructure project and demanded it be funded in Manitoba. Every single day they wanted that. The Leader of the Opposition put out his personal newsletter into his constituency saying, I want to see 550 million cuts everywhere else in Manitoba, but I want you to build new facilities in my community. That's what we saw. That was very unfortunate.

Our plan is to actually build infrastructure for all Manitobans. People in the North deserve schools and roads. People in the south deserve schools and roads. People in the south and the east—southeast deserve schools and roads. People in the southwest deserve protection from floods, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we're doing.

At the same time, we increased the personal tax exemption in the budget. We increased the spousal tax exemption in the budget. We increased the dependants tax exemption in the budget and we increased the personal tax credit for senior citizens in the budget, and the members opposite have voted against more—

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

I want to start by thanking honourable members for the control that they have displayed throughout this week so far, and I'm starting to detect here that we're starting to stray away from that a little bit and so I'm encouraging you to come back into the form that we have displayed earlier this week. So I'm asking for your co-operation in that regard.

Mr. Pallister: I enjoy the Premier's trips to fantasyland, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is even without the PST hike a 13 per cent raise is something no other Manitoban can expect, quite frankly. And with the PST hike included, this is the highest raise in tax revenues in the country, double the national average, and that leaves a lot of money in the hands of the spenDP to mismanage. Certainly, the reality is it leaves too little money in the hands of Manitobans who worked for it and earned it.

And we urge the government to reverse the PST hike. This would help struggling families and seniors who are already struggling under the burden that the government has imposed on them. If last year's unprecedented—well, 25 years, it's been, since the biggest tax hike has occurred prior to last year. Those families are struggling with the tax and fee

increases the government's imposed. This pulling back on the PST could help alleviate the serious disparity that is growing between us and neighbouring jurisdictions that's threatening to hurt our province and is hurting many families today.

*(14:00)

So again I ask this lethargic government if they would consider seriously, for a change, listening to the reality that they are hurting Manitoba families. Would the Premier admit that this extra PST hike is simply funding his ribbon-cutting tour and nothing else?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, earlier this week we announced the bundle of services for auto insurance, home heating and electricity rates in Manitoba are the lowest in Canada. As a matter of fact, those rates, on average, over \$2,000 lower than the Canadian average. This is adding real value to Manitobans' bottom line because the Crown corporations of auto insurance and hydro remain accountable to the people of Manitoba through their government. And that is the commitment we made; we will follow through on it.

Disposable income is going to increase by 3.8 per cent, according to the Conference Board of Canada, more money in the pockets of Manitobans. We've had record retail sales this last month, Mr. Speaker. We've seen record sales of automobiles. We've seen record real estate sales in Manitoba.

People are working in Manitoba, among the lowest unemployment rates in the country, among the highest participation rates in the economy, and we're educating young people through mentorship and apprenticeship programs. And we're working with the public sector, the private sector and the non-profit sector to build essential infrastructure, to protect communities from floods, to ensure children get education and seniors get care. It's a balanced—

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

Manitoba Economy Government Record

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, today Statistics Canada published a year-over-year growth in average weekly earnings by province from June 2012 to June 2013. Unfortunately, under the NDP's mismanagement of the economy, Manitoba is ranked dead last.

These latest findings along with the highest inflation rate in the country, the biggest tax increase in 25 years and illegally increasing the PST means Manitoba families are faced with tough decisions and are left with less and less of their hard-earning money in their pockets.

Mr. Speaker, why does this Minister of Finance believe that Manitobans should be working for free?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans work very hard for their money, and they have more disposable income now than they've had in a long time. They've got more disposable income when you look at the comparisons to the national average. And we understand Manitoba families worked hard for the money that they earned.

It was very interesting today, Mr. Speaker, to see—you know, earlier in the summer, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) said they'd cut indiscriminately, across the board, \$550 million. Well, they added a little flesh to the bone this morning. He would claim as non-essential the schools—Sage Creek, Amber Trails and Waverley West—that we have announced support for. I guess he figures that the kids don't need those schools.

That's not the kind of approach this side of the House takes. Those families need those schools—

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

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, a recent online Winnipeg Free Press poll asked Manitobans if they were feeling the pinch from our province's nation-leading inflation rate. An astonishing 82 per cent of over 4,500 respondents indicated, yes, things are getting very tight.

With record tax grabs, an illegal PST hike, the worst inflation in the country, ever-faltering small-business confidence and a lazy political party unwilling to fundraise and who have imposed a vote tax on Manitobans, this all points to one thing: The spenDP doesn't care about Manitobans' well-being; they just want their cut from the paycheques of hard-working families.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government wake up, face the facts and take their hands out of Manitobans' pockets?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House is committed to providing employment. This House—this side of the House is committed to

working with the private sector to create even more employment. We have the third lowest unemployment rate of the—of all the provinces in all of the country.

What do you suppose would happen if the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) had his way and implemented the cuts that he's talking about? You know what else he thinks is non-essential, according to his press release this morning, Mr. Speaker? He says that expanding doctor training and recruitment in rural and northern areas is non-essential.

How can they get up in the House every day and complain about the shortage of doctors and then come up and say they're going to cut the very doctors and recruitment and training programs that put doctors in rural—

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

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the minister isn't clairvoyant and his crystal ball is broken.

Manitobans saw their paycheques rise by only \$3.69, while our western neighbours in Saskatchewan saw an increase of \$38.17 more. Once Manitobans are hit with all the tax grabs, fees and illegal hikes by this government, there's nothing left to support their families.

When will this government stand up and acknowledge that Manitobans are forced to work for less, leaving families to make hard decisions on 'priorizing' everyday essentials? Does the spenDP think they're more important than Manitobans and they should be left to a smorgasbord at the public trough while the rest of Manitobans struggle to make ends meet?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say this for certainty, that Manitobans don't need a crystal ball to see what the members opposite have actually said they were going to do. No crystal ball is necessary, because the Leader of the Opposition has said very clearly that they will cut indiscriminately, across the board, \$550 million worth of services that Manitoba families depend on. And the—no crystal ball necessary to see what the Leader of the Opposition said today.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what else he says is non-essential? He says the Cancer QuickCare Clinic is non-essential. He said that 241 community

projects under Community Places are non-essential. He said that mentorship programs that help kids keep out of trouble are non-essential. The members opposite's priorities are totally out of—

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

Deputy Premier Cabinet Removal Request

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Today marks the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech, I have a dream, which focused on the eradication of racial inequality, and it's hard to believe that 50 years later that this NDP government is plagued with a scandal of racist remarks made by the Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson).

The minister believes that he is entitled to make such remarks. We don't believe he is entitled to make those remarks.

I will ask the Premier of the province again: Will he remove the Deputy Premier from Cabinet?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): It's always worth to revisit the dream that Martin Luther King had for the people of the United States and, indeed, the people of the world. It was a dream based on social justice, and that's exactly why we have the first hydro project in North America built in partnership with First Nations people.

That's exactly why we have a prenatal benefit that's for—available for all young families and children in Manitoba, whether they live on First Nations communities, whether they live in northern communities, rural communities, urban communities. We have the only province in Canada that has a prenatal benefit to help young families get off to a healthy start.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Neighbourhoods Alive! program that works with people at the local level to rebuild their housing, to make sure their neighbourhoods are safe, to ensure there are recreational opportunities for young children after school at a time of risk when their parents might still be working.

Those are things that are the vision of Martin Luther King. They're the vision of this part of the Legislature, this side of the government. These are things we're doing to build a more socially just society.

And just recently, we've discovered that one third of the First Nations people living—

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

Mrs. Stefanson: I don't believe that the behaviour of the Deputy Premier is exemplary of the kind of dream that Martin Luther King had some 50 years ago.

Just because a person has something stolen from them does not give them—or entitle them to go out and steal from someone else. Two wrongs do not make a right. The Premier has the opportunity to do the right thing today by removing the minister from Cabinet.

The question is: Will the Premier take the leadership and do the right thing today?

Mr. Selinger: The Deputy Premier, the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), very much shares the dream of Martin Luther King.

That's exactly why, even before he was in elected office, in the 1980s, he championed the case of Helen Betty Osborne, a woman who had been murdered and there had been no action taken by the police authorities to deal with it. He brought that case to attention, closely worked with the families and has expanded that division to protect all missing and murdered Aboriginal across the country.

That is something that no other member of this Legislature has ever done, no other member of a Legislature in Canada has done. That is leadership provided by our member on this side of the House. We're very proud of the work he's done.

* (14:10)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable member for Tuxedo has the floor.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, when the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) made homophobic comments, the Premier acted quickly to remove him and strip him of his caucus responsibilities. But when one of his Cabinet colleagues makes a racist remark, he stands up and praises him, as all members opposite do. This is just wrong.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier do the right thing and remove his minister from Cabinet, or is he saying to Manitobans that it's—that making a racist comment is not as bad as making a homophobic one?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the honourable member across the way. What she's skipping over is the fact that the member has expressed regret for his comments. He has withdrawn those comments and he has apologized for those comments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when members opposite make inappropriate comments, their response is to deny them. They pretend they didn't happen even though members all over the Chamber have heard them, even though staff have heard them. When they do that, they just go into a structure of denial.

The members on this side of the House, if they make an error—and we all make errors, except, perhaps, members of the opposition. We as human beings do make errors from time to time, and when we make an error we take responsibility for that and we apologize for it, and then we get back to the world, back to the business of creating a more socially just world, a more socially just society, a society where murdered and missing women are brought—the perpetrators of those crimes are brought to justice, where the families are given support for healing.

That's what we do on this side of the House: work every day for a better life for all Manitobans.

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

Deputy Premier FIPPA Redaction

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act office said its decision to redact the Deputy Premier's inflammatory comments, which was made public last Thursday, was covered under section 23(1)(a) of the act.

Can the minister in charge of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism, please explain that section to the House?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We've canvassed this. Section 23(1) has been put into—read into the record by the member asking the question, and he understands that.

And the reality is that that section is part of the FIPPA legislation which has been in place for many years within this House, and it's a section that says advice, opinions, proposals, recommendations, analyses or policy options developed by or for the

public body or a minister can be—can be—information that is disclosed or not disclosed, Mr. Speaker, depending on whether it's that type of advice or opinion.

The officials in the department normally deal with these matters as a matter of routine. They're signed off by the deputy minister and they're provided to the public. That's the standard procedure in all departments within the government.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, it seems that the seat belt light's on today.

Yesterday, on more than one occasion, we had asked: Was the decision to redact the ministry's—the minister's inflammatory comment covered under section 23(1)(a) of the act to protect against material that would reveal advice, opinions, proposals, recommendations, analyses or policy options developed by or for the public body or a minister?

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

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we just went over this clause, 23(1)(a), and we made it clear that there's a standard procedure that's followed in government where there's an official that handles freedom of information requests. They prepare the material, they review the material and then the disclosure is signed off by the deputy minister in the department. That was the procedure followed here. That's the procedure followed in every department.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, on the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's speech, it is disappointing to hear the blatant cover-up which this government tried to do on the racist comments by this Deputy Premier.

The Premier told this House yesterday that when asked whether the statement which was redacted was the opinion or the advice of either the government, the minister or himself, he said no.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, why are they hiding behind the act? Why don't they just admit they were trying to cover it up, and how many other situations are they covering up?

Mr. Selinger: I've answered the question. The request for information was handled in the standard method by officials in the department, signed off by the deputy minister.

And what the member's skipping over—what the member's skipping over—is that regrets were expressed and an apology was made by the member, which puts the bar higher than what we've seen on any other member on the other side of the House. They just deny. Anything that they say that's untoward, they deny, and they pretend that they could never do anything wrong, Mr. Speaker. They think that it's impossible for themselves to make a mistake. And when it's impossible to make a mistake, it's impossible to have regrets. It's impossible to apologize for something. There's no such thing as redemption. When you're perfect, you can't do anything wrong.

We accept that mistakes can be made. When mistakes are made, people take responsibility for them and they apologize for them. Then they get back to the business of building a better Manitoban for all Manitobans, an inclusive society, a socially just society. That's what we're about.

Deputy Premier FIPPA Redaction

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): What the Premier failed to say is that there wasn't actually responsibility taken initially. They tried to cover it up by redacting it from the freedom of information request, Mr. Speaker.

Now, yesterday, and the Premier repeated it today, he says that this is standard procedure to cover up racist comments.

When did it become standard procedure to cover up racist comments under FIPPA requests?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, that's—what the member has just put on the record is exactly the reason we have some challenges in the House. When a member opposite tries to misinterpret the words of another person, tries to stretch the truth—and I mean stretch the truth—it's not even worthy of rebuttal.

He knows what we said; it had nothing to do with what he said. He can be a creative journalist if he wishes; I wish he'd be an honourable member of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I want to remind all honourable members—in fact, the honourable First Minister, in specific—all members in this Assembly are honourable, and I have always, hopefully, treated each and every one of you in that fashion.

And the comments that I just heard, I think, were inappropriate, and I'm going to ask the honourable First Minister to withdraw those comments in reference to another member.

Mr. Selinger: I withdraw any inappropriate comment I made, and I apologize to the House for that.

Mr. Speaker: Thank the honourable First Minister.

The honourable member for Steinbach, with a supplementary.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, you know, whether one is a creative journalist or a standard journalist, it's hard to do your journalistic job when information is redacted from a freedom of information request when it shouldn't have been redacted, Mr. Speaker. There are rules that are supposed to be followed under the freedom of information request.

We have a minister who is supposed to guard those rules. She's the gatekeeper for those rules, and I want to ask her: Why were these racist comments—why were they redacted? Why were they covered up when there was no reason under the FIPPA act to cover them up, other than to protect the deputy minister? Madam Minister, why were they covered up?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Again, I sense we're straying away from what I would consider to be appropriate decorum in the House, and I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable member for Steinbach, when he's addressing his comments, through the Speaker, please. That way I can maintain some decorum in here and make sure that we are respectful of each other. So I'm asking for your co-operation in that regard.

Now, the honourable First Minister, I believe, was about to respond.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when a freedom of information request is addressed by the civil servants and they make it available to the public, one of the things they do at the bottom of that request is they make it very clear that any member receiving—anybody that receives that information has the right to appeal it, if they're not satisfied with it, to the Ombudsman in Manitoba, which is a position that reports and is accountable to the House, not to the government. It's an independent officer of the Legislature. And that is stated right at the bottom of every FOI response that's put out there, so people

know their rights if they're not entirely satisfied with the response they've got.

That is an additional assurance to the public that if they're not satisfied with the information they've got that they have the right of appeal to an independent officer of the Legislature.

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

* (14:20)

Deputy Premier's Email FIPPA Redaction

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Well, you wouldn't even know what to appeal because it was blacked out and it was never intended to be seen, Mr. Speaker. The issue is very clear that it should never have been redacted, and it was only redacted because they're trying to cover up for the deputy minister.

And I want to ask the government, I want to ask the Premier: When did he first learn of this freedom of information request and the fact the portion was redacted, and when did the Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson) learn that this request had come in and that a portion of it was being redacted? When did each of them know?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we've explained this. I've explained this. These matters are dealt with in a routine fashion by the public officials in the department. They receive the request. They deal with the request. The request—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I'm getting very close to the point where I have to call House leaders into a meeting. I'm sensing we're getting out of control here again and I want to make sure I maintain control of this House; that's my responsibility. So I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. Allow for the questions to be posed and for the answers to be in response. So I'm asking for the co-operation once again.

I'm sorry, I regret to interrupt the First Minister. First Minister, to continue his response.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've explained to the House the standard procedures that would follow in this case. Public official receives the request, handles it in a way they consider appropriate under the legislation that guides

their behaviour. That is signed off by the deputy minister and the information is made available with the very clear information at the bottom of the form that responds to the request that there is the right of appeal to the Ombudsman of the Legislature. I've put that on the record. I put it on again for greater certainty.

Brian Sinclair Inquest Triage Document

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, the inquest continues into the death of Brian Sinclair, who died in 2008 after a 34-hour wait in a hospital emergency room where he was left unattended, and as the inquest continues, the questions continue too.

This week it was disclosed that there was an initial triage document that was filled out by an aide when Sinclair first arrived at hospital and it is missing, and the aide's notes were then not available for the police in their investigation.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister: Why were these notes not preserved?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question.

I can inform the member that at the time of Mr. Sinclair's tragic death, the WRHA informed us that a sheet of paper was regularly used to track patients waiting to be triaged. It was essentially a to-do list, Mr. Speaker, that was routinely discarded at the end of each sheet of paper or at end of a shift. There is no question we would benefit from having that sheet of paper now. Indeed, when it was discovered that Mr. Sinclair had died, the security searched for the note in the trash, did not find it.

The inquest is yet to hear from the triage aide and the triage nurses on this subject. We know that we're going to learn more from those witnesses and, indeed, from all of the evidence that shall be put forth before the inquest.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the minister calls that paper a to-do list, and the tragedy here is that it didn't get done.

With the first phase of the inquest wrapping up this week, there's a lot of questions remaining in regard to this initial triage document. This piece of paper likely contained the name of Mr. Sinclair and the medical complaint, and it just disappeared. And new video just released this week shows that aide dropping that piece of paper on the triage desk after

speaking to Sinclair, but, of course, police in their investigation, as the minister says, were unable to recover it.

Can the minister explain in this case why care wasn't taken to preserve this key piece of evidence?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to be very, very clear, as has been the WRHA. Mr. Sinclair came to the emergency room that day seeking care and the hospital failed to provide that care. That is not in dispute and not in question. And, certainly, many efforts have been taken since the day that Mr. Sinclair died, in fact, in the immediate days following and the months and years that have followed.

I can say to the member opposite that that use of paper to track those waiting to be triaged no longer exists. Patients are now entered electronically. There is a green wristband system that is used, and also access is limited to ensure that nobody goes into the waiting room that—

Mr. Speaker: Honourable first minister's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, it's clear that in other procedures at the time the nurse would use that piece of paper to call those patients back to the triage desk for a more thorough review, including measuring their blood pressure and getting a more—a better picture of their health concerns. We know that that action could have saved the life of Mr. Sinclair. We know that that key piece of paper could have alerted front-line workers to the presence of Mr. Sinclair—Mr. Sinclair in ER, and instead it was shredded.

And, indeed, it seems to be a troubling pattern for this government that these key documents get shredded and we have a key piece of evidence that has gone missing, unrecoverable, unable to be used by investigators to determine what happened.

Will the minister say today whether or not there's a cover-up here?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I will again repeat for the member that we have yet to hear at the inquest from the triage aide, from the triage nurses, from a number of witnesses, dozens, in fact, that are going to provide testimony and provide the best possible information so that the judge can make the best possible decisions on his recommendations.

I want to be very clear, Mr. Speaker. There has been no testimony concerning shredding or other

such matters. The member ought not put that on the record.

Certainly, when the member—when Mr. Sinclair was discovered to have passed, security did search for that note in the trash and elsewhere. It was not to be found, Mr. Speaker. They didn't look after that.

And, most importantly, people should know that system no longer exists; it's electronic, and there are other measures in place to ensure that that doesn't happen again.

STARS Helicopter Service Quality of Care Update

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in February 2012, the government handed a hundred-million-dollar contract to the STARS helicopter service without a tender. The government made a big mistake in not tendering this contract to ensure the highest possible quality of service as well as the best price and also, of course, to give a fair economic opportunity for Manitoba businesses and not just Alberta businesses.

Now issues are coming forward about the quality of the service being provided by STARS.

I ask the Premier: Will he tell the Legislature what sorts of review or reviews are being done of the quality of care given by STARS personnel during the transport of people for emergency reasons?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): As the member knows, the STARS non-profit organization was brought to Manitoba in 2011 when the flood was unfolding very rapidly and we wanted to make sure we had the best possible services for anybody that might be stranded and needed evacuation by air, and the STARS service was extremely helpful during that period, saved lives, provided services to people. And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that service was—deemed necessary to be continued.

And any incident that occurs, we have a critical incident process that we've put in place on this side of the government. Any critical incident occurs has a standard internal review and learnings come out of that to ensure that things aren't done in the future.

The contract has compliance requirements and it is closely monitored to ensure proper services are provided in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, May the 2nd of this year, a 2-year-old, Morgan Moar-Campbell, had

severe brain damage after a emergency flight with STARS from Brandon to Winnipeg.

Today, CBC's I-Team has released information that there was a second critical incident during STARS transport and that there have been several complaints from hospitals about STARS missions. Hospitals would not complain unless there were serious concerns.

I ask the Premier: Is the Province investigating whether STARS used properly trained personnel on its missions, and can the Premier tell us what the recourse is when STARS fails in the service that they're contracted to by the Province?

Mr. Selinger: As I said in my previous question, we have a critical incident process that's put in place for any form of medical care which fails to serve a patient appropriately, Mr. Speaker. We also have quality assurance reviews that are done. They're done as a matter of routine for all services we provide in the health-care system, and this applies to the STARS helicopter service in Manitoba as well.

So I can assure the member that none of these incidents are ever taken lightly. When an incident occurs, a critical incident review is done and, as a matter of routine, a quality assurance procedure is put in place that reviews the types of services they're providing and the level of quality they're achieving pertinent to the services they were contracted for.

*(14:30)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that Manitoba has noticed is that STARS produces a lot of PR and hype to publicize the efforts which they are doing, and these raise some significant ethical concerns. There are questions, for example, about the way that STARS makes things public, including Twitter, on the details of its operations. And some of these ways, there are concerns whether there's a contravention of the public health information act, or PHIA. You know, if our hospitals or clinics were to do the same, and to have—enlist people to give testimonials in the way STARS has, these questions would be raised legitimately.

I ask the Premier: Is he investigating whether STARS has breached PHIA provisions, as well as the concerns about quality of care?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the member's raised the question.

Critical incident reviews are done on any specific incident where the level of care was

inappropriate to the needs of the patient. Secondly, quality assurance reviews are done as a matter of routine.

And the member knows that when it comes to hospitals, they have foundations. They do fundraising. They promote the services that they provide. They let the public know of the excellent services that are provided in all of our major tertiary facilities in Manitoba, and that is a part of what happens with health care in this province.

Even though we, by far and away, are the dominant funder, with the greatest proportion—well over 90 per cent of the funding comes from the public purse, but they do do additional things in well—as well.

The STARS organization is a non-profit organization, and the founder of that organization is still involved with it today. It started in Alberta. It's extended into Saskatchewan and Manitoba. It's a service that provides helicopter emergency evacuations throughout the prairies. They do do some fundraising as part of what they do. But they're completely accountable for quality of service and completely accountable for any incidents being reviewed by an independent process, and that will continue. And if they want to continue—

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

Canadian Senate Reform Provincial Consultations

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): The position of the government of Manitoba with respect to the future of the Canadian Senate is crystal clear: We believe that this outdated, undemocratic, elitist organized institution needs to be abolished now. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, though we brought a resolution to the floor of this Chamber twice, neither the official opposition nor the leader of the third party have seen fit to vote in support of that resolution.

Could the Minister of Justice please update the House on the government's recent submission to the Supreme Court of Canada on the future of the Canadian Senate?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for his great work on this very, very important issue.

Manitoba, in conjunction with other provinces and territories, is intervening in the federal government's reference question on the matter to the Supreme Court of Canada, and Manitoba's submission was filed yesterday. Mr. Speaker, the Senate is fundamentally and deeply flawed and it is time to abolish it. We call upon the federal government to engage the provinces in consultation with a view of finding consensus to get rid of the Canadian Senate.

Manitobans and Canadians understand and support our position, and they certainly support the position put forward by the member for Fort Garry-Riverview. I only hope that members opposite will come around and they will stand with us and stop standing up for an outmoded, outdated, antidemocratic Canadian Senate. The time has come for—

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

Stu McKay Government Meeting Request

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Stu McKay, who is with us today in the gallery, is a victim of the 2010 Individual Flood Proofing Initiative and needs a helping hand. Mr. McKay is asking the First Minister, the Premier, to meet with him right after question period today.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the First Minister: Will he commit to meeting with Mr. McKay and resolve this dispute between the government and his initiative?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): First of all, if the member's gone through all the procedures and has done the appeal that is entitled—that he's entitled to in this procedure and he still has some remaining issues that he wishes to address, we will find a way to meet with him and ensure that he's been treated properly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, I'll take the First Minister at his word, and Mr. McKay will meet with him right after question period. Thank you.

STARS Helicopter Service Incident Disclosure

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, there are reports emerging that there's been another incident with STARS and that it was not disclosed to the public and that there's a critical investigation taking place, but this is all news to Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, we would like to know today: Based on this new emerged-information that's emerging, does this Minister of Health have concerns in regard to the safe operation of the air ambulance service operating in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the STARS helicopter ambulance first came to Manitoba during the '09 flood and provided excellent life-saving service, and when we were experiencing another very significant flood event in 2011 they returned and once again provided excellent service. And it was at that time, after those experiences, that we engaged in discussions with them about longer term service.

A part of that contract is that they are a seamless part of the health-care system, which includes being subject to critical incident reviews. We know that by having unanimous support of this Legislature in believing in critical incident reviews that learnings can happen with a view to not having any incidents happen again to affect any Manitobans.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, it's clear there's a very important issue here of public accountability. It is concerning that this incident was not disclosed, that it was kept internal. It seems to be a pattern with this government that that takes place. This latest incident raises very important questions about the system and the commitment of this government to ensure system transparency and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, today, will the minister indicate: Is she aware of other incidents similar to this one that have perhaps been investigated and not disclosed to the public? Does she have confidence and is she aware of problems within STARS that she wants to disclose today to this province?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, as a result of the pediatric cardiac deaths in the 1990s when medical errors were swept under the rug and ignored, Justice Sinclair came forward and made recommendations. Chiefly among them was that we develop a critical incident process where individuals can come forward if there is a medical error, that error can be examined and explored fairly without fear or favour and that learnings can happen.

Our entire health-care system works under the premise that we have to have a culture of safety. I have confidence that STARS is providing excellent service. I have confidence that they are indeed subject to critical incident reviews and that any

reviews that are reported will be investigated thoroughly. That is how you have a culture of-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired. Time for oral questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I want to-before I go to members' statements, I want to draw to the attention of honourable members to our public gallery where we have with us this afternoon Mr. Ray St. Germain, who I'd introduced earlier, but unfortunately he's here now with us-not unfortunately, but was unable to be here earlier, but we welcome you here this afternoon, sir.

And I believe we also have in the public gallery Mark Sefton, chair of the Brandon School Division, who is a guest of the honourable Minister of Education (Ms. Allan).

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, time for-

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ray St. Germain

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize someone who has built a legacy that continues not only to enrich the musical culture of Manitoba, but the culture of one of this province's founding peoples, the Metis.

Mr. Ray St. Germain is in the gallery with us today, and I am proud to say that he hails from Kirkfield Park. A long-time artist, broadcaster and promoter of Metis and Aboriginal culture, Ray is an icon on the Canadian music scene.

Born in St. Vital, Ray got his start performing Elvis tunes at amateur shows. As he began writing his own songs, he became a regular guest on local radio shows and toured Canada playing his music with Hal Lone Pine, Betty Cody and their son, Lenny Breau. He then went on to host and perform with the CBC, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Since then he has performed with such artists as Johnny Cash, Porter Wagoner and Johnny Horton. His music has taken him across Canada as well as across the world from Nashville to Israel. Known as Winnipeg's Elvis, he has been a producer, performer, manager and host on CBC, Global, APTN, CKY and NCI FM. He was a co-producer, writer, host and

singer on APTN TV's Rhythms of the Metis, and he is also heard as the voice of the bear on the award-winning children's series Tipi Tales.

Throughout his distinguished career he has shown incredible dedication to his music. In his own words: If you're going to get into this business, don't do it halfway.

* (14:40)

This dedication and musical skill has been recognized by many. Ray has been inducted into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Honour and received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal last September. This summer he was also invested into the Order of Manitoba, and at the Manito Ahbee Festival 2013 Aboriginal Peoples Choice awards he was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson).

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me in recognizing Ray St. Germain, a community leader, a superb musician and a representative of Manitoba's cultural heritage far beyond our province's borders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Emmeline Farms

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, on August the 17th, 2013, I was invited to attend the 125th anniversary celebration of Emmeline Farms, near Austin, Manitoba.

Emmeline Farms was originally homesteaded in 1888 by Peveril and Eliza Poyser. The homestead quarter was situated on the Fort Ellice Trail and had many ox cart trains crossing the homestead in its early days. In the early part of the 1900s, the farm was passed to Trevor Poyser, who married a local schoolteacher, Miranda Gutyke, and together raised their three children, Lindsey, Elsie and Ted, on Emmeline Farms.

In 1950, the farm was passed on to Elsie and her husband, Frank Sims, who expanded the farm and continued the farming—family farming tradition. In 1980s, their son Curtis and his wife, Gloria, took over the farm, expanding their holdings and raising their three children on the farm. It was at this time that the farm was officially named Emmeline Farms to commemorate the former Emmeline School District.

Today, Emmeline Farms is a commercial and seed grain operation, operated by Curtis and Gloria Sims. The fifth generation of the family, son Nathan,

began farming with his parents in 2010, and so the family farming tradition continues.

The events at the 125th anniversary included the old-time threshing event with threshing machine, steam engine and horse-drawn wagons hauling sheaves. At the same time, a large modern combine was operating nearby and provided a contrast of harvesting then and now. Many friends, relatives and observers, young and old, enjoyed the step back in time provided by this threshing demonstration.

Emmeline Farms demonstrates that the family farms of Manitoba continue to change and move forward in the best traditions of the agricultural community of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to join with me in congratulating Curtis and Gloria Sims and their three children, Elliot, Nathan and Courtney, as Emmeline Farms celebrates 125 years and five generations of family ownership. Thank you.

Nagar Kirtan

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, this Sunday, September 1st, as many as 10,000 Sikh people will join together in procession through the streets of downtown Winnipeg to celebrate Nagar Kirtan.

Nagar Kirtan celebrates the creation of the Sikh Holy Scripture, which was compiled by the fifth Guru Arjan Dev Ji and installed as the religious book in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. This book contains the writings of saints whose philosophies were compatible with Gurus' point of view along with the Gurus' writings, irrespective of the saints' religions, castes, economic or social backgrounds. This showed far-sightedness of Gurus and also the tolerance and equality of the Sikh religion.

In Punjabi, Nagar means town and Kirtan means singing of religious hymns, and so Nagar Kirtan participants traverse town singing sacred hymns accompanied by a float carrying the Sikh scriptures. Many wear saffron and cover their heads as a sign of respect to the presence of the sacred Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

This weekend's Nagar Kirtan procession will begin and end at the Memorial Park. After the parade, Mr. Speaker, the community will gather at—in the park for a feast and to hear speeches. I am pleased that my colleagues the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) will join me to celebrate this great holiday.

Manitobans are proud that, in this diverse province, many of us side by side with families from different cultures and traditions, it is important to celebrate these differences and remember that while we hold different beliefs, we also have many values in common, including the values of equality, non-discrimination and justice.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in Nagar Kirtan. This is an opportunity for us all to learn more about the culture and religion of our neighbours. Thank you.

Maurice Parobec

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Maurice Parobec is an inspirational Manitoban. He spent 20 year–26 years teaching and coaching in Manitoba, where he influenced the lives of countless young people. However, after a diagnosis of cardiomyopathy in 1995, his quality of life took a turn for the worse. His doctor told him he could no longer play hockey or participate in strenuous activity.

In 2005 he was no longer able to teach and was told by that his doctor that nothing could be done. In 2008, Maurice received a heart transplant and his life improved. Fast-forward to 2013 and Maurice has just returned from the World Transplant Games in Durban, South Africa.

In June 2008, Maurice received a heart transplant and a second chance at life. He has split time—split his time between Vancouver and Palm Creek, Arizona, where he is enjoying the ability to have an active lifestyle he enjoyed before cardiomyopathy.

In 2012, Maurice participated in the Canadian Transplant Games in Calgary, playing volleyball, floor hockey, tennis, badminton, table tennis, shot put, ball throw and four by 100 relay. There he received six gold and four silver medals and also met 150 transplant recipients from all walks of life who are now healthy and thriving as Maurice is.

Maurice travelled to Durban, South Africa, at the end of July to participate in the World Transplant Games with a contingent of 34 Canadian athletes. Unfortunately, during competition, Maurice dislocated his shoulder in a volleyball game and was unable to participate in the remainder of the games.

But being a stubborn and very competitive individual—a trait all of us from Angusville,

Manitoba, inherit—he was able to provide support to his fellow teammates and is looking forward to compete up—to the upcoming Canadian competitions in 2014 and the world competitions in 2015.

I would like to invite the members of this Legislature to join me in congratulating this outstanding individual on his accomplishments. We are all so proud of you, Maurice, and what you have done with your life. Thank you.

Political Division

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call for an end to the politics of division which has so dominated our province for far too long. This week Manitobans are witnessing an example of the politics of division being practised by the NDP and the Conservatives.

An NDP's Cabinet minister's email comments about the ignorance of do-good white people were revealed last week, creating further division and poor understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Manitoba.

The Conservative Party's used the politics of division not only in this case, but also with respect to LGBTTTQ issues. It's time to rise above the divisions. It's a time for better understanding of the divide we've today in Manitoba and to bring education and healing, not further division.

Mr. Speaker, The Deputy Premier's (Mr. Robinson) statement has served only to fuel the flames of misunderstanding and racial partition. The Premier's (Mr. Selinger) decision to sharply discipline one member of his caucus, the MLA for St. Norbert, while not providing any discipline or accountability with respect to the Deputy Premier has only demonstrated differential treatment within his own ranks.

There needs to be not only a common understanding but a common accountability for those who promote misunderstanding and poor leadership and who seek to divide rather than to bring people together.

We have an insensitive minister and an indulgent Premier, who demonstrates a double standard at best. Combined with an opportunistic opposition party, the House has wasted a substantial amount of time maintaining divides and setting a record for lengthy legislative sitting with not as much accomplished as there should have been.

Manitobans know that the Conservatives of NDP have—and NDP have done their best to put a line southeast to northwest in Manitoba to divide the people of this province rather than to bring them together. We can do much more working together in the interests of all, bringing better understanding, building bridges and having greater effectiveness.

We must rise above the politics of division and bring a common understanding, a common accountability and an ability to work together to achieve great goals, improving the well-being of all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements, and we'll move on to grievances. No grievances?

* (14:50)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you resume third reading debate on Bill 20?

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READING

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resume debate on concurrence and third readings of Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended), and the amendment thereto, and standing in the name of the honourable member for La Verendrye, who has 27 minutes remaining.

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

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, I'm more than happy to put more words on record in regards to the hoist motion brought forward by my colleague from Steinbach.

Yesterday, when he introduced it, I started speaking. I had—I spoke for three minutes, and it seemed, after these three minutes, there were members across the way who looked like they might be willing to support this motion. So, today, hopefully, in the remaining time I have, 27 minutes, I may be able to convince all the members from across the way to support this hoist motion brought forward by the member from Steinbach.

Mr. Speaker, if they support this motion, that would put Bill 20 on the shelf for six months.

Six months would put this bill into February, and, you know, February is probably when we should've started the spring session this year to start with. And maybe we can start it this year a little earlier so that we can get all the business of the legislative done before—so we wouldn't have to be sitting here in August.

This would give the government more time to consult with voters, which is one thing that they did not do. They brought in bills. They brought in tax increases. They brought in a number of things that the taxpayers aren't looking at. It would give them more time to create proper plans for flood mitigation.

When we had a flood scare this spring, several plans were—you know, idea is they wanted money in a hurry, but there were no plans to back up what they were saying, and that is disappointing, Mr. Speaker, because you can't do projects without plans.

More time to do a comprehensive study on government spending—Mr. Speaker, this government does not have a revenue problem; it has a spending problem. And that is something this government needs to look at and try to fix this up, because the taxpayers of Manitoba are tired of paying for this government's spending problems.

Mr. Speaker, I started yesterday talking about a hundredth birthday party that I attended on Sunday, and there were a lot of seniors there that I had a chance to talk with. And these seniors were fairly elderly, because, I mean, the lady's birth—she was celebrating her hundredth birthday, but they're not happy about what this NDP government is doing.

Most of them retired a number of years ago, and they're living on a fixed income. Back 10 years ago, it was probably enough money for them to exist, but, as this government continues to raise the cost of living, they're having a harder and harder time existing.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba leads the country in inflation. From a news article: We're No. 1; inflation rate rising fastest in Manitoba. Due in no small part to the PST increase, Manitoba's inflation rate grows faster than any other province in July. New figures from Statistics Canada reveal consumer prices in Manitoba rose 3 per cent from the previous July, following a 2.7 per cent gain in June. The increase is seven tenths of a percentage point higher than Prince Edward Island, the next closest province, and more than double the Canadian average.

A lot of these things were due to the PST, things like vehicle registration increases, a lot of fee increases that this government has introduced. And, Mr. Speaker, seniors read the newspaper and they know what's happening out there. They're convinced that this government is not doing what it should be.

One of the ladies I talked to at this birthday party said she's concerned about what is happening here in Manitoba. In the last two budgets, there have been more than a half a billion dollars in tax and fee increases. Mr. Speaker, these seniors want to know, where is the money going? They can't keep up to all these increases. In Budget 2012 the NDP added several items to the list of taxable items. A lot of these items affect seniors: home insurance, haircuts and salon visits. Now, in 2013, they are raising the PST by 14 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, seniors that are already having a difficult time existing on their budget today don't need all these extra increases. The seniors—we owe the seniors something because they're our—who brought us to where we are today. And a lot of these things—like, I know an aunt of mine usually goes for a haircut and a colour and, you know, once a month. And a lot of these things, they may not necessarily need it, but they enjoy it because it gives them some life. It gives them, you know, makes them feel good for themselves, and when they can't afford to do that, I think that's something that the seniors deserve. They deserve better than what we're giving them.

Hydro. In the last year, hydro's gone up by 8 per cent. Eight per cent is a significant amount for somebody who is on a fixed budget. You take the 8 per cent of the PST, the—you know—the hydro, 8 per cent, that's a lot of money. And according to this NDP government, they say we have the lowest hydro rates in the country. We may have today, but the way they're increasing, and they've said they're going to increase the rate every year, how long is it going to be before we're the highest in the province? We're the highest in everything else, so they'll probably put us to be the highest on hydro as well.

These seniors come from a time when integrity, trust, accountability and someone's word meant something. They are not getting this from this government. But, I guess, the one good thing about this meeting I had with these seniors is that most of them live in NDP strongholds, the Burrows area, the—in that area. They voted NDP in the last election, but they told me there's no way that they will be voting NDP in the following election.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are seeing that the NDP government does not care about the people of Manitoba. They only care about themselves. During the 2011 election the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stated, and I quote: Our plan is a five-year plan to ensure we have pro-future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll deliver on that. We're ahead of schedule right now. Those are the types of statements that these seniors are upset about. They're used to taking somebody's word as their word, as gospel. But when these types of statements are brought out to be nothing but untruths, the seniors get upset about this.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier stated that, you know, that these are things that shouldn't happen. Like, he did not believe that there should be a tax increase. I mean, how can the Premier make such a huge mistake, to be that far away from the truth? Perhaps the Premier and the Finance Minister should really get some financial advice and get rid of some of their spinners.

Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2012, and now in Budget 2013, if Bill 20 should pass this spendP government wants to take close to half a billion dollars out of the pockets of Manitoba taxpayers. One can only conclude from this that the election campaign of 2011 was designed to be untruthful. It was designed not to let the people of Manitoba know what was really happening in this province. I mean, you have experts who are doing all this millions of dollars—it's like big business. And, if they are that far out that they have to increase the taxes by such a large amount, where are they? What other major mistakes are they making in the budget system? I mean, to be that far out does not make any sense in the business world.

*(15:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all the members opposite—because they all went around campaigning with a no tax increase, and I'm sure some of them won their constituents with those promises. I mean, if they knew about those tax increases and what they'd be doing to Manitobans, I think they should all be supporting this motion by the member from Steinbach so that they can have a chance to rethink, talk to their constituents and see how they can straighten things out. I don't believe that all the members are that untruthful everything they do, but, if they are, well, then they should for sure be voting for this motion to give themselves another chance.

Mr. Speaker, a few months ago there was a rally in front of the Legislature. A number of constituents

from both—from all of the province were there and they were rallying because they felt what the government was doing to them was not fair. I walked through the crowd and talked to a number of them. They were all unhappy with what the government was doing, and many of them were members of constituencies that were held by the NDP. They could not believe that this spenDP government was acting like a dictatorship, not a democratic government. They wanted to know why there was no NDP members taking part in this rally and listening to them but instead either snuck out the back door or just looked out their windows but would not come out and face the crowd.

I mean, we hear from members opposite how good Manitoba is doing, but in a lot of areas we're running third behind Alberta and Saskatchewan. One thing that they forget about is with our federal transfer payments we receive a lot of money from the federal government that Alberta and Saskatchewan don't get. It's not a fair comparison, and I believe that Manitoba is a province—with all that it has, should be a province that should be No. 1. It used to be No. 1, there's no reason why we shouldn't be No. 1. I don't believe that this government should be willing to say, oh, we're happy with No. 3. We should be No. 1, and this government should really take a look at what they're doing to try to put us to No. 1, not No. 3.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government with all these tax increases are increasing all families to a tune of \$1,600 with their tax and fee increases. For an income there's—of a middle-income family, this is a lot of money if they're struggling to pay their bills. I mean, what can they cut from their budgets? What programs can they cut? We all know that sports programs are important in the development of our youth—even this government admits that and they understand that we need to keep that. With fall around the corner, school starting, parents have to buy new clothes for these kids. They have to buy school supplies. They have to enrol a lot of these kids in programs, like in—whether it be music, sports, and all these things are really important to keep our families growing, to keep them so we can be No. 1 eventually in this country. But how many families are going to have to make those tough choices as to what they can cut and what they can't cut? What can they afford to keep and what will they have to cut? I mean, whether it be a sports program, singing lessons, piano lessons—I don't think it's fair for this government without talking to the people of Manitoba what should be done.

Mr. Speaker, under the balanced budget, debt repayment and taxpayer protection act, Manitobans have the democratic right whenever a—to a referendum whenever a government wants to make a major tax increase. If Bill 20 passes, it will gut this act and leave the door wide open for more tax increases. The taxpayer protection laws are there to safeguard Manitoba families from governments like the NDP. What can we see in the future? We've already lead the country in inflation, are we going to continue to see inflation be a major part in Manitoba where it's hurting all the Manitoba families? We need a government that spends strategically and grows the economy, not one that sees taxing as the only way to solve problems. The spenDP would rather raise taxes from hard-working Manitobans than look at its operations and determine whether it is spending wisely.

Mr. Speaker, the vote tax, I know we've discussed this a lot in the while, but it still means a lot to the people of Manitoba. What will a million dollars do? A million dollars may not seem a lot to the government, but there are programs where a million dollars will help a lot. I've mentioned a lot in my questions in regards to children about how a million dollars can help children. The \$5,000 that each member is taking is coming out of the pockets of Manitobans, but it can be going into a lot of other programs, autistic children. It can be going into sports programs. There's—the list goes on and on. I mean, this government does not have an income problem; they have a spending problem. It's about time that this government admitted they have a spending addiction and did something about it.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that this NDP government, their answer to anything that they have that's going wrong, throw more money at it. Throw more money and the problem will go away. Well, that doesn't necessarily help, because if you don't put the money in the right place, or if you take a look at how the money is being spent, it won't do a darn thing. We have a health-care system that is in trouble.

Every day we hear more and more about wait times in emergencies, wait times for ambulances, wait times for unloading, babies being born on the side of the road, people being sent away from QuickCare clinics because they don't live in the city, ERs being shut down. We have 18 ERs shut down in this province at the present time, and that's a lot of people being affected by this. The minister needs to really take a look at our health-care system and do

what's good for the system and for the people, not for what's good for the NDP so they can just have photo ops.

In this budget and in this bill with the PST, the government tried to justify this increase in PST and other taxes by saying they needed it for flood mitigation. Well, that was their first attempt because it looked like we possibly could of had a flood this spring. But they had nothing ready to go. They had no projects that were ready to go. They could not come up with a list. Any responsible government that has had 13 years to work on these projects would have had a list that was ready to go. And also, Mr. Speaker, when they were talking about this flood mitigation work, you don't start flood mitigation right in the middle of a flood. They should have started it the year before and they could have done the work over the winter. If this NDP government was so concerned about flood protection they would have had projects ready to go. Instead of their keep—instead of keeping their promise not to raise taxes, the spenDP is raising taxes and trying to blame Mother Nature as a scapegoat. And the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has not been able to, when questioned several times during question period, come up with the proper required engineering and environmental work that needs before any of these projects can go ahead, more NDP mismanagement.

From the flood mitigation they went to infrastructure. Infrastructure—and, yes, our roads in Manitoba need a lot of work. The capital for highways should be increased and roads need to be repaired. But what happened, Mr. Speaker? They increased the gas tax by 2 and a half cents a litre last year, but this money did not go to road repairs. It may have gone in somehow under the table to road repairs, but the budget went down for road repairs. I mean, it doesn't make any sense that this government should say that they're using that money for road repairs when they're not.

*(15:10)

Mr. Speaker, from there they went to hospitals and schools. And, yes, hospitals and schools are a very important part of our province, but, again, too, nothing has been done. Look at the Selkirk hospital. There's every excuse in the world why it hasn't been done. They started it before the last election. They pounded a bunch of piers, but, really, nothing is happening.

So, if things—like, they always seem to come up with the idea that everything is important and it

needs to go right now, just like this tax increase. This was on April the 16th that they brought in their budget and this bill. Have they done any of these major projects? What are they doing? Most—they're going around and they've probably, I don't know, used probably a mile of ribbon in all kinds of ribbon-cutting projects—ribbon-cutting ceremonies, but what kind of projects are they doing? Are they—Mr. Speaker, with a population of 1.2 million in the province, Manitoba has 26 per cent of its youth that are under the age of 19. We have a lot of youth in this province, but this government has got our debt built up to \$30 billion—\$30 billion. By the 312,000 19-and-under youth we have here, that is about a hundred thousand dollars per youth and child in this province. I mean, that is not fair for these people to stay in this province when they have such a legacy of debt built up for them. This government doesn't seem to think this is a problem. They just keep borrowing more money, adding to the debt, but our youth do care.

I was talking to somebody who used to live in Manitoba that's now living in High River, Alberta, and he was telling me how many people that work there are young. The majority of the workers in Alberta are young. And he's totally surprised at the number of Manitobans that are there. Why are they there, Mr. Speaker? They are there because they can make more money. They—there's just—there's nothing for them in Manitoba, and this government can take the blame for that.

I mean, they need to look after our youth, because if we lose a generation of youth, the contractors are all—everybody's complaining we don't have enough workers in Manitoba. And, yes, we are bringing in more workers, you know, through our immigration programs, but that's not enough. We need to keep the youth that we have here. We need to give them incentives to want to stay in Manitoba, because the youth our—are our future.

Mr. Speaker, there's several areas that this government needs to look at, and I believe that one of the things that they can do is listen to the people of Manitoba. Since April, there have been petitions that we've read out, there have been rallies in front of the Legislature, there's been committee to Bill 20 where several people came to speak to Bill 20.

I have a presentation here by a lady who's not very happy with this government. I'll read a few lines from it: Do we still live in a democracy? If so, why aren't the taxpayers given a choice in matters that

directly impact their very economic existence? One per cent PST increase may not seem to be that much on the surface, but, for example, when the cost of hydro increases, that means we not only pay more for the hydro but more in PST and GST as well. That is a triple blow for the hard-working taxpayer.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines, on a point of order.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Yes, point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I don't mean to interrupt the member's tempo, but it is a rule of this House that if you're reading a letter from someone into the Legislature, you ought to table it. So that's—so the member has the option of tabling it or perhaps paraphrasing it without having to table it, but that is the rule of this Chamber, as I understand it.

Mr. Speaker: I want to—on the point of order raised by the honourable minister, I want to inquire of the honourable member for La Verendrye if he's reading from a private letter.

Mr. Smook: No, this is something that was presented at committee.

Mr. Speaker: So this letter is already on the public record?

Mr. Smook: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: All right. Will that satisfy the honourable minister? Okay, the honourable member for La Verendrye, I regret to interrupt you, but you can continue.

* * *

Mr. Smook: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In case the member wasn't listening, I had referenced right at the beginning that I was going to read from a presentation that was made at committee. So, yes, he did break up my tempo and 'poss'—

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: A point of order, Mr. Speaker,

I will apologize for misinterpreting the member's statement and raising a point of order, that it was, in fact, not a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable minister for the apology and I encourage honourable members to allow the debate to continue.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for La Verendrye, to continue.

Mr. Smook: The more time I spend in this Chamber, the more I learn. Those were facts that I wasn't aware of, and I apologize for that, but I will make sure next time that I either wake up the minister before I state something like that.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this government is intent on raising the PST. We've been here since April, you know, presenting petitions, committee, but this government is clearly not listening to the people of Manitoba. So far in this session 23 days were spent debating Bill 20. Nearly a third of all House time has been used to increase the PST instead of focusing on more important bills that the NDP is intent—but the NDP is just intent on increasing taxes. The NDP fought an election by promising not to raise taxes and, yet, they are trying to anyway. They're not listening to Manitobans. They should listen to Manitobans, support this motion or call a referendum.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate?

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I wish to put a few words on the record with regard to the hoist motion that was put forward by this side of the House with regard to Bill 20.

This bill has, as an understatement, caused a great fear with so many Manitobans, a lot of questions, a lot of concern on a—on various fronts. We believe that what has been lost by this government was the understanding that the legislation as it stands asks for a referendum to be held with regard to the balanced budget protection act. And we believe that Manitobans are very correct in their position that this government has, actually, no legal right to be increasing the PST prior to a referendum being held. And, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's been interesting talking to people across the province over the last several months, whether it be at a rally at the Legislature or at Sandy Lake or Clear Lake or in Souris or in Thompson. We know that Manitobans across the province are very concerned on two things: (1) that the PST is being increased, when it's clear that this government is just

looking for more revenue when they really should be able to meet their obligations within the current budget that they have; and (2) that the referendum takes away their right, their opportunity to have a say in how this province determines an increase in tax that definitely impacts every single Manitoban.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this tax will have a very serious effect on low-income families, on single parents, you know, all families in this province. We're seeing an increase in hydro rates by 8 per cent. We've seen—which was rather interesting, presented by the leader of the official 'opposin,' 22 per cent growth in the tax haul that this government has implemented over the last while. That's the highest tax in Canada. It's double the national average. And the PS—without the PST, even, we are the second highest only to another province. So we know that, basically, what this government is doing is trying to remind Manitobans that they're for sale and they're looking at ways to buy their votes. And I'm very disappointed that this government, after these many years have just not figured out that Manitobans do not appreciate being told or reminded that they are for sale, and it eventually catches up to you.

* (15:20)

And I believe that this is the time when Manitobans have had enough of the—this government's mandate to tax Manitobans and to, you know, indicate in a very unclear way how they're planning to spend those dollars. They indicate it is going to be infrastructure, and we know, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of infrastructure needs in our province. And we also know that this government has been in power for 14 years and actually should have been able to 'prioritize' and address a lot of these issues. We hear about five-year plans, we hear about 10-year plans and we know these plans come and go without this government following them. We know that they work on a political agenda, Mr. Speaker, and it's very unfortunate that so many Manitobans have had to be the recipients of a government pawn game of whether they receive supports or not.

And we also hear from so many Manitobans that if they complain, if they raise issues with regard to the government—and we've seen that with, you know, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) when he was minister of Agriculture telling a specific agriculture organization that you have to be careful about how closely you are tied to the opposition because it will have an effect on our relationship. To me, that's

pretty much a threat, I would say, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that when this organization was told this they were shocked that a government—a senior government minister would actually say these types of things to this organization and many, many more other organizations.

We have seen individuals in the health-care field who are working very hard to provide the services that all Manitobans deserve. All Manitobans deserve timely and caring health care, and I know that that is not happening in the province. We know a lot of individuals who just are past believing the rhetoric that this government has put forward with regard to their commitment to improving the health care in our province, Mr. Speaker. We've—see hospitals that are 80 per cent full of people that are waiting for—in acute care, in beds—are waiting for placement within personal care. We see people that are looking for some leadership from this government with regard to ensuring that we have specialists, that we have doctors in place to address so many health-care needs.

You know, an example—you know, personally, even, my daughter had to wait, she had—both of her kidneys were severely infected and we had to wait five months to get a diagnostic test done to ensure that her kidneys were not damaged in any way. You know, Mr. Speaker, I just find that that is absolutely wrong, when we have a government, we have a minister that continues to talk about what matters first for Manitobans and how she actually is working to improve the health-care system, then I guess I wonder why we continue to see so many families face extensive wait times, so many families that are going to other provinces, other jurisdictions, even to the United States to receive treatment. We see more and more that—of that happening, and it is very concerning when that happens.

And, you know, we talk about this government's rhetoric—well, my sister is a nurse and she actually was a nurse in—at St. Boniface Hospital in the 1990s, and when we talk about, you know, the rhetoric that comes from the government side with regard to a thousand nurses being fired, Mr. Speaker, she doesn't remember that. She—and you know she's a young woman, she's in her early 40s and—or mid-40s and, you know, she says, no, that's wrong, you know, and we know for a fact on this side of the House that it had a lot to do with the RHAs coming into place and the unions wanting to have the renegotiations of contracts with the nurses. So, you know, my sister knows that, and so many other health-care

professionals know that. So, you know, the government will continue to put their rhetoric on the—on record and we'll continue to hear from people that work in the system, as my sister does and my cousins did, and who say, no, that's not exactly true. So we know that this government spin with regard to tax increases and the need for an increase in PST is very concerning.

We've asked for a list of the projects that they consider a priority of—infrastructure priority. We know there are the projects that are out there, but we want to know where this government feels that those priorities are at their Cabinet table, Mr. Speaker, and we're not getting those answers. We know that so many—if it's regarding flood infrastructure, you know, I know for a fact that, you know, the Shellmouth Dam is in need of repair. I know the Minnedosa Dam is in need of repair and that they are not working at full capacity or at the full capacity that would provide the best protection possible. But we don't hear the government talking about making that a priority, and, you know, Manitobans are waiting to hear exactly what they consider their priorities for—specifically with regard to infrastructure projects.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We see communities like Russell who are waiting for a personal care home. We see their hospital in Russell have at times 70 per cent capacity of seniors waiting to be panelled for personal care. I've been told that if there was an accident on Highway 16, at times, if there was an accident, that they would have some serious challenges finding a bed for an emergency situation. I've heard from nurses that have indicated that if somebody should have a heart attack on—in—during certain incidences with the increase with people waiting to be panelled for personal care, that that individual would likely receive care and be assessed in the hallway in a recliner. You know, that's not quality health care. That is not the health care that Manitobans signed up for and that is certainly not what Manitobans believe these tax increases are going towards, because they haven't prove—done anything to prove that that is where their priorities are.

We have seen Brian Sinclair's—through his media reports and through the inquiry or inquest, that he was left in an—in emergency for 34 hours before somebody realized that he had passed away. He had been vomiting in the emergency room. There were people that noticed that he was in distress. And now

we hear that, you know, his intake sheet was shredded. And that's what the minister—she was indicating that, you know, there's no report, that it was shredded. Well, you know, the former deputy minister of Health and now the CEO of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has put that on the record; she has indicated that. So, you know, we know that things have gone astray with regard to the accountability of this government with regard to documentation. We know that. And now we hear that the video that—of the ER is missing several minutes of tape. You know, it just continues to happen where we know that this government has an obligation to ensure that documentation and video evidence should be maintained and kept safe.

We found that in Phoenix Sinclair's situation where we've had three or four ministers who continue to revolve as situations become a little heated in their portfolios. They shuffle them out so that we can't ask questions of that minister on—in how they are—or not—are not accountable to their actions or, you know, inability to act on these issues. Phoenix Sinclair was a 5-year-old girl who was dead for several months before anybody even knew she was missing. And I believe that Phoenix Sinclair deserves accountability to her life and death and that we, as Manitobans, deserve to respect that legacy and to improve services.

We know that there are a number of things that need to be improved within the child-welfare system. It is a system in chaos and there are so many issues with regard to accountability and transparency. So, when they're talking about this increase in the PST, I'd like to know from the minister where she plans to allocate those increased dollars in her department.

* (15:30)

We see autistic children waiting and actually aging out of supports available to them. They're being shut out of their—out of opportunities to have a quality of life that they deserve. We have a government who in 2011 made a promise. They made a promise to these families that they were going to eliminate wait times, and what would we see? Over the last three to four years we've seen an increase in wait-lists. We've seen an increase of children aging out and we see a government that keeps saying, oh, we've increased funding. Well, the wait-lists are increasing so there's no accountability by this government to address that. You can't throw money at things and you can't throw numbers out there without paying attention to the outcomes.

When you see more children needing help in this area, and these families were assured that those services would be in place for those families, it puts into question what exactly this government was planning to do with—or what their intentions were with their Thrive! document and their, you know, press conference with regard to children with autism.

That's just another example of where—these families are wondering where those dollars being collected through the PST are going to go. These are a group of citizens within this province who have signed hundreds and hundreds of petitions from all over this province demanding that this government fulfill its promise. It's a promise that appears to have been broken and it appears to be a promise that members opposite have indicated are a waste of time. These petitions are not a waste of time. It's one of the few tools that individuals in this province have to share their concerns and share their frustration with this government who fails to fulfill its obligation when they make promises prior to elections.

With an increase in PST we're going to see a number of families go without different types of supports—and as I indicated yesterday, it is so important to have children have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. It's so important. It's so important for their leadership skills. It's important for their personal health, physical health. We want to ensure that children are given every opportunity to flourish, and I believe that when this government creates a tax for personal purchases such as this, you are, you know, you are taking away an opportunity.

We know that people on low—that are low-income earners or on social assistance spend every single penny that they have locally. We know that they struggle to make ends meet. They don't have the pleasure or the opportunity to say, you know, I'm a little short. Can you lend me a 1 per cent increase? You know, they can't do that. But what is happening to these individuals, these families, is a government that is saying, you know what? We know it's kind of tight for you, but you know what? We're going to take another per cent off that because we just have our own priorities. We have the vote tax we've got to take care of. You know, we've got our own priorities, and, unfortunately, you're going to have to try to figure it out. You're going to have to figure out how you're going to be able to make your budget work for you. You know, maybe that your child won't be able to have that popsicle after, you know, they do really well at an event. They may not be able to have that

Slurpee because they will not be able to afford that. Families deserve to have an opportunity to determine how they're going to spend their income, and they live within their means.

You know, it's interesting because what we're seeing here is a government that is really losing touch with what is important to Manitobans. We've met with the mayor of Thompson, who has indicated that he has so many issues with regard to his community and he's failing to get the ear of this government. When you are one of the highest—who have the highest crime rates in the country, how do you think that works for a community like Thompson to attract doctors, to attract teachers, to attract other professionals within your community? And I'm not saying that in any negative way, other than to say this is what we're being told by the leaders of that community. And we all know—we all come from communities or areas of—that have so many residents that are concerned about the personal safety of themselves and their families.

We see an increase in crime. You know, I recall, you know, just 20 years ago, you know, not having to worry about locking the doors of my house or not having to worry about taking the keys out of the vehicle. But, you know, times have changed and we have to be more cognizant of the increase in crime within this province. And violent crime—violent crime.

We see, you know, organizations like Osborne House, the YWCA in Brandon, so many other shelters and organizations within this province who provide support for vulnerable Manitobans getting into conflict with this government. Instead of supporting them and knowing how important their work is and in—actually, sitting down and trying to work things through and determining how best to deliver those services, they lock horns with these organizations because they challenge the government.

You know, we saw what happened with Hydra House. We saw how this government said, oh, yes, they're accountable. There's no issue there. And I think it was Tim Sale was the minister at the time, you know, and it came back to haunt him because, no, it wasn't fine—it was not fine. That organization was not providing care to Manitoba's most vulnerable. They were taking that money and using it for Sea-Doos and holidays and furniture for their own use. Service purchase agreements were not being followed, weren't even being implemented.

So, you know, we want to see a government that's going to be accountable up front, not be reactive. And all we see is a government that is spending money, and without any accountability or transparency to that. And we would like to see a better job done by this Province with regard to that—Manitobans do. Manitobans are feeling the crunch.

The member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) raised some really good statistics today about how Manitobans are struggling. They're feeling the pinch from this government's excess spending and not caring about how they are managing Manitoba's dollars.

I have two children and, you know, they know that when their allowance is done, it's done. They have a budget. They know how much they're allowed to spend. And when they don't have any left within their account or within their wallets, that's it. They got to wait 'til the next payday. They've got to wait to the next opportunity, or they do an extra chore, which we may consider, you know, providing them. But we don't just give them extra money because they've spent it.

You know, that's exactly what is happening here by this government. And you know, it's interesting, because we do have that conversation at the kitchen table with my 19- and 17-year-old, and they get it. They know that when their budget of allowance is gone, they've got to wait. They've got to try to make some tough decisions about whether they can go to a movie that night or whether they stay home instead and watch it on TV—something that's on TV. They know that that—that they're not going to get extra dollars, because they overspent. So they've learned to budget, which, obviously, this Province has not done. And Manitoba families are expecting better from this government.

When a premier stands in a public place and indicates, that's ridiculous, I—we would not increase taxes, what does that say to Manitobans? What does it say to individuals who are looking at politics or government? They're—that leads a really—leaves a really bad taste in so many young people's lives who are looking at whether they should really even engage in the process. You know, why vote? What—when the member for—or the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of this province says one thing and does exactly the opposite less than 24 months later? You know, why bother, is what I've been hearing from a lot of young people. Why bother when we have a government that says, I will not raise taxes, and then does it?

* (15:40)

And not only do they raise the PST, but prior to that they expanded the PST to include so many other things, that they've created so much revenue for themselves over the last couple of years and we have so little to show for it. We are asking this government to be accountable. We've seen the largest tax increases since the NDP and, again, it was the NDP that raised the PST by one point in 1987. So this is the largest tax increase and they wouldn't even go to the people on it. Manitobans will be paying an additional \$383.5 million more in PST due to the NDP's decision to expand and increase the tax over the last two years. That's \$383.5 million coming out of the bank accounts and the pockets of Manitobans.

You know, my children have jobs and they work really hard at raising dollars for themselves, and, you know, they have to pay more for anything that they buy because this government can't control its spending. My children are, you know, working hard to make money so that they can buy things within their means, and then they see that any time they buy something now it's going to cost them more. You know, it's just a very, very sad situation, and this is continuing. And this government is failing to provide Manitobans with how they're planning to spend that money, because, you know, that's part of the debate with, you know, the children in the house. If they want to get, you know, something extra, something a little more expensive, there is the opportunity to have a discussion. There's an opportunity to have a debate and both sides can hear the story. You know, they can share their reasons why they need to do this and we can give them some debate back and then there's a vote. You know, there's a decision being made, and it's like a referendum, and then that's where the decision is made on whether they can go forward and buy that. So families know it, and they're being crushed by this un—the unnecessary taxes that this government is putting on them.

When Manitobans hear that they pay the highest income tax outside of Québec and we already have the highest PST in western Canada, how is that in the best interests of Manitobans? How is that in the best interests of families that are trying to make a decision of whether their children will go to school here or will they go to school in Alberta or will they go to school in the States or—you know, it's a very, very tough decision.

And we know that this tax change is simply driving more people and businesses outside of our

jurisdiction, outside of our province. At Clear Lake this past weekend, I met with a teacher who teaches in St. James and he runs a business in Clear Lake. And, you know, we were talking, and I thought, you know, we'll talk about, you know, education issues. You know, what do you feel are the issues? He says, you know, ultimately, we need Manitoba to be a better—better at—or be more business-friendly. And I just said, really? Let's talk about this. And he says, well, the PST and all the other taxes and all the other red tape that he faces running his business at Clear Lake in the summer, it costs him 30 per cent more to run this—his business at Clear Lake as it would if he had to run his business in the United States or in another jurisdiction, 30 per cent more.

And, you know, he says, and I know that because I go to trade shows, he says, and I talk to other individuals and we talk numbers. We talk about profits. We talk about challenges. And 30 per cent more it costs him to run his business here in—at Clear Lake in Manitoba. So, you know, he says things are going to change. He says, you know, he's a teacher and he doesn't believe the propaganda and the spin that's being, you know, presented by this government. He wants to see a more competitive Manitoba for his family, for his business and for future Manitobans.

We've seen a significant, significant shift from this government actually following through on so many initiatives. You know, I live in Souris. I—you know, we survived the flood in 2011. And, you know, we've got a new swinging bridge which we appreciate in our community because it does provide—it's not only an attraction for tourists, but it is also a link between the east and the west side of our community. But, if people walk on that bridge, if they just take a look and look north along the waterfront, along the river, Souris River, they will see that there are homes that are still struggling to get their yards and their homes back to the way they were before 2011.

One individual says, I'm not a quitter—I'm not a quitter—I will fight for what I believe is right and what is right for my family, he says. But this NDP government has actually caused him to quit, to wave the white flag and say, you know what? It's just not worth it anymore. They just wear you down. They send you from one place to the next. They don't respond to your correspondence. The appeal process didn't work, and I have been told that it's outside of their scope.

You know, it is so sad when you see these individuals who have worked so hard to make their homes so beautiful and their yard so beautiful. And one individual actually has left the province—Ontario—he's gone. You know, his house flooded completely and he's been fighting with this government for—well, for the last three years, and he's left. He said, you know, what am I going to do? I don't have a home, I can't get compensation and this government is giving me the runaround. So, he's left and—

The Acting Speaker (Mohinder Saran): Order. Honourable member, your time expired.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Thank you very much—thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker, and all of those others in the House that are just, I know, going to be hanging on every word that I have to say this afternoon.

I was waiting with anticipation for someone on the government side of the House to stand today, and when they didn't, again, I felt myself being extremely disappointed. I'd love to hear one of them put thoughts on the record but they continue to hang their heads in shame, knowing that what they have done to Manitobans. How they've betrayed Manitobans is something that they cannot stand in this House and justify, and it's really too bad, but I know many of us will have many opportunities in the coming months to put our comments on the record on Bill 20.

And this is just—you know, I was kind of hoping that maybe this hoist motion would've been a motion that members on the government side of the House could have stood up and put a few words on the record and spoken in favour of and then voted with us to take a look at this piece of legislation six months down the road, when they've had a chance to rethink their betrayal of the taxpayers of Manitoba. And that they might even have enough courage to try to defend why they think they needed to raise the PST and go out to the public and hold that referendum, give Manitobans that democratic right that they have still in law today to vote on any increase in major taxes, one of them being the PST. So we continue to be extremely hopeful that the government will see the light, that members on the government side of the House will listen to what Manitobans are telling them and have been telling them.

* (15:50)

And I know that many on the government side had the opportunity to hear presenters when they came to committee on Bill 20. And, unfortunately, the one person that was noticed by his absence was the Premier (Mr. Selinger)—the Premier who said that he was prepared to listen, that we have a process in this Legislature where people can come forward to committee and be heard. He was asked several times in question period in the House by some of my colleagues whether he was going to, in fact, attend the meetings—attend the public hearings and hear first-hand what Manitobans were saying about his betrayal and why they were upset with the increase in the provincial sales tax to 8 per cent from 7 per cent. And he—obviously, he didn't answer the question. He ducked the questions and then he also ducked out the door when the committee hearings started to take place. So it's unfortunate that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) wasn't there to hear first-hand what Manitobans had to say.

And I'll just go back to some of those presentations and put some of the statements that were made at committee on Bill 20 and, again, reiterate not what I'm saying here in the Legislature today, but what other Manitobans are saying. And I'll repeat again, because I think it's worth repeating that it wasn't an orchestrated committee hearing. There were many, many Manitobans that registered because of their outrage and the fact that they felt they had been betrayed by a Premier and a government—by a government that lied to them during the last election campaign when they said that they weren't going to raise taxes. As a matter of fact, the Premier sort of laughed it off and said it was nonsense, absolute nonsense that he would even think about doing that. Well, what he says and what he does are two different things, and how can he have any credibility or how can he stand in this House and answer any question today and expect any Manitoban to believe anything that comes out of his mouth? Well, what he said before the election and what he did after the election were two completely different things. It was a complete about face, and Manitobans have caught on. So, when he stands, when he answers any question, when he makes any statement it's hard to believe anything that he says.

And just going back to some of the quotes from presentations that were made at committee, and I will quote: During the 2011 election you stated you would balance the budget by 2013, 2014. And what isn't said in that quote is that they said they would balance the budget by 2013, 2014, without raising

taxes. That was the commitment that was made by the government before the election, and going on—and go on to—go back to the quote, and it says: Your opposition claimed that it would take 'til 2017-18. You have now adjusted your forecast to 2016, 2017, and let's be frank. No one believes you. And that's the end of the quote. That's not my—those aren't my words. Those are words of a taxpaying Manitoban that can't believe a word that the government says. And he goes on, and I quote: I'm not very happy about you guys running around doing all these ribbon cuttings either, especially for projects that were finalized far before this PST increase was announced and the funding in place long ago. Again, this is dishonest, and what's even worse is when you show up at ribbon cuttings for city projects that the City doesn't even know about and has not yet approved. This is just grandstanding and, again, dishonest and insulting to the voters of Manitoba. And that's the end of the quote. I'll repeat those words. This presenter says that the government is dishonest and insulting to the voters of Manitoba.

And I think the word insulting is a word that we have to spend some time on. Manitobans are a little smarter than the NDP give them credit for. They believe that the promises and the commitments that the government made and then did a complete reversal on, a flip-flop, and lied to them, are insulting. That's the word that they're using, and they have every right to use that word.

When this presenter talks about the ribbon cuttings, I think our leader had the opportunity today to expand upon that. And we look at the 130 announcements and ribbon cuttings that have been—announcements that have been made since the budget was introduced, for a total dollar value of \$1.2 billion. So I'm sure that the comments that this member of the public made back in June of this year certainly were very appropriate. Now, I don't know if he had a crystal ball or not, but he certainly, I'm sure, wasn't anticipating or expecting the 130 ribbon cuttings and announcements and the \$1.2 billion that have been spent to date.

And, you know, the clock is ticking on the increase on the PST and we also know that already the increase in the PST has cost Manitoba taxpayers \$45 million—\$45 million—and we are still counting. We will count every day the amount of money that taxpayers have to take out of their pockets and put in the coffers of the government who believes that they know best how to spend taxpayers' money.

But I got a bit off the committee quotes and the hearings, and I'll go back to that same person at committee who went on to say, and I quote: I don't know which is worse, the way you're misleading the voters or the fact that the media hasn't taken you to task on it. I can't speak for everyone, but for myself, my anger and disgust with this government has far less to do with an increase in the PST as it does with the absolute dishonest way in which you did it. That was the end of quote.

I believe when he was speaking about this dishonesty he was talking about what was said before the election versus what was done after the election. But he also was very upset that Manitobans no longer had the right to a democratic referendum to vote on whether the government should increase the PST or not.

And that was put into law many, many years ago to try to protect the taxpayers. As a matter of fact, it was a taxpayer protection piece of legislation, which has been completely gutted as a result of the actions that have been taken by this NDP government. There is no taxpayer protection anymore from a greedy government that continues to dig deeper into the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. And there isn't any one of the members on the opposite side of the House that can stand up and justify why they have a 13 per cent increase in revenue in their coffers and Manitobans are having to pay more. There isn't any Manitoban, I don't think, that has seen a 13 per cent increase in the money that comes into their household in the last year. But government continues to milk the taxpayer for absolutely everything that they can.

And it's really disheartening. It's very disheartening to know that Manitobans can no longer believe or trust anything the government says. And we don't see anyone on the government side of the House standing up and trying to defend their actions.

I believe they must be embarrassed—I believe that they have to be embarrassed by their actions.

An Honourable Member: Should be.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And, you know, if they're not, they should be—my colleague says they should be, and I agree that they should be embarrassed.

* (16:00)

And we're hopeful that the longer we continue to speak on this piece of legislation, the more opportunities that we have to speak on this

legislation and, in the months ahead, that maybe, just maybe they'll see the light. Maybe they'll stand up and listen to what taxpayers have to say, and the longer it goes on and the more money that's generated and pulled out of people's pockets, the more disheartened Manitobans are going to become. And we will continue to seek out as necessary to ensure that Manitobans know that we're here. We're here on their side and we're here trying to convince the government that the right thing to do would be to stop the nonsense in the increase—in the 1 per cent increase in the PST, put a halt on it and go to the people and justify. I mean, they've talked about all the money that they're going to spend in every single different area throughout the province and in every community throughout the province. If that is the rationale and the justification they have for increasing the PST then, possibly, they could take all those ribbon-cutting announcements, make that justification to the people of Manitoba and ask them to vote on whether they're moving in the right direction or not, and that referendum would give people the democratic right to say yes or no to the tax—excuse me—to the tax increases.

And it's not just the 1 per cent that is so insulting to taxpayers, it's the expansion of the PST last year, and there were many, many services that weren't covered before last year's budget with the PST at all. So the services were expanded last year. We know that house insurance was included. There were many, many other things that were included and now, when two years ago there was a zero per cent PST, we now see an 8 per cent PST on many of those services.

So no wonder Manitobans are outraged. No wonder we had so many people coming out to committee to speak against this legislation and against this government, and it's unfortunate that not one member on the government side of the House actually listened, because if they had listened we wouldn't be sitting here today. We would be—as a matter of fact, we would've, I'm sure, been able to hold the referendum by now and Manitobans would've had the chance to voice their opinion either to support the government or not. And, you know what? Quite possibly the majority of Manitobans would've said, yes, to the 1 per cent increase. We will never know because this government didn't give them that democratic right. What they did was say, Manitobans, we know best. We're going to take away that opportunity for you to have any meaningful dialogue and discussion and we're going to take away your democratic right to vote on this.

Well, you know, there are many people that have immigrated to Manitoba because they believe we are a democracy, that they value that democratic right that they have here in our country to vote, and what we've seen by this action in this government is that we've removed that democratic right and it's become somewhat of a dictatorship. They're looking to dictate from on high and say, we know best. We know best what—how your tax dollars should be spent. Just give them to us and we'll be the stewards of your money.

Well, we've seen the kinds of things that this government has done, some of the waste and some of the mismanagement, and we've also seen—at a time of unprecedented growth and revenue we've seen many non-profit organizations be starved by this government. We've seen years when they've had no increase in their operating grants. We've seen non-profits and community organizations having to go out and hold fundraiser after fundraiser to try to raise enough money to serve the people that they support through their organizations when we've seen unprecedented growth in revenue that comes into government and we've seen a decrease in the support that goes to community organizations, and that's really an unfortunate set of circumstances.

It's unfortunate that government isn't keeping up with the needs of the non-profits that are doing a great job in many, many instances to serve some of the most needy people within our community. We see organizations that are protecting those that need protection and need some security and support as a result of domestic violence.

We see those organizations day after day, struggling to try to make ends meet and provide the kind of care and support that's so badly needed. And when they have to worry about going out and holding a fundraiser in order to raise the money because government isn't supporting them, I say, shame on a government—a government that pays lip service to organizations, to the issues of domestic violence, to the issues that surround many, many of the most vulnerable within our community.

Can talk the talk, but we've got a government that can't walk the walk. And again I say to this government, they should look at themselves—take a good, solid look at themselves internally and ask where they believe they have the right to dictate to Manitobans how much of their hard-earned tax dollars they're going to take.

I want to just go back to another quote or two from committee when we had one presenter say, and I quote: I find it rather ironic that you've introduced some bills lately that protect consumers and citizens from auto dealers, from garages and so forth, but yet the legislation that protects us from you, you decide we're just going to do an end run around it. And that's the end of the quote.

Well, that says volumes, I think. That says volumes, and it should say volumes to this government. They feel that they had legislation in place—they still have that legislation in place today to protect them from government, and that is legislation that gives them the democratic right, through a referendum, to vote on whether major tax increases should be implemented. That's protection from government for Manitobans. This presenter says it all when he says, you decide we're just going to do an end run around it.

Government is looking to, and has already, broken the law that protects Manitobans from this heavy-handed government. And they have, in fact, done an end run around Manitobans. And that's unfortunate. It's unfortunate because there isn't anything that this government says or does today that can or should be believed because they've broken their trust with the electorate and with the people of Manitoba. Saying one thing before an election and doing exactly the opposite after shows no credibility. It shows arrogance; it shows a lack of consideration for Manitobans who are struggling to make ends meet.

And there are many Manitoba families that are having to make difficult choices today as a result of what this government has done, while they're not having to make any difficult choices; they're just being everything to everyone. They've made announcements about spending \$1.2 billion over the last few months with 132 'rib'—130 ribbon cuttings and announcements. That's not making any tough decisions, but they've—they're asking families to make the tough decisions around the kitchen table on whether I'm going to be able to enrol my children in sporting events, whether they're going to be able to play hockey this year, whether they're going to be able to go to piano lessons or music lessons or dance lessons—all of those things have to be put on the table and have to be examined. When you have less money in your pockets as a family, you've got to make some tough decisions around choices for your family.

* (16:10)

And this government is not making any tough choices at all. They're just out there announcing billions of dollars in new projects. Where's the tough decision making? The only tough decision making is families, families that are seeing less income, less money in their pockets, \$500 million less over the last two budgets, \$1,600 for a family of four less every year. Sixteen hundred dollars is a significant amount of money. That could be hockey for your children. That could be that family vacation. That could be buying a new car. That could be even purchasing all kinds of things for your children. You know, the government talks and brags about, you know, not charging the PST on bicycle helmets. My goodness, they probably can't afford to buy the bicycle, so why would they need a free helmet? You know, no common sense—no common sense by this government.

At some point in time it has to come to an end. We have to take a look of what's happening to families, to those that are living on fixed incomes. We've got seniors that live on fixed incomes. They don't even have indexed pensions coming in, and they're having to pay higher rents, significantly higher rents. I know that many in my community are facing increases in their rents of 12 per cent this year. Twelve per cent on their rent, an extra 1 per cent on the PST and all of the other services that have been expanded—they may not have to pay house insurance, but they have to pay insurance on the contents in their apartments—all of those things add up. They add up, and that means that seniors may not—they're going—they're having to make tough choices, difficult choices as to how they're going to continue to live.

And we know that sometimes seniors can make the tough choices about the kinds of food that they eat when they have to cut back. We know that they can, but they may not be able to have the proper nutrition as a result of the lack of resources in their pockets or the money that's left at the end of the month after they pay all their bills. And we know that seniors are struggling and having a difficult time. But, you know, it doesn't seem to make any difference to this government. They sit in their seats. They collect their salaries. They even look at a vote tax, \$5,000 per MLA on the government side of the House every year that goes into their pockets, the pockets of their political party. And who's paying for that? It's the seniors. It's the seniors in our community that are living on fixed incomes that are

having difficulty making ends meet, and they sit back and they say how can this government possibly set their priorities based on their own needs rather than on the needs of the people that they were elected to serve.

So I know that there are many in the community that are extremely disillusioned with the government today. I know that members on the government side of the House are getting the kinds of comments and feedback that we're getting. And I know that Manitobans are not going to forget. They're not going to forget what's been done to them in this year's budget and last year's budget, and in the last election when they were so betrayed. Betrayed by a government that told them that everything was going to be okay, that told them that they were going to look after them, that told them that there were not going to be any tax increases; told them that they were going to balance the budget and then continued, after the election, to do exactly the opposite. And there's no way that they can blame absolutely everyone else for their actions.

We have a government that likes to blame and doesn't want to take any responsibility at all for their actions and for the decisions that they made. Well, I want to tell you that Manitobans are not going to forget easily. They're not going to forget; they're going to hold this government to account. And we're going to continue to stand up, month after month, in this Legislature and speak on this legislation and hope that they will have some second thoughts about the actions and the direction that they have taken. We will continue to ensure that Manitobans do not forget the kind of treatment that they have received under this government.

So, with those comments, I know I will have further opportunity to speak on this legislation. I would encourage members on the government side of the House to stand up and to put some comments on the record and possibly take a second look at the direction they're heading, and show the respect to Manitobans that they deserve through a referendum and through a change in the direction that they've taken on the increase in the PST.

So, with those comments, I will—I know there will be others. I'm kind of hopeful, I—that maybe the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) might stand up now and—

The Acting Speaker (Mohinder Saran): Order. Honourable member, time expired.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I hesitated for a moment there; I hoped that someone on their side would actually get up and debate this bill but it appears that they have nothing to say, so. They certainly have lots to say behind the scenes but they don't want to say it out in front and put it on the record. I would certainly love to see someone from that side get up and speak about the amendment that was put forward by the member from Steinbach, the amendment to basically hoist this bill, to give six months for the government to consult with the people, to maybe follow the law that is in this province, the law, The Consumer Protection Act, which states that for major tax increases, such as income tax and provincial sales tax, a referendum is required in this Province. Instead, they went out on July the 1st, which is supposed to be a day of celebration—certainly wasn't this year in this province because that's the day they went out and hammered on another 1 per cent on the sales tax. Everybody went back to work on the 2nd of January and found out, realized that they were paying more money into the provincial coffers.

So they've been collecting for that frame of time, and I think the number is now somewhere around—from July the 1st until now, somewhere around \$40 million of revenue they've collected illegally from the people of Manitoba. They're defying their own legislation and collecting it illegally. That's reprehensible. There's one law for the government; one law for everybody else. That's just—shouldn't be allowed, they shouldn't be proud of that. They should be totally ashamed of it. They should either wait until the legislation's passed that they intend to pass, which we're referring to in our amendment, or the other choice is hold the referendum.

* (16:20)

What are you afraid of? If the—it's a lazy government that won't go out there and talk to the people and convince them that they truly need this increase in the provincial sales tax. If it's so desperately needed, then it's up to the government to sell that idea to the people. I would submit that they haven't done that. They haven't even consulted very well with the people. I attended committee hearings several times on Bill 20, and it appeared to me that they call them hearings, but I don't think anybody on the NDP side of the table in there was listening. They seemed to have a lot of other things that they were devoting their attention to, and they suggest that that's their consultation with the people. Well, it's not a consultation. It's—the people come in. They notice—

they noticed the lack of attention. They noticed that no one's actually paying any attention to them, and then they also notice, further down the road, when there's absolutely no amendments allowed to the bill even though a lot of these people came in, made some very, very good suggestions on how to improve things, how to do things a little bit different, some things would have helped on this bill. So they may have come in upset. They left very angry, and they've got friends, they've got relatives. The message is going out there and it's going out there very strongly.

You know, I was interested yesterday, or was it the day before, when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) tabled his so-called package of hydro, home heating and car insurance, and suggested that we were \$677 ahead of Saskatchewan, I believe, it was. Well, it's always—what I wrote—I wrote a note to myself at the time. I said, wow, \$2,500 behind on income tax and 3 per cent behind the provincial sales tax, but, wow. We saved \$677 on his package. So I guess that really means we're only maybe a little over \$2,000 further behind. We've recouped a little wee bit of it.

I know I asked the question one day, my—I had an office worker in Neepawa that compared her and her husband's provincial income tax to other provinces, and they found that in BC—and this is provincial income tax I'm talking about—that in BC as compared to Manitoba they would pay \$6,387.65 less. In Alberta, once again, on provincial income tax, they would pay \$4,885.41 less than in Manitoba. In Ontario they would be paying \$3,760.06 less on provincial sales tax—provincial income tax. And then, in Saskatchewan they would pay \$2,555.12 less. So I'm sure that when you look at those figures and then you look at this home heating, car insurance, hydro package and you save \$677, I imagine they're just jumping for joy. That really should impress them that—and then—then you go out and say, well, we're raising the sales tax by another 1 per cent—another 1 per cent on the sales tax. That puts us 3 per cent behind Saskatchewan, puts us 8 per cent behind Alberta.

How do we stay competitive? How do we convince people that we're a great place to come and shop? And, believe me, I want to see people come to our province. I want—I noticed the other day our tourism numbers were down substantially. That's concerning. Now, what I actually read—I might as well give the whole story—was that tourism was down somewhat across Canada. But do you think we're going to help tourism by raising our sales tax

by another 1 per cent? People go on holidays. They do very many things. They may eat in restaurants. They may stay in hotels. They may camp. They may—whatever they—whatever their preference is. So, when they're told, oh, if you go to Manitoba, you now have to pay 8 per cent provincial sales tax on just about everything you buy, the list is pretty massive. So they're told, well, you've got to pay that. Well, maybe we just won't bother holidaying there this year. Maybe we'll go somewhere else for a holiday. Maybe we'll go somewhere where it's a little friendlier. Maybe we'll go where the sales tax is only 5 per cent. Oh, no, maybe we'll go where the sales tax is zero. What a novel idea. So if you don't think that you're hurting the economy of this province by raising that sales tax, taking away—another small step of taking away our competitiveness, you might as well think again.

I was recently in Roblin and I'd stopped at a couple of businesses there and I asked them about the sales tax. And the one business owner said to me, you know—in Roblin I should mention is in the Dauphin constituency—and he said, you know, we're close enough to the Saskatchewan border now that we got people going over to Yorkton, I believe it is, to shop once a week. They go over and make major—on a major shopping trip. And, you know, it's the mindset that's there. They—when you consider the gas and the travel and everything, they may not be saving a lot of money, but they're upset, they're perturbed, they're not happy, so they're going to make a statement. But they go there once a week, bring back a carload of whatever they're buying, and then they—he says, now they're using our businesses here in Roblin as convenience stores. He says, we can't stay in business as a convenience store. He said, we—the Province, the NDP government of this province, has made us non-competitive.

We've been reading petitions in here and you'll notice when we read the petitions it sounds like the old song, I've been everywhere. But it's all the communities that are within a certain distance of that Saskatchewan border and the American border and their concerns about our competitiveness and their concerns about people going out of the province to purchase whatever they may want to purchase. They—this whole movement of 1 per cent more sales tax has hurt all those businesses, and will continue to hurt for a long time.

It's no wonder that this Premier (Mr. Selinger), our Premier, is rated as the worst premier in Canada for fiscal management. Seems like they really only

know how to do two things, and that's raise taxes and spend money. Never look for savings within. Although, when they do look for any savings, it's kind of like a lightning bolt going out there, and I think they must use a dart board and just say, wherever that dart hits, we'll do something, but we have no idea what we're going to do.

You know, before the last election, every single one of the members opposite, the NDP candidates, went out and knocked on people's doors and talked to people in halls, and every one of them said, we will not raise taxes. They followed the lead of their leader who, through events we've seen especially in this sitting of the House, maybe isn't a good one to follow the lead of, because he's certainly not displayed a lot of leadership lately in this House. But, anyhow, they said, ah, we're not going—we're campaigning on we're not going to raise taxes. We're saying to everyone that it would be utter nonsense to suggest that we would go out and raise taxes.

* (16:30)

Within six months, they go out and they—NDP government went out, put on the highest tax increases we'd had in 25 years. Within 18 months, they went one better; they put on the highest tax increases we'd had in 26 years. And, even with all this windfall, all this extra fees and licences and extra taxes, they're still projecting a half a billion dollars deficit. It's sad. They've found a half a billion dollars extra revenue a year, and they're spending it faster than they can bring it in.

And now we're seeing that we—even without the PST increase, we would have had highest level of own-source income for the government, the highest level of own-source income in Canada. They didn't need to raise the PST. What they're doing by raising the PST is creating a slush fund for themselves, a slush fund that they believe—and fair enough they believe it—I think they're wrong, but they believe they're going to buy the next election with it.

What they've done, they went out—and I heard one of our members suggest that one of the biggest expenditures lately has been the two miles of ribbon they bought, I think he suggested—but they went out and announced 130 different projects, saying they're all there, they're all—we're doing this because we were able to raise the PST, and that extra income from the PST is going to pay for all these projects.

Now that extra income from the PST is to be about 275, 277 million dollars a year. They've

already announced \$1.2 billion, I think, worth of projects. So at that rate—they did that in something like 80 or 90 days—at that rate, if they keep this announcement string up, they should be able to run it up to about \$4 billion a year against \$275 million of income, of extra income—becomes rather a moot point. We go by—right back to where we started at with them spending far more money than they take in. No idea how to control expenditures.

You know, one other thing I wanted to just touch on briefly, but I'll maybe get to it in a moment. I just found something else that I wanted to say. And, you know, the—there's been a lot of media comments on the PST increase and what's happening here.

And I found it interesting going through The Dauphin Herald a while back and seeing a couple of quotes in there. The Dauphin Herald, of course, is from the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Struthers) own hometown and probably somewhat of a supporter of the Minister of Finance, but they weren't in the article. That's for sure.

They said and I quote: Just as it did with balanced budget legislation in the past, the NDP is thumbing its collective nose at Manitobans, vowing to change the laws to suit its needs; ensuring taxpayers have no say in the increase.

And that's what I've been talking about for 15 minutes. That's exactly what happened. They went on to say: It is that type of arrogance the NDP has shown over its time in power and especially since the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) took over the reins.

So that's what the hometown paper—and believe me, in our rural communities everybody reads those hometown papers. And that's what the Minister of Finance's hometown paper was saying.

You know, there are a number of other quotes and things that came out of the committee hearings that—some of the things that I kind of picked up on—under the NDP we no longer have a rainy-day fund. I think there is still a small rainy-day fund, but that's one person's opinion at the committee hearings. And we depend on federal transfer payments, and we're the highest taxed populous west of Québec.

In fact, the NDP are lying about the tax increase. They're saying that every dollar of the PST increase will go to infrastructure, and, by the way, and I'll move from this, but only about 40 cents will be going to infrastructure, if any of it is at all.

What they've done is they've taken this so-called infrastructure, which used to be, in my mind, hard infrastructure—it's roads, it's bridges, it's sewer and water, those types of hard infrastructure—what they've done is they moved the capital projects out of Health, the capital projects out of Education, the personal care homes, the hospitals, the schools. They've taken them all and they moved them over and called them infrastructure. Those used to be the capital projects in those departments. They used to be handled and paid for in those departments. Now they moved them out of those departments and said—the Minister of Finance has said: We will be accountable at the end of year. He won't give you a list now where they're going to spend this money, but at the end of the year he's going to be accountable for every cent of it. That was the phrase he used: I'll be accountable for every cent of it.

So, end of the year, well, we built this hospital. We built the school. And I have no doubt he's going to be accountable for the \$275 million. I want him to be accountable for the \$275 million freed up back in Education and Health, and he's not going to be accountable for that. That, then, becomes the slush fund. If he's going to be accountable, be accountable for the things he moved over and left the funding back behind. And, if he's not going to do that, he's not being fair with the people. He's not being fair with anyone.

You know, the NDP put forward this tax at a time when people—when Manitobans can least afford it. We have seen some increases in all our costs where this kind of a tax is going to really impact because this tax isn't specific. It's not specific to any one group like so many taxes are, like cigarette tax is specific to smokers, liquor taxes are specific, I guess, to drinkers. This tax—doesn't matter whether you're young and old, doesn't matter whether you're urban or rural, doesn't matter what your income is. You're going to be hit. You're going to feel it. People on fixed incomes, people on low incomes certainly are going to feel the impacts of the 1 per cent increase in sales tax.

I know many seniors, and I'm approached by them quite often. Actually, I guess I'm in the senior range, too, but these are senior seniors. And I'm approached by them quite often, and they say, you know, there's a couple, and we've got our pensions, we've got our old age pension and we've got our CPP, and if our income's low enough, we've got a supplement on the old age pension. But those pensions won't offset the 1 per cent increase in the

sales tax. They're on a fixed income. They know where every penny of it's going, and they're not living rich. They're definitely not living rich. They've got all sorts of demands on them, and the irony is the 1 per cent sales tax isn't the only thing they're getting hit with. The irony is that their hydro went up 8 per cent in the last year, and it's going to go another 4 per cent next year, and 4 per cent the year after.

* (16:40)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

All these things just overwhelm them. And people's spendable, disposable income is shrinking, and it's shrinking because this government is so greedy it can't keep their hands out of their pockets.

You know, I talked earlier about the failure of this government to consult with Manitobans on the PST hike, but it's just beyond rationale that they would actually go out and simply break the law. And now, we hear, in the last couple of days, that by redacting some—on a statement that was made by a minister, that they ignored another law. They ignored the freedom of information law. We know that, with the Jockey Club and Assiniboine downs, they ignored another law there. We know that, back a number of years ago, they went into a scheme that—to bilk Elections Manitoba out of \$76,000 or \$78,000 and were eventually forced to pay it back. But that's the type of thing that this government will try.

You know, and just on some of the other issues that we deal with—but they do tie in. Everything ties in to this particular bill, to the increase in the sales tax. You know, they talk about strategic infrastructure funding and go to great lengths about all the wonderful things they're going to do, and then we hear, well, yes, we announced a couple of nursing homes in Winnipeg. Well, that's great. A couple of hundred-bed or whatever nursing homes, great idea—five years from now, but we need the money right now. We have to take this increase in the provincial sales tax.

Oh, and we're going to put an additional outlet into Lake Manitoba seven years from now, nine years after the flood. So don't worry, people around Lake Manitoba, you're fine because it was a one in whatever—we like to pick numbers out of the air—but it was a one-in-100-year flood or it was a one-in-300-year flood, so you shouldn't get flooded again for another hundred years. It doesn't work that way, as everyone knows, except maybe some of the

flood forecasters in this province, but it doesn't work that way. These people see their shoreline has eroded. They're living in fear of the same thing happening again that has happened. And the ones that weren't destroyed by it certainly will be destroyed if it happens again.

You know, the NDP's continuous problem, constant problem, for them, is they don't get results for the money. They collect money from Manitoba taxpayers in large amounts, and they spend it in even larger amounts. But they don't go out and say, okay, we put an extra \$10 million into this. What were the results we got? Where are we with—what did we get for that money? What can we tell the people, because the people will pay taxes for certain things? They do expect results, and, lately, they haven't been getting results. You know, broken promises go on and on and on, promises that were made around Lake Manitoba—my constituency has a large chunk of the west side of Lake Manitoba—and the compensation packages that were promised and never delivered, and still are not delivered. Once again, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), in his former portfolio, said, there will be multi-year programs and they will be comprehensive. Well, there haven't been multi-year programs, so I guess comprehensive falls by the wayside too.

You know, the—another thing that has been high on the list in this particular year of legislation and around the sitting and visiting with people from the constituencies is the amalgamation of municipalities, and I'm sure the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) would probably be talking about that when he gets up, but I did want to just read one quote that came from Doug Dobrowolski, who is the president of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. He said this bill threatens to not only damage the relationship between our two orders of government, meaning the provincial, but to tear apart communities that have built their partnerships over decades not only because of what is in the bill but because of the undemocratic way that it is being forced on their members. And that is quite a telling story, and it's a sad reflection on what this government is doing out there: No consultation. We know best. We'll ride roughshod over everyone.

So I hope that the NDP, the provincial government, the NDP government will eventually have some second thoughts, listen to the people that came to the committees, listen to some of the stuff we're saying, at least a little bit of what we're saying, and maybe have some second thoughts. I also would

like to see some of them get up, at least speak to this amendment and put your thoughts on the record, convince the people of Manitoba why you need an extra 1 per cent sales tax.

I fully support the member for Steinbach's (Mr. Goertzen) amendment to this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and certainly a privilege to speak to the hoist motion brought in by the member for Steinbach and, with the fall—the September long weekend coming up and the fall season upon us, we—we're certainly enjoying the heat in the building. It's a refreshing change from those cool evenings that we had and the cool days. It just reminds us of what this building could've been like all summer if it had been any kind of a summer such as last summer when we had lots of heat all summer. So we're certainly blessed in this country with a variety of weather at any time and this is—I find this heat just very enjoyable right now. Not everyone will agree, but that's fine. That's—I enjoy this.

But, with the fall and the change of seasons, the harvest is well under way out in the rural areas outside the Perimeter Highway, in case members opposite would like to know that. The harvest has begun. It's going quite well, and I understand from a number of my constituents that they're very pleased so far to date with the harvest to date, and they're certainly hoping for many more days like this. We definitely don't need an early frost which could affect some of our later maturing crops. But, as always, the optimism reigns in Manitoba, and the optimism reigns in spite of the NDP really—I guess, is what it is because of next week the school starts.

I know that parents and some children are quite excited about school starting next week, and, with that, comes the school supplies that parents are having to pay for these days and the extra PST that they're having to pay for. And I know the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Struthers) legacy will be that there is no PST on bicycle helmets. However, we all know that there's still tax on the bicycles, so what the government giveth, they more than take away from everyone here. And with the fall season and school starting, the parents and their children will be deciding on sports and arts and extracurricular activities to decide on what they're going to spend their free time with.

* (16:50)

Mr. Speaker, they'll also have to decide whether they actually have any money to do this to—on how much money they will be able to allocate to this, because we know that just a mere two years ago the NDP members were out there canvassing door to door. That's probably the last time they went to door to door, because they haven't dared go back there since. They promised no tax increases. What did they do? The first budget around is that they had the biggest increase in fees and charges, expansion of the PST to things like insurance, home insurance, the like. It hit families very hard. It hit seniors very hard. It hit fixed—people on fixed income. And, as if that wasn't enough, this year, they've illegally raised the PST. They raised it 14.2 per cent to go up to 8 per cent. And it's—we are well on the—if they want records, they certainly got it in terms of fee increases and tax increases. The most tax increases in 25 years.

So you would think with all this extra revenue, a 22 per cent increase with the PST, a mere 13 per cent increase in fees without the PST hike, but, with the PST, now they've gone 22 per cent. How many Manitobans have seen a 13 per cent increase in their income? How many Manitobans will see a 22 per cent increase in their income? And, certainly, if those Manitobans were seeing anything like that, they would not be running a deficit, the same as they were two years ago. They would not be borrowing even more money to go farther into debt, but that's, unfortunately, where our government has put Manitoba.

They continue to run a \$500-million deficit in spite of massive increases in revenues. They continue to borrow more debt. We're going to be now over \$30 billion in debt. They don't even make payments on their—on our debt now. They're not repaying any of that debt. They have drained the rainy day fund. There's very little money left in there. And, on top of that, they would take from Manitoba Hydro, but, no, there's no money left in Manitoba Hydro's account to be able to take. So they would raid that one too if it was available.

What they've done is they've maxed out the credit card. They've maxed out the credit card in Manitoba and—on their carefree spending, they're spending with no results in mind; it's only spending to—for the—to have their daily ribbon cuttings and self-gratification tour of Manitoba.

And, you know, if the—all of this is bad enough, but on top of that, what they want—what they are going to do, what they will do and what they are

doing, is, on top of all this revenue, they've decided to take a vote tax. Each and every one of these NDP members will take \$5,000 per year in a vote tax. And it's shameful that they would take money from Manitobans, pick Manitobans' pockets, just to line their own pockets.

And I look back, and the Minister of Agriculture, he managed to take \$16,540.99 in election rebate, but is that enough? No, that's not enough. He needs to go back. He wants \$5,000 more per year to pay for his next election campaign. Perhaps, if he would go out there and do some door to door, and ask his constituents for money, perhaps he would not need this \$5,000. But I don't know, is he afraid to do it, or is he just not inclined to do that? And it's—so that's unfortunate.

The member from Selkirk got over \$11,683 from the tax-paying public in Manitoba, but that's not enough for him. He still wants his \$5,000 a year in vote tax. And that's \$5,000 a year, not just a one-time payment. He wants to finance his next campaign, so that he doesn't have to go out and talk to Manitobans, so he doesn't have to go to his constituents and say, we just have a record—we just raised—we have the record tax increases in the—for the last 25 years.

And, by the way, we're still massively in debt; we're still running a deficit; and we have nothing to show for this tax increase.

There is so many ways that this NDP has failed Manitobans. The PST hike, the illegal PST hike, brought in on July 1st, it's illegal. They should have changed the act to—before they raised the PST, but they just don't bother following the law, I guess. They're breaking the law by raising the PST without a referendum.

Have a referendum. If you really believe this is what Manitoba needs, and perhaps they do believe this is what Manitoba needs, go out and put it to a referendum. Ask Manitobans. We know that they broke their word. They—after campaigning for no tax increases, they turned around and increased taxes at phenomenal rates.

This lack of consultation cuts across many areas, Mr. Speaker. They—the—Bill 33, the forced amalgamation bill—talk about a disaster. You know, all they had to do was go out and talk to municipalities, and talk to municipalities and say, you know, if you're interested in amalgamating, we will assist you. How can we help?

But, no, that's not how they do it. They spring it on the AMM the day before their convention last November, and then they've tried to give all kinds of excuses why they need to force amalgamation onto municipalities. And I've certainly heard—I know that they've heard too—I know that, speaking to many of these municipalities and many of the people who—residents who live in these municipalities and particularly coming into Winnipeg, the—our beach communities who have seasonal residences at the beach communities are upset—and upset is putting it mildly—about how they feel this government has treated their municipalities.

We have self-sufficient local governments. They are working quite well at—Victoria Beach is an excellent example. They've upgraded their water system. They have their own police force. They are doing quite well financially. They're self-sufficient because of their permanent population. As predicated by the current act, they are at 600—and-some residents—permanent residents. In fact, they're—they say that they're over 3,000 on a seasonal basis and all those seasonal residences pay municipal taxes, and they vote in municipal elections. And yet this government is saying: You don't count; you don't matter. This municipality shall amalgamate. And that's the wrong way to go about doing—trying to encourage co-operation. They could've—certainly could've gone about it in a much more democratic and more proactive way.

And then, on top of this, their timelines are totally unreasonable on this proposed bill that's sitting there. They are supposed to have their plan in by December 1st and have their agreement—amalgamation agreement done by May 1st of next year, and that's—there's a lot of business to be attended to. There's a lot of agreements that need to be reworked if two municipalities are to amalgamate, and it's just—the timelines are totally unreasonable. Municipalities, over and over, have told this minister his timelines are totally unworkable. He fails to—either he fails to understand or he fails to listen to them, but, one way or the other, it is a poorly thought-out bill. And I have told him repeatedly, he should pull the bill and start over again in a 'consultive' basis with the municipalities and work with the municipalities rather than working against them.

Mr. Speaker, there's many other avenues where this government is failing Manitoba. The Americanization of Hydro is particularly disturbing. We have just a gem in Manitoba Hydro, and this

government has decided that they shall run Manitoba Hydro now. The NDP party figures they own Manitoba Hydro. And Manitoba Hydro belongs to Manitobans; it does not belong to the NDP.

And you take this circular route of the Bipole III to start in northern Manitoba and go to the Saskatchewan border and wander through western Manitoba, wander through southern Manitoba, and then come back up to the northeast corner of Winnipeg is totally ridiculous. The cost estimates on this are at least a billion dollars more than a shorter, greener, more precise route coming down the east side of Lake Winnipeg, but yet this government does not want to see fit to put—include Bipole III in an NFAT study, that they are pretending to do for their two new dams with Keeyask and Conawapa. So it's unfortunate that this government fails to do—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (17:00)

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) will have 17 minutes remaining.

And, just prior to adjournment, I want to, as we, in the continuing series of celebrating our youth here in the Chamber, we have one of our pages whose last day is today, and that's Shannon Cosser. Shannon will be attending the University of Winnipeg this fall and will be taking pre-psych courses and wants to become a psychologist as a career. Now, I don't want honourable members to be worried about the case study that she's been conducting here over the last year. She says that she hasn't added any names attached to the notes that she's been taking. So don't—tell honourable members not to worry about that.

Shannon, over the past year, has also worked in a job in retail and headed a group of teenagers against drunk driving and maintained an 85 per cent average in her schooling.

So, on behalf of honourable members, Shannon, we wish you the very best in your future education and career opportunities.

And 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 28, 2013

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Petitions		Brian Sinclair Inquest Friesen; Oswald	4604
Provincial Sales Tax Increase–Referendum		STARS Helicopter Service Gerrard; Selinger	4605
Goertzen	4593	Friesen; Oswald	4606
Wishart	4593	Canadian Senate Reform Allum; Swan	4606
Rowat	4594	Stu McKay Eichler; Selinger	4606
Eichler	4594		
Helwer	4597	Members' Statements	
Provincial Road 433 Improvements		Ray St. Germain Blady	4607
Ewasko	4593	Emmeline Farms Briese	4608
Hydro Capital Development–NFAT Review		Nagar Kirtan Saran	4608
Pedersen	4594	Maurice Parobec Rowat	4609
Stefanson	4594	Political Division Gerrard	4609
Applied Behaviour Analysis Services			
Mitchelson	4595		
Smook	4596		
Friesen	4597		
Provincial Sales Tax Increase– Cross-Border Shopping			
Schuler	4595		
Graydon	4596		
Oral Questions			
PST Increase			
Pallister; Selinger	4597		
Manitoba Economy			
Graydon; Struthers	4599		
Deputy Premier			
Stefanson; Selinger	4600		
Ewasko; Selinger	4601		
Goertzen; Selinger	4602		
Deputy Premier's Email			
Goertzen; Selinger	4603		
		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Debate on Concurrence and Third Reading	
		Bill 20–The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended)	
		Smook	4610
		Rowat	4614
		Mitchelson	4619
		Briese	4624
		Pedersen	4628

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

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